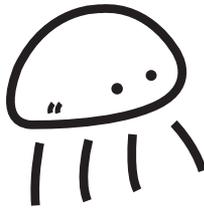
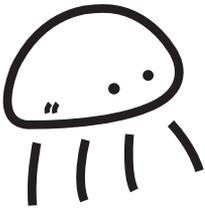
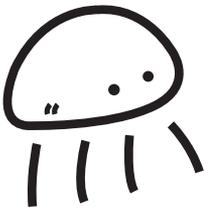
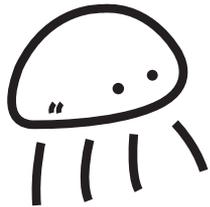
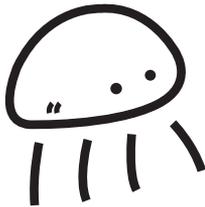


There has to be someone who reads this shit... Is that you?

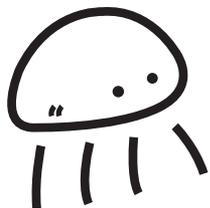


# interchange

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Online Diatribes by **Emi Koyama**



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interchange

# What is this ‘zine about?

Interchange is originally a section within **Eminism.org**, the online propaganda center created by Emi Koyama (that’s me!). Interchange basically archives some of the most interesting postings Emi made to various electronic mailing lists and message boards, although sometimes I include things that don’t fit into this criteria. This ‘zine is the “best of” collection of the online version, so to speak.

You can find the entire Interchange archive online at:  
<http://eminism.org/interchange/>

# Who is this Emi chick?

**Emi Koyama** is a multi-issue social justice slut who synthesizes feminist, Asian, survivor, dyke, queer, sex worker, intersex, genderqueer and crip politics. Emi is the founding director of **Intersex Initiative** ([www.intersexinitiative.org](http://www.intersexinitiative.org)) and has presented extensively on intersex activism, working-class sex worker feminisms, and the domestic violence “industry.”

Emi is also the founder of **Confluere** ([www.confluere.com](http://www.confluere.com)), an “alternative speaker’s bureau without the (centralized) bureau” and is responsible for putting the “emi” back in feminism via **Eminism.org**.

# #76: “Rebellious” Teachers Don’t Deserve Rachel Corrie Award

Forum: QSTUDY-L

Date: 12/05/2004

In announcing the Rachel Corrie Award 2005:

The Progressive SIGs and Caucuses Coalition (PSCC) of the CCCC wishes to honor the memory of this extremely courageous student by recognizing a teacher in the CCCC who has taken professional risks in order to promote social justice through the teaching of writing. It is well known that the politics of hiring, tenure, and promotion often motivate graduate students and junior faculty to write, teach, and serve in “safe” subject and project areas; many are encouraged by mentors to shy away from genuinely “controversial” or “risky” subjects until they are tenured. In making this award, the PSCC hopes, conversely, to encourage writing teachers early in their careers to take on research, pedagogy, and service projects that promote commitment to peace, justice, and human dignity—even when hazarding the ire of deans, chairs, editors, and hiring and review committees.

This is bizarre. I think it’s absurd how obtaining tenure consumes 99% of the lives of aspiring scholars and I think that it’s pathetic that they are often forced to compromise their commitment to social justice, but the “courage” to risk tenure—which, hello, most workers in the U.S. don’t have tenure and life doesn’t end there—is nowhere near equivalent of the courage and the conviction it takes for one to stand unarmed and nonviolent in front of raging military tanks to keep them from bulldozing civilian houses.

This is what’s wrong with academia. Only professional academics are so sucked into the whole tenure process as if their worlds revolve around whether or not they get tenure. I’ve seen many friends lose sanity in this process. Meanwhile in the real world, people are putting their bodies and lives in line to protect their home, their families, their human dignity.

Sure, I’m all for awarding young scholars who defy pressures to conform—perhaps with enough pampering our colleges faculty will become more interesting. But giving them the award named after Rachel Corrie because of their “courage,” demonstrated by their willingness to address “controversial” subjects prior to tenure, seems disrespectful to what she actually fought for and died for.

And it scares me to think that even the scholars who wish to encourage more “risky” scholarship (i.e. those who set up this scholarship) don’t understand that the “courage” of young scholars who address “controversial” topics and the “courage” of young, unarmed woman walking up to the Israeli tank are two entirely different things.

- ek

# #77: Honesty And Reason Are Our Best Weapons

**Forum:** Intersexed\_Society list

**Date:** 04/04/2004

Lezlie wrote:

- > This is something we all need to read. It's very informative and it gives
- > us all, GLBTI, backing to who we really are:
- > (Press Release from UCLA)
- > UCLA Scientists Find Genes Organize Male and Female Brains
- > Differently; Research Suggests That Sexual Identity Is 'Hard-Wired'
- > Before Birth

This press release is dishonest and deceptive. The study in question has nothing to do with what this press release claims. See:

<http://www.intersexinitiative.org/news/000058.html>

<http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=17116>

Surely, we don't need to rely on intellectual fraud in order to stand up for "who we really are."

- > One group that could benefit the most from this type of research is
- > most certainly Intersexed. From a blood sample, the newborn could be
- > identified as being a boy or a girl.

The study, which I can send to you in PDF format if you want to read for yourself, has NOTHING to do with that. It merely documents that there are differences between male rat brains and female rat brains even before their gonads are formed. It's an interesting scientific discovery, but does not tell us anything whatsoever about the nature of gender identity or sexuality.

Besides, if you read the article you'd know that their research method involves cracking little fetal mice's heads and slicing their brains to investigate their structure. EVEN IF the finding was applicable to humans, and ALSO IF it were to tell us about the person's gender identity, they would have to kill the child to be able to make that determination. So perhaps they can get our gender correctly in our death certificates, but it definitely doesn't help intersex people to have their brains cracked and sliced.

No matter how much science is advanced, there will always be people who are raised in the gender that doesn't fit. And IT'S OKAY for these people to exist; it shouldn't be considered a tragedy. Instead, we should be working toward making the society more accepting and respectful to these people.

This kind of research may help by giving us some scientific backing. And, it could help the children grow up identifying with their true gender. Before they really know who they are.

Unfortunately, this particular research does none of the above: instead of giving a “scientific backing,” it provided a weak spot for the right wing to exploit as an evidence that the “homosexual conspiracy” (which they now include intersex in) is perverting science to serve its political agenda.

You think I’m exaggerating? See the link below:

<http://www.cnsnews.com/Culture/Archive/200310/CUL20031021a.html>

It’s an article from October 20, 2003 issue of the Cybercast News Service, a Christian-based, ultra-conservative news site. Thanks to UCLA, who sent out such a fraudulent and deceptive press release, now right-wing fundamentalists get to use it to discredit all other scientists who are honestly working to explore the biological connection to human sexual and gender variations.

To his credit, Eric Vilain is not the villain as his name might suggest. In a “Nature” article (January 29, 2004), he is quoted as saying that intersex surgeries “should be delayed until the child can offer consent and has started displaying gender-specific behavior.” That’s fabulous! But it’s not the study involving cracked-open rat brains that gave him this insight; it’s the fact that science hasn’t actually figured out how to detect intersex infants’ gender identity, as he admits on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio interview on November 15, 2003.

Scientists pretending to know more than what we actually know has resulted in the brutal treatment of intersex children by John Money and Co. What we need is more honesty and open communication from doctors and scientists – not fake research announcements designed to mislead the public. They should remember that we are not that stupid and neither are the people who hate us. We can’t expect to just trick the hatemongers with bad science into supporting our rights.

Emi Koyama  
Intersex Initiative  
<http://www.intersexinitiative.org/>

# #78: Sex and Parental Values (Or, Introduction to Sex Neutrality)

Forum: strap-on.org

Date: 06/04/2004

my parents are freaking out on my (cool, queer, non-monogamous, feminist, punk) 16 year old twin sisters because they are sexual with their boy and girl friends and party all the time (drugs and alcohol) and make bad grades. and a part of me thinks that my parents are right to tell my sisters that they are doing things wrong regarding being so sexual at their age. but i am not sure how to feel. cuz i lost my virginity when i was 15 and i'm non-monogamous and queer and slutty as hell my own self.

so i guess my question for all you queer sex-positive types is where do you draw the line? how much is too much? how young is too young? should i talk to my sisters and tell them to slow down or just keep telling them that its okay as long as they are safe?

First, parents are perfectly entitled to talk to their children about values they hold. However, values are something that cannot be taught or pushed on others: it is something one develops from all the personal interactions and circumstances that form the totality of the environment surrounding the person. Nobody can transmit values directly to others – and especially not by scolding someone or telling her she is bad.

Should parents discuss their values with their cool, queer, non-monogamous, feminist, punk daughters? Absolutely. But they shouldn't expect that their values would dictate their teenage daughters' behaviors. If, in the totality of the girls' life experiences, they have developed respect for the parents' moral authority, then certainly sharing of their values may impact their daughters' behaviors in some way, even if it's not exactly the way parents wish them to behave.

Second, if not wanting them to make mistakes is the reason for having reservations about the girls' behavior, then telling that they are doing something wrong is not the way to address it. Here, I think it would be beneficial – assuming that you and your parents have earned respect for you moral authority – for you and your parents to offer personal insights you have gained through achievements and mistakes you have made in your own lives.

I've been (wrongly, I think) referred to as a "sex positive" at times, but I'm more like sex-neutral. I don't think that sex is particularly good compared to other fun things a person could do. The main advantage of sex over other entertainment is that it's free or relatively low cost (unless you pay for the service, of course). I can't really say any more that it's safer than other activities such as playing baseball or listening to music, but there are ways to do it relatively safely. In a way, I'm de-mystifying sex from both sides rather than just one.

So, while I am firmly against the repression of sex and sexualities, I don't particularly glorify sex and I am annoyed as hell by the sex-positive fundamentalists who have little tolerance for people who are different from them. Wouldn't it be ridiculous, for example, for someone to say that people who don't enjoy basketball as much as they do are not really in touch with themselves? Some sex-positive fundamentalists would assert that sex is more fundamental than basketball because it's our biological urge – a mistake, because the sex-negative side could use the same exact reasoning to argue that heterosexuality is superior to other forms of sexualities.

But unlike sports, sexuality is a site of massive repression, violence, and exploitation in our society (I was going to say a site of "inequality," then caught myself remembering how shitty top women basketball players are treated compared to their male counterpart). Whereas basketball has universally recognized rules and regulations to address safety needs of participants, the regulation of sex, if any, is often based on someone's personal value rather than on the actual needs of the participants. So it makes sense to say that young people need to be introduced to sex with caution and protected from some of the potential hazards – unfortunately, however, those who advocate for the "protection" of children and teenagers from sexual "mistakes" often fail to address specific pitfalls of being sexually (hyper)active young.

In short, we as a society need to build a culture in which young people can naturally (that is, from the totality of her or his surrounding) learn how to protect themselves, but unfortunately we don't have that culture yet. I think it's reasonable to feel that teenagers often have not learned these skills anywhere and therefore they may run into hazardous situations. However, telling them that it's bad to have sex when they are young is not going to work, as shown in any number of scientific studies about "abstinence-only" educational programs officially sanctioned and promoted by our right-wing government here in the U.S. Harm reduction, on the contrary, works.

We can't change the culture overnight, but we can start from changing our family dynamics so that we are talking openly about sexuality with all of its joys and pitfalls. If it is your and your parents' assessment that the girls do not yet have skills to protect themselves, we need to think about how we can help them, as family members, learn the skills, rather than making a moral judgment about it or saying that they are too young for this or that. Again, it matters how much weight you have in the totality of your sisters' universe – but I think you might have a better chance of helping them as someone who is "non-monogamous and queer and slutty as hell."

- ek

# #79: If We Can't End Exclusion, At Least Stop Legitimizing It

**Forum:** Students for Genital Integrity list

**Date:** 06/01/2004

On 6/1/04 5:21 PM, "Anya" wrote:

> This year i have the opportunity to attend the Michigan Womyn's Music  
> Festival (michfest.com), a super huge feminist retreat-type gathering  
> (and, yes, i do have issues with their "womyn-born-womyn only"  
> policy) But apparently anyone can hold a workshop on anything they'd  
> like, or so i've been told. I've gotta look into the details and see if this  
> is possible for me to do, but i really would love to hold a Genital  
> Integrity workshop focusing in infant male genital mutilation. So, does  
> anyone have any suggestions or are any females attending this event?

>  
[snip]

>  
> "Justice too long delayed is justice denied."—Martin Luther King Jr.

Anya,

It's nice that you "do have issues with" the festival's discriminatory policy against transsexual women, but why are you suggesting that you (we) take part in supporting the discrimination?

Let's say that you did a workshop about circumcision at the festival—how would you think if all the participants (including doctors and nurses) simply said "yes, I do have issues with circumcision" but went ahead and continued to participate in it anyway?

If you insist that participating in a discriminatory festival is acceptable, I suggest, at very least, that you remove the Dr. King's quote about justice from your email signature.

---

**Date:** 06/02/2004

On 6/2/04 12:59 PM, "Anya" wrote:

> I was very hurt by the way you presented that email, emi. i dont think  
> we should be nasty to each other.

So you are hurt—big deal. Trans people are not just emotionally hurt by anti-trans sentiments, but they are *actually* disadvantaged and wounded by anti-trans discrimination and violence. I didn't mean to be "nasty" toward you, but I don't think that being nasty is worse than actively participating in discrimination.

You see, some women think excluding transsexual women is a great idea, and so they take part in the festival. I strongly disagree with their position, but at least it makes sense why they do what they do. I think it's hypocritical to state "I have issues with the policy" and then still participate in the festival.

We are not talking about small issues here; we are talking about blatantly discriminatory policy against an entire subgroup of women in a supposedly "feminist" festival (which, I might clarify, is not a private party as many naively believe, but a business enterprise that is legally considered as public accommodation like theatres and restaurants).

- > But the truth of the matter is i feel a certain duty to reach ALL
- > audiences regarding this issue.

And you don't feel any sense of duty to support transsexual women who have been excluded from this very festival and have been doing outreaches and protests for many years? Perhaps you don't. Even then, don't you \*at least\* feel that you shouldn't be stepping on their toes as they continue to outreach and protest?

- > I was told the trans camp isnt that far from mich fest, i would love to
- > go there and give a presentation some day soon.

I suggest that you go there and attend a workshop or two. You won't be giving any presentation at the Camp Trans, which is held as a protest against the discriminatory policy of the Michfest, as long as you are justifying your participation at the very festival that discriminates against them.

- > this year i dont have the funds to go to the trans camp.

Camp Trans is a protest. It doesn't cost anything to participate. Of course they can't guarantee food for you while you stay there (unlike the festival, which provides meals—although I understand that some food is donated or purchased by the organizers and people tend to share), but there aren't any other expenses once you are already there. And it's across from the main gate of the Michfest, so you won't need to re-arrange any transportation.

Just so you know: Trans activists and allies want festival attendees to walk over to Camp Trans to attend workshops or to chat about the issue, but that's not their goal. They want you to stop supporting the institution that discriminates against them, as long as the discriminatory policy continues.

Some festival attendees seem to think that their participation in the festival would become okay as long as they also attend Camp Trans and superficially express support for trans inclusion, as if that would indemnify them from charges of supporting discrimination. That is missing the point entirely. Yes, they want to talk to you, but talking to you is not the end-point; getting you to join their struggle is.

By the way, I was not being nasty when I asked you to remove the MLK quote from your email signature. It really offends me that someone would quote him in the same email that justifies supporting an institution that publicly and proudly discriminates, as if stating "I have issues with it" somehow makes

everything okay.

(Disclaimer: I am not affiliated with Camp Trans and have never even attended it, so obviously I'm not speaking for them. It's far from where I live and my disability makes camping very difficult.)

---

**Date:** 06/03/2004

On 6/2/04 10:58 PM, "Anya" wrote:

- > Big Deal? yeah, so if it's not a big deal to hurt an individual than why is
- > it a big deal to hurt a group of individuals?

I'm not your therapist, and this is not a support group. When you make a statement on a political issue, your statement can be criticized if others find it offensive, oppressive, or hypocritical. I can't possibly be responsible for how you feel just because I criticized your comment that needed to be criticized. It's not my responsibility to take care of your emotional needs.

It is however my responsibility to confront and resist discrimination against trans people, as well as toward other marginalized groups. When feminists talk about discrimination and oppression, they are dealing with social and economic structures that shape our experiences and \*not\* someone's hurt feelings, individually or collectively. That you even think that they are somehow equivalent ("why is one not a big deal and the other is?") is truly astonishing.

- > but part of me feels that if a group of men or Chinese or any certain
- > group, wants to have a week to themselves, let em have it. again i do
- > not know were i stand on this issue.

That's only if it were a private club (not public accommodation). For example, a group of white people are free to meet among themselves privately at a camp site—but they cannot operate a restaurant or theatre that is "white only." If you "do not know where [you] stand" on something that simple, I really hope that you would remove the MLK quote from your signature. It's a disgrace to his legacy.

Unlike Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Augusta National Golf Club is a membership-based private club, which is legally entitled to exclude whoever it wants. But that did not stop feminists (joined by Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition) from waging a campaign against it—because as feminists what we are interested in is whether or not something is fair and just, not just merely legally tolerated.

As part of the campaign against Augusta's anti-women policy, feminists sought corporate sponsors, media and even Club members to stop legitimizing the Club. They sought PGA Tour to stop sanctioning Masters Golf Tournament; Masters to relocate to another club; and corporate executive to cancel membership at Augusta. Under law, we can't deny private clubs' right to

exclude whoever they choose; however, others do not have to regard the Club with legitimacy and respect while it continues to exclude women.

The truly important question here is \*not\* whether or not Michfest has the legal right to exclude certain women. It is whether we should legitimize the exclusionary festival by performing, presenting, volunteering, ventering, financially supporting, and participating in it.

We are not talking about whether or not some hypothetical group of people get to have a week to themselves. We are talking about your suggestion to present a workshop at the festival, which would add value to the festival and therefore legitimates its exclusion of transsexual women. If you are planning to do this, you are less ethical than a slew of corporate sponsors who responded to feminists' call to stop advertizing their products during the live broadcast of the Masters (CBS lost all sponsors, so they aired it without ads, making CBS the sole sponsor for the broadcast).

By the way, after hearing that Jesse Jackson was joining feminists in protesting Augusta, the local chapter of Ku Klax Klan showed up to counter-protest Jesse Jackson and in support of the Golf Club. Do you see why I find it extremely offensive to see Dr. King's quote attached to your email? If you aren't going to help end the discrimination against trans people, at least don't help prolong it by giving the festival legitimacy that it doesn't deserve.

> you catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

But you are not a fly. And if you were, you wouldn't be giving a tip on how to catch you more efficiently.

Besides, what made you think that you are so important that I'm trying to win you over (which, I assume, is what you meant by "catch more flies")? I'd be happy if you come to agree with me, but that's not why I'm responding to you.

I'm responding for the same reason feminists protest Augusta: to stop lending legitimacy to your statements. That's also why I appear unconcerned about your hurt feelings: I don't want to give legitimacy to your sense of entitlement to be free from criticisms that hurt your feelings. If you feel, however, that any of my criticisms are misguided or unwarranted, I'd be willing to revisit and discuss that.

- ek

# #80: Pimps Are Not Our Friends

**Forum:** pro-decrim list

**Date:** 11/22/2004

Annie wrote:

I'm floored that a group of about five people have been giving the St. James clinic (a free clinic for sex workers, run by sex workers) an awful time, trying to shut it down, and slandering it, because they think the Clinic shouldn't take monetary donations from strip club owners.

I'm not one of the five or so people in question (and in fact, I don't agree with all of their demands), but my understanding is that nobody is trying to shut down the clinic. There is a genuine disagreement among sex workers over whether or not the clinic should take money from the managers and pimps, and it should not be turned into a question of loyalty.

I find Annie's characterization of the controversy similar to how critics of war on Iraq or of PATRIOT Act are attacked as aiding and abetting terrorism and being anti-American. It's wrong to turn a genuine disagreement over issues into a test of loyalty because it stifles the free exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Since when do sex workers who need money not take money from those who have different beliefs, lifestyles, jobs, politics, etc?

There is a difference between individual sex workers taking money they are entitled to in exchange for their service, and organizations that are supposed to represent the interest of sex workers taking money from those whose economic interest is dialectically in conflict with ours.

When Danzine began publishing 'zines in Portland, some strip club owners offered to place ads in them to help cover the printing cost. Even though their offers were genuine and no visible strings were attached, Danzine refused to take their money, because we needed to keep Danzine independent of the managers in order to advocate for workers' interests in its pages.

Besides, not all strip club owners are bad people at all. Some are quite wonderful and do good things.

Do they treat their workers as employees and pay them livable wage, instead of charging them fees to work? Do they provide medical and other benefits that workers and their family members need? Do they take responsibility for occupational safety and health, covering them under the workers' compensation insurance, for example? They need to fix these things first before they can be considered friends of sex workers.

The St. James is not taking money in return for favors to club owners, or to any other donors.

Club owners are getting a good PR as if they care about sex workers' health,

without actually making any changes at their establishments to improve working conditions that directly affect the well-being of their workers. If they are so concerned about sex workers' access to health care, why don't they already provide health insurance for all of their workers?

By associating themselves with the St. James Infirmary, managers are getting what they paid for: the public (mis)perception that they are concerned about their workers--which allows them to continue to exploit and mistreat workers at their establishments. Plus, they get tax credit. And a seat at the Board of Directors.

The Board! I still can't believe that they would put a boss on it. I could imagine having to accept a few checks from club owners to make ends meet, but I don't know what rationale there is for putting them on the Board. Why is that? My first guess was that it was offered in return for cash donations (which happens a lot within the 501c3 system), but Annie says that donors don't get any favorable treatment from SJI, so I'd like to find out what the actual reasons were that lead to the decision to invite the club owner to the Board of Directors. Someone please tell me!

Please fight the real enemies. (Ie: Bad laws, rapists, harmful addictions, stigma, sexually transmitted infections, prejudice, hate, etc.)

Bad management is our enemy. Consider how much money they are stealing from workers each night by refusing to treat them as employees and by charging stage fees, or how much money they are saving by not providing health insurance. The money they give back to sex workers in the form of donations to SJI is miniscule by comparison. Anyone who takes advantage of the society's prejudice toward us (prejudice is the reason for the government's refusal to enforce labor laws) for personal gain is just as much enemy as the prejudice itself.

- ek

# #81: Abuse is More than just Individual Acts of Violence

Forum: WMST-L

Date: 05/02/2005

Note: This is in response to Daphne Patai's challenging of rhetorics expressed in Clotheline Project shirts and labeling them as "hate speech" (by which she is actually referring to angry or aggressive tone, but not necessarily hate speech).

On 5/1/05 12:24 PM, "Daphne Patai" wrote:

"Verbal abuse hits just as hard" (MacKinnon view that cannot distinguish between verbal and physical abuse. If people really believe this, then no doubt women are as abusive as men--just with slightly different means; all sorts of data show women's greater verbal gifts. Again, this view that words equal deeds allows everyone to be a victim.

You are missing the point of the statement expressed in the shirt. It is not suggesting that verbal and physical abuse are the same. In the many years of working against relationship abuse we've learned that abuse is not about specific act of hitting or kicking or even yelling, but a pattern of power and control. In an abusive relationship, even the words "I love you" could be used to establish and maintain a pattern of power and control, if used manipulatively. That doesn't equate the phrase "I love you" with hitting; it merely shows the complexity of how abuse actually happens.

But the society largely only sees specific acts of violence, rather than how these acts form an abusive pattern as a whole. The expression on the shirt is trying to tell the society that, even if individual acts of verbal and emotional abuse may seem trivial because there are no hospital visits or visible scars, they should be taken just as seriously.

And before you accuse me of trying to criminalize speech as "abuse," I do not support legal system as a primary method of fighting violence against women. I believe that it should be the last resort, and that primary focus should be given in prevention efforts that fosters early intervention by friends, family members and the community.

Also, for the record I do believe that women's abuse toward men is a bigger problem than reported because so much of that abuse is hidden since they tend to be less physical than men's abuse of women. BUT that would not lead to the conclusion that "women are as abusive as men." To suggest that, you must assume that men's larger stature and greater physical strength are solely responsible for their violence against women, and that's just plain stupid. Doesn't men's greater institutional power factor in at all?

Which raises soem interesting questions that I have never seen addressed when research on violence against women goes on: Have you

ever felt obliged to make up or exaggerate things you have suffered at the hands of men?

Daphne, this isn't a new question and you know it. Yes, it does seem that sometimes incompetent therapists and others (including feminist advocates for survivors of violence) lead women to exaggerate abuse they have suffered or "remember" ones that did not take place, although most of the time the process isn't a conscious one for both the therapist and the client. However, we still don't know how widespread this problem is vs. the actual incidence of abuse, so we need to be careful not to prejudge or prejudice anyone's stories.

Do you believe all the accounts of abuse you hear about from your friends or in feminist classrooms?)

As a matter of fact, no. But I do tend to believe that whoever is telling the story believes that story to be true. Friendships and classrooms aren't the court, so nobody needs to be interrogated.

By contrast, the occasional (very rare) mentions of lesbian rape were very different in tone, e.g.:

Good observation. But come to Seattle in June when Northwest Network ([www.nwnetwork.org](http://www.nwnetwork.org)) has the Clothesline display--you'll see a lot of shirts made by queer survivors, which vary in tone. It's really hard to see the variety when you see just a couple of them.

the anger at my original posting reflects a major current habit within feminism: the tendency in dealing with the problem of violence against women to not allow any questions to be raised about feminist claims

No. The responses are due to the fact you misused the word "hate speech." It's fine if you don't believe in hate crimes law, etc. (in fact, I've been pretty outspoken about opposing hate crime legislations), but you can't just change the definition of a commonly accepted term and expect others to understand what you are trying to communicate. You angered people because of your mischaracterization of statements on the shirts as "hate speech," because calling them "hate speech," as the term is understood by the rest of the society, is extremely offensive.

and also the habit of exaggerating everything about violence against women

And you seem to have the habit of minimizing everything about violence against women and turning everything into the Vast Feminist Conspiracy. Okay, so physical abuse and verbal abuse are two different things--but why does one have to be real and the other merely some feminist plot to "bolster a monolithic view of men as predators and women as their victims"?

Emi Koyama

# #82: Music Festival Can't Hide Behind Private Property Rights

The following discussion took place in a personal LiveJournal site over whether or not Michigan Womyn's Music Festival or other private organizations can lawfully exclude transsexual women from attending it.

**Forum:** a personal LiveJournal site

**Date:** 06/12/2005

Private organisations have the right, whether it's a company picnic or a huge music festival that has become popular, to define who is invited and who is not.

True, like Augusta National Golf Club gets to exclude women from its membership. But that didn't stop feminists from protesting Augusta and the Masters Golf Tournament that is held there. The point here: we shouldn't stop at discussing whether or not an entity has the legal right to exclude, but whether or not it's the right thing to do so.

Above I used the example of Augusta to make a point, but legally speaking, MWMF has less right to exclude certain people than Augusta does. Because Augusta is a private membership-based organization, it can refuse membership for any reason, including race, sex, religion, disability, etc. On the other hand, MWMF is not a membership-based organization; rather, it's legally a for-profit corporation (and I'm not suggesting that they are making a tons of profit here — I assume that they made it a corporation for tax purposes) that provides public accommodation. In other words, MWMF is more similar to restaurants, hotels and movie theatres than to a private picnic.

Public accommodation, even if it's privately owned, does not have all the right to exclude people for any reason like Augusta and other private clubs do. For example, they cannot exclude people because of their sex, race, religion, disability, etc. As far as I'm concerned, it's a matter of time before the State of Michigan adopts a non-discrimination law protecting the rights of trans people; after all, many other states already have similar laws.

In short: if you really feel that it is legitimate for MWMF to exclude trans women, you should articulate your feminist justifications, rather than relying on legal arguments.

but to say they cannot have their limited party is like...

The problem is that MWMF is not a private party. If that is the direction they want to take, I think they should make it a membership-based organization like Augusta. And even then, don't expect protests to stop — after all, feminists do protest Augusta.

You bet it's discrimination and there are places and times for it...

If so, I want you to make a case that this, in fact, is the place and time for it.

Personally, I can sort of see that a case can be made for specific workshops or spaces inside the festival being reserved for non-trans women (while at the same time, other workshops and spaces could be reserved for trans women only), but I have not heard any good argument that would justify excluding a specific group of women from a women's festival.

Unless, that is, you consider trans women non-women. Then we'd be having an entirely different conversation. (But truthfully, I have more respect for people who say "trans women shouldn't be allowed in because they aren't women" than those who say "I accept trans women as women, but they shouldn't enter." At least the former has a consistent and logical position.)

- ek @ <http://eminism.org>

## #83: "John/Joan" Is Not A Textbook Case for Intersex

**Forum:** WMST-L

**Date:** 05/31/2005

On 5/27/05 6:39 AM, "Betsy Keller" wrote:

For a film festival on intersex, I highly recommend the one hour film "Sex Unknown" (PBS) which deals with the famous "John/Joan" case. While the child in this case was not intersexed, the doctor who supervised the case was of course the famous Dr. John Money who had pioneered intersex surgical intervention, and the film has much relevance to intersex issues.

Why recommend this program? As you mention, the program has \*no\* intersex people in it; just a bunch of non-intersex experts talking about intersex based on a single clinical case that is not even an intersex case. The only reason it might be appropriate for an intersex film festival would be to show how not to make a program about intersex.

To PBS's credit, "Sex Unknown" was part of its science series, and it was specifically designed to explore the science of sexual differentiation, NOT to explore the lives of intersex individuals. So there wouldn't have been any problem if they didn't promote the program as \*about\* intersex. Likewise, I don't have any problem with teachers using that program as a film about the science of the development of gender identity, but I think it's inappropriate to show it as an intersex film.

Also, there's a lot of confusion about what John/Joan study and its failure can tell us about the nature of gender identity or the appropriate course of treatment for intersex. For one thing, you can't use a single case as an evidence for anything, either for nature or for nurture. Also, there are other reported cases in which "normal" males lost penis due to botched circumcision and was raised as female and still to this date live as women.

This morning's (5/31/05) New York Times has an interview with William Reiner, one of the experts involved in the intersex debate. Below is excerpted from the article:

As part of a research study, I've personally seen and assessed 400 children with major anomalies of the genitals. Of those, approximately 100 might be called "intersex." Our findings have been many and complex. The most important is that about 60 percent of the genetic male children raised as female have retransitioned into males.

We also found that of this group there were some genetically male children, who despite genital anomalies were raised as males, and they continued to declare themselves as male.

This number is based on his clinical sample, which has large number of boys born with cloacal exstrophy. Like the subject of "John/Joan" case, these are children who are both genetically and hormonally male. And even among this group, only about 60% of children later transition to live as men, meaning that 40% don't. That's hardly a clear vindication for nature over nurture, though it does suggest somewhat strong biological influence.

Reiner's comment (as quoted by NYT) is misleading, however: it makes it sound as the 60% figure applies to all genetic males, but it clearly doesn't apply to girls born with androgen insensitivity syndrome, who are genetically male but hormonally unresponsive to testosterone and are born with external appearance of female. Among "genetic males" with AIS raised as girls, those transitioning to live as men are pretty rare. Reiner's number does not reflect this because there are ten times as many CE patients in his sample as there are complete AIS patients.

Emi Koyama

# #84: The Great Transgender Debate of Summer 2005

Forum: WMST-L

Date: 08/03/2005

On 8/3/05 6:20 PM, "Bronwyn Winter" wrote:

i note mel's clarification that intersex and TG [as] not related—the fundamental reason, as i see it, for them not being related is that intersex challenges our assumptions about what is biologically 'normal' so that even 'biological sex' which we take for granted as being 'natural' is \*also\* culturally constructed.

Intersex bodies just are. They don't exist as theoretical device to challenge anything. Besides, do we really need to look at intersex to realize that biology is also culturally constructed? I mean, didn't we already know that, based on our understanding of how women's bodies are constructed?

TG on the other hand is about rearranging oneself to fit \*physically\* into a 'gender role' one feels more comfortable with. i.e. it doesn't break down assumptions about sex and gender but reinforces them.

Again, transgender people just are. They don't need to justify their existence by proving their usefulness toward your theorizing. But that said, don't transsexual people "challenge" some of our basic assumptions about sex and gender, that is: that one's anatomy is the basis for her or his gender identity, and that it's unchangeable?

can you imagine us having 'race reassignment surgery'?

No. Only people who imagine such a thing are the bigots who want to discredit transsexual people.

The fact is, transsexual people exist, and they are facing extreme violence and discrimination because of their difference. Things we do can make their lives better or worse—your rhetoric clearly does the latter.

why then, cannot we see this problem in relation to so-called 'gender reassignment' surgery?

Listen, there are ways we can critique and problematize the medical interventions toward transsexual people without demonizing transsexual people. Suggesting that being transsexual is similar to participating in "the worst form of cultural appropriation" is not a reasonable criticism, but a hate speech.

where is the outcry about what has recently happened in my country, where children have been legally allowed to go through 'gender

reassignment' before they reach puberty?

I believe that you are talking about the recent court ruling in Australia, and if so you are mischaracterizing the ruling.

In the recent case, a 13-year old trans-identified person was given permission to take \*puberty-blocking\* pills, not fully "go through gender reassignment." The reason for this is that if the puberty is medically delayed for several years, then this individual will be in a very good position to make a decision as an adolescent several years later. That way, the 13-year old will not be forced to experience the undesirable and irreversible physical changes due to puberty, and keep all options open when s/he is more mature.

The point here is that physical changes due to puberty is irreversible, but puberty-blocking medicine is reversible. If, after several years, the person decided not to go through with the transition, that's fine too: just stop taking the pill and s/he will experience puberty just fine.

You may disagree with the ruling, but please don't mischaracterise it just to make it easier to dismiss.

yes mel, of course TG is not the same thing as intersex. intersex challenges gender, 'gender reassignment', and 'beauty surgery', both reinforce them.

Hello, do you realize that 99% of intersex people simply want to live as ordinary men and women? They are just as gender-conforming as transsexual people, or as the general population for that matter.

and why do we not also see the MTF TG push to occupy women's safe spaces—from lesbian spaces to rape crisis centres, as cultural and political appropriation?

Transsexual women are women, so why shouldn't they be welcome in a women's space?

I think it's the height of hypocrisy especially for a lesbian space to exclude transsexual women who are lesbians: many "lesbians" have had straight relationships in the past and fully enjoyed heterosexual privileges back then, but nobody questions their place in a "lesbian" space after all.

it would indeed still seem that the most radical and challenging thing women can do is to claim our own, safe, women-only spaces.

Na, I never felt "safe" in women-only spaces, especially those that claim to be "safe." Sexism isn't the only oppression, ya know.

interestingly, in fact, the main shit fight about TG membership of sydney lesbian space happened among lesbians (in fact it divided the sydney lesbian community), there was very little TG participation in the debate.

Of course – why would any self-respecting transsexual people put themselves through such hostility? I consider it a duty for non-trans people to fight against trans oppression.

now what does \*that\* say about internalised pressures on lesbians to own, and fight for, everyone's issues but our own, and trivialisation and marginalisation of lesbians when we speak up about \*our\* issues?

Trans issue is not someone else's issue for lesbians; it's an issue that concerns all lesbians and especially trans people who are lesbians.

When trans women are excluded from a women's space, it's not safe for all other women whose identities are more complicated than "woman." When trans lesbians are excluded from a lesbian space, it's not safe for all other lesbians whose identities are more complicated than "lesbian."

Emi Koyama

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**Date:** 08/05/2005

On 8/4/05 7:09 AM, "Bronwyn Winter" wrote:

the hostility of your response puzzles me. no-one has asked any individuals to justify their existence. i am not setting out to vilify individuals who identify as transgender,

Then why did you make a suggestion that being transsexual or seeking recognition for one's gender identity as equivalent to the "worst form of cultural appropriation"? Why did you characterise transsexual women's entry to women's space as an "occupation" and "cultural and political appropriation"?

criticism of the culture/ideology of beauty practices is not vilification of women who wear makeup and high heels, criticism of the ideology/culture of marriage and motherhood is not vilification of women who are married and/or mothers.

Correct. But if someone were to go on to suggest that women who wear makeup and high heels are "brainwashed," for example, it becomes a vilification of these women. What you did to transsexual people was similar to this: it wasn't a criticism of the culture/ideology of gender, but a direct attack on who they are.

re the issue of women-only space, we will continue to disagree on this. but i would prefer it if such disagreements could be expressed without resorting to personal insult. such tactics are bullying and silencing.

Then perhaps you could have stated your position on women-only space without resorting to attacks on transsexual women. Calling their entry

to women-only space as an “occupation” and “cultural and political appropriation” is clearly an insult, a tactic designed to bully and silence transsexual women into compliance.

Your suggestion that any lesbian who opposes the discrimination against transsexual women are “internalising” the “trivialisation and marginalisation of lesbians” is also an insult.

In fact, you did not state a single coherent reason why transsexual women should be excluded from a women-only space. You basically labeled transsexual women occupiers and their lesbian supporters sellouts, and that’s all. If you want to argue about women-only space, then let’s do that; don’t rely on bullying and silencing tactics like these.

Emi Koyama

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**Date:** 08/06/2005

On 8/5/05 11:16 PM, “Adriene Sere” wrote:

Emi said that to even imagine doing in terms of race what transgendered people do in terms of gender is “bigoted.”

That’s not what I said. In my observation and in any available literature, the only people who ponders about the ethic of “racial reassignment surgery” are the people who are bigoted. I never suggested that the act of imagining it is itself bigotry — no, I’m simply pointing out that people who are not bigots do not imagine such a thing to begin with.

Certainly cosmetic surgery and a change of identity were done in terms of race, “occupation” and “cultural appropriation” are the descriptive terms that would be used. Why is Bronwyn so berated for using these terms when it comes to gender?

Because I’m sick of white women using race metaphor to vilify trans people, as if racism is a thing of the past and everyone (at least within feminist circles) is \*so\* beyond it. I’m sick of the fake outrage white women express as they say “it would be \*so\* obvious to everyone that it’s \*so\* wrong if it were about race.”

The boundary of “people of color” isn’t as clear as many of these white women seem to think. There are people who are mix-raced, people who can pass as white, people who were raised by white people and were taught to be white all their lives. The definition of whiteness itself is culturally and historically dependent. I don’t believe in creating a Blood Quantum system (or any other singular system designed to draw a clear and unambiguous boundary) to determine who is “of color” enough; and that is exactly the same way I feel about the gender boundaries.

In other words, it's not so much that I want transsexual women to be part of women's space; it's more about the politics of drawing clear and unambiguous boundaries that bothers me. And in that sense, my position on boundaries is perfectly consistent whether we are talking about racial lines or gender lines: I don't believe in creating rigid boundaries, and believe in demilitarizing the borders.

btw, I have had two brief experiences with mtf persons in women-only space, space where I was simply visiting.

There goes the "I have a friend who is XYZ so I'm not prejudiced" trajectory...

But I support Bronwyn's questioning of the assumption of those born and raised male to be accepted as women and join women-only space just because they insist on it.

Fine, if you think you are in a position to question if someone is a real woman or not, then I'll also question that you are a woman. Don't be surprised if I scream when I find you using the women's restroom.

I certainly think they have a right to insist on respect as human beings, and the right to create their own space.

What are you talking about? When we created "women's space," trans women have always been part of us.

Emi Koyama

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**Date:** 08/06/2005

On 8/6/05 2:14 AM, "Max Dashu" wrote:

As for having operations to change genitals and taking hormones, I'm not convinced that they do challenge the cultural prescription that anatomy is the basis for gender identity.

First of all, I wasn't trying to argue that it's great to be transsexual because they challenge cultural assumptions. My main argument was that it's not the point for transsexual or intersex persons to challenge cultural assumptions, and that they shouldn't be expected to break down binaries any more than other people.

That said, I was disagreeing with Bronwyn's point that intersexuality challenges cultural assumptions but transsexualism doesn't. I don't think it's not the point of either intersexuality or transsexualism to challenge anything, but if she were to say that intersex challenges cultural assumptions, then transsexuality also challenges a different set of cultural assumptions (while leaving other assumptions unchallenged, of course).

It's just like being a lesbian. Claiming lesbian identity does challenge some cultural assumptions (compulsory heterosexuality, women's position relative to men in male-dominated society, etc.) but at the same time it leaves other assumptions (gender binarism, compulsory monosexism, etc.) unchallenged. I just think it's illogical to bash transsexuality as "not challenging" cultural assumptions while celebrating intersexuality and lesbianism for "challenging" them.

I'm not interested in interfering with people's choice to undergo physical modifications, but am concerned about what I am hearing from butch lesbians I know personally who are reporting intense pressure to "transition" into men.

Pressure exists both ways, depending on where you are: there are pressure for butch women to "transition" in some circles, and there are pressure for trans-identified people to not "transition" in others. And this is something we can all join together to work on: there shouldn't be any pressure interfering with people's choice to transition or not to transition.

The trans movement is about self-determination, and not about coercing more people to transition. To say that trans movement pressures people to transition is just like saying that the pro-choice movement wants there to be as many abortions as possible, as Rush Limbaugh has once stated. No, pro-choice is pro-choice and self-determination is self-determination.

Of course, that doesn't mean that privately there aren't any peer pressure to transition among peer groups — however, there are also peer groups where there is a pressure to not transition. The important point is that as a movement, the trans movement is for self-determination and against coercion.

She was infuriated at the insistence that her body had to be made to conform with culturally assigned traits, that "woman" could not include who she was.

To refuse to accept her as a woman is just as offensive as refusing to accept transsexual women as women. I don't understand why some people consider this same act (defining "woman" so narrowly that many people who identify and live as women everyday are excluded from it) is offensive when it happens to a non-transsexual woman, and yet an acceptable feminist position when it happens to a transsexual woman.

This is a kind of "policing" you are not going to hear about in queer theory classes, but it is real. I see a lot of silencing going on around these issues, a lot of shouting-down, with "bigotry" being the favorite cry to silence dissenting voices.

I don't understand: what this friend of yours is experiencing is similar to what many transsexual women are experiencing, namely that someone else had defined "woman" in such way that they are excluded from it against their will. How does trans people's confronting such "policing" silence her?

We are basically outraged about the same problem here, but somehow you are making it sound like people who support trans people's right to transition are to blame for causing the pressure for non-trans people to transition. That is such a twisted logic – it almost reminds me of conservatives' rhetoric against same-sex marriage, which is that it destroys families. There's no basis or logic to what's suggested here.

I just have to say, I don't trust the omission of male privilege from consideration here. Gender identification and "performance" is not everything; how you are raised, your chores and opportunities and mobility, your personal history of being treated as a male or a female in a patriarchal society, all have profound effects.

I agree – those who have been treated as a male in a patriarchal society must recognize and confront her or his privilege (as do people who are not transsexual in a cissexist society). But we also need to stop seeing male privilege as absolute or universal: our lives are more complicated than just being raised as a male or a female, and the experience of "being treated as a male or a female" varies widely depending on many other factors.

It's easy to say that all (cissexual) women share the "experience of being raised as a girl under patriarchal oppression," but in reality these same words do not mean the same thing for all women. Given that, I have no problem accepting transsexual women's childhood as a very unique form of girlhood, even if it's not typical. Is there any logical reason that her childhood experiences are any more different than all the unique experiences that women may have? And who is "policing" the boundaries of "woman" now?

Emi Koyama

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**Date:** 08/07/2005

On 8/6/05 "Suzanne Franks" wrote:

Transsexuals are not the only people qualified to think analytically about the issues involved in transsexualism.

Agreed, but I also believe that, as members of the dominant group, cissexual people discussing transsexualism must have a basic level of sensitivity toward the minority group that the issues they are discussing impact.

Now, I AM willing to concede that there may be a difference between wanting to have "race reassignment" surgery and wanting to have "gender reassignment" surgery. But if that is so--then what is the difference?

The very fundamental difference we must understand \*even\* before starting this conversation is that "race reassignment" surgery is just a thought experiment, while "sex reassignment" surgery is a lived and embodied

experiences of real humans. All I am asking for is the sensitivity toward people whose lives the discussion will touch upon, which has been completely absent from the people who have been making this race analogy. This particular analogy is routinely brought up by people who already disapprove of transsexual existence as a cheap shot to discredit and dismiss transsexual people, and it was no exception this time around.

On 8/7/05 12:21 AM, "Max Dashu" wrote:

many lesbians I know are wary for a variety of reasons, not least the over-the-top name-calling broadband denunciations of feminists in the GLBT press over this issue over the past decade and a half.

The reason you read denunciations in press is because these publications first publish columns and essays that are critical of transsexual people or movement, and then other people respond denouncing that. In other words, critics of transsexual issues have not been silent as you claim.

But the demonizing is too much fun, and altogether safe in a society that attacks feminism from every conceivable direction.

It's not fair to characterise these "denunciations" as "attacks" on feminism. The authors of such "denunciations" are not attacking feminism, but are making a feminist case for transsexual inclusion.

I am encouraged by occasional voices of MTFs who are disturbed at this pattern and express understanding and sensitivity around issues like the much-maligned women's space.

Women's spaces are not maligned by trans activists. The policy excluding some women from the women's space is what is being challenged.

To characterise efforts to end the discrimination as attacks on feminism or women's space is similar to how war-mongers call you unpatriotic and traitors for opposing the war.

In the brave new PoMo world, we have been admonished that there is no communitarian interest for women, that the many differences render this category meaningless.

It's ironic how transsexual people are attacked for not breaking down categories enough, and yet also attacked for rendering categories meaningless. Please at least pick either and stick with it, okay?

Emi> To refuse to accept her as a woman is just as offensive as  
Emi> refusing to accept transsexual women as women.

I don't agree with this equation.

Why? I thought that you and I agreed that everyone deserves the same respect, safety and liberty... Or, did you mean to say that everybody deserves them, but some more than others?

You can accept transsexual women's right to self-identification, to define their identity, without insisting that their experience is the same

On the contrary, I'm insisting that transsexual women's experiences are unique. That said, I don't think there's any reason to assume that their experiences are any more unique than all other women's unique experiences.

Some do not see transwomen as their peers, because their life experience is different and because of behaviors that are culturally-taught and imbibed.

Right, and I really don't see Condoleezza Rice as my peer either, but unlike some people I don't have the bloated sense of entitlement to enforce that feeling onto other women.

You are critical of woman-only space as excluding transwomen against their will, but your solution becomes forcing the women who seek that space to admit transwomen against their will.

Why do you insist that the dominant group is entitled to decide if, when and how they would include the "other"?

Also, it's not accurate to say that my solution "forces" someone something because I don't have such power. What I do is similar to what feminists have been doing around the exclusion of women from the Augusta National Golf Club: lacking legal authority to force Augusta to open up membership to women, we first tried to persuade the club to change its policies, and when that was unsuccessful we asked business leaders, Masters Tournament and others to stop patronizing or legitimatizing the club. That is exactly what I'm doing around women-only space.

The crucial ingredients are trust and good faith, which can not be demanded but only earned and freely given.

Your statement would make sense if all women had to earn it before they can enter the space. But if Condoleezza Rice and Margaret Thatcher can enter the space, then it really has nothing to do with trust or good faith. Why are transsexual women the only ones to have to prove themselves?

The differences between being raised as a girl or a boy are considerable: countless patterns of favoritism versus secondary status, leisure versus housework, etc, etc, etc.

That's not what I asked for. I am asking you to show that the between-group (i.e. raised girl vs. raised boy) difference is more fundamental, severe or significant than the within-group (i.e. among raised-girls) variation. Unless that can be shown, and I don't think it can be because it's not true, the existence of between-group difference cannot be used as a reason to exclude transsexual women from women's spaces.

On 8/7/05, "Rebecca Whisnant" wrote:

Because if [Marilyn] Frye is right, then those who are relatively powerless HAVE to "police boundaries"—that is, make decisions and control access to themselves and their spaces and activities--in order to effectively get more power than they now have.

Interesting point. My response is that the society is not so simple that it's made out of just masters and slaves, but there are many whose identities are hybrid or multiple who occupy the borderlands of racial, gender and other constructed boundaries. I am not arguing that everyone should be able to come in and out as they please; I am arguing however that at least those whose bodies and spaces on which the boundaries are drawn should be able to cross that boundaries freely without having to prove their status with documents.

In other words, I don't oppose "women-only" space, but I oppose any attempt to institute any one official definition of "women" that is clear and unambiguous. To draw any such line would always cut through someone's flesh and bleed — and I am not just speaking figuratively here.

If we agree that women should sometimes be able to exclude or avoid people who are uncomplicatedly men, then we have to confront the question of just *how* uncomplicated a person's womanhood has to be in order to not be excluded from a particular space or activity or group.

There's a jump in your logic here: why does excluding people who are "uncomplicatedly men" necessarily lead to questioning any other person's place in a women's group? And why do you believe that "uncomplicated" women should have such enormous power over "complicated" ones? Who among us is completely "uncomplicated" woman? Do you even realize that your argument could easily be used to justify exclusion of lesbians from women's spaces? ("In order to keep 'us' safe from unwanted sexual attention!")

It might sometimes shade over into, or be inflected by, bigotry, and that should always be challenged. But it is not bigotry in and of itself.

Sounds like "when you're excluded, it's not bigotry; but when I'm excluded, it's bigotry."

Rather, to *deny* women some significant latitude to make these kinds of access-denying judgments seems to me, very problematic.

And who are the "women" who should have should be afforded such latitude? The most gender-normative, gender-comforming ones?

Emi Koyama

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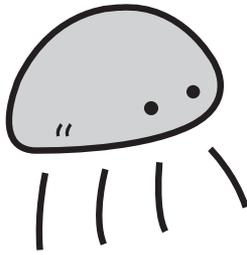
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