

# It's spelt Sisterhood, not Cis-terhood

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The signatories of this letter strongly condemn the actions and doctrines of the Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs)\*. This strain of feminism recently gained notoriety due to their problematic opposition of the proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (these reforms proposes to allow trans and non- binary people to self- declare their gender without, as is the case now, going through humiliating legal and medical process). This law could help to make the lives of a highly discriminated against minority easier. TERFs however claim that the aim of the proposed law change is a threat to cis women.

**As feminists we reject the TERF notion of a woman.** That our gender and therefore our roles in society are determined by biology is a sexist idea that we have spent our lives rejecting. We demand better than that for ourselves and for our trans siblings. Trans women are women. The proposed law change is not a conspiracy aimed at abolishing women's rights, nor are trans women trying to hijack female identity. They have their own identity, that of a trans women, which comes with its own experiences of prejudice and discrimination.

**We ridicule the idea that men need to pose as trans women in order to abuse us.** We have faced abuse from men in a myriad of ways. These men have always had the backing of the patriarchal state and society. They didn't need to subject themselves to transphobic abuse and oppression to facilitate abusing women then and we don't see why they would need to now. There is nothing inherently, biologically or psychologically dangerous about trans women and TERFs will not make us afraid of them.

**We hate the TERF habit of denying people their gender identity.** Referring to trans women as men and trans men as women, denying non- binary people their identity, and trying to refuse them basic rights is a clear sign of prejudice and it has no space on the left. It traditionally belongs with the conservative right and people expressing such prejudices should not be accepted in leftist or anarchist spaces.

**We are disgusted by the TERF techniques of bullying trans people and their friends and comrades.** TERFs stand against a vulnerable minority by refusing their right to exist, using their dead names, doxxing them, smearing them online and in the press and waging a fear campaign, all whilst accusing trans women of being a possible legal and physical threat to cis women. These techniques are not consistent with their announced aim of getting legislation refused by parliament and belie the TERFs real agenda of intolerance.

**We are sick and tired of TERF alarmism.** There is no evidence that trans women are in any way a threat to cis women. To the contrary, there is a lot of evidence that TERFs feed the prejudice against trans women. The countries which introduced their own versions of GRA are not experiencing the problems the TERFs associate with allowing trans people to determine their own gender.

**We despise the use of the State to police our politics, bodies, personality and identities.** When the TERFs recently prosecuted an anarchist trans woman for assault, with the help of the metropolitan police and the magistrates court, they sent a message to us: they believe that their opinions are more important than the well documented physical and mental risks the police and the courts system pose to minorities. We think this is abhorrent. It was a deliberate provocation of vulnerable trans community to get the desired result of them being arrested much like the actions of the Forward Intelligence Teams used by the police.

We will never accept snitching to the police after an event, when the personal risk is over, to be a valid form of resistance. What's more, while punching people is almost never a good thing, what needs to be pointed out here is that claims this was an example of male on female violence are unfounded and bigoted. The aim of labelling it that is to add fuel to an alarmist scare campaign against trans people. We believe that the term invented by our sex worker comrades to describe TERFs and their counterparts Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminists (SWERFs): "carceral feminism" is indeed correct.

Finally we believe that contrary to the propaganda spread by them that **it is the TERFs who are perpetrators of violent hatred, not trans women.** It is them who make us feel unsafe. We do not believe they are victims. We believe that the TERFs are similar to the so called men's rights movement in that they are mistaking losing their privilege for losing their rights. We will not allow our radical and feminist groups and spaces to become battle grounds for their hateful agenda.

**We are committed to fighting for an awareness and intolerance of transphobic attitudes in the organisations and spaces that we are part of.** We will not let transphobia go unchallenged in our spaces both online and offline and we will support our trans comrades in their struggle against patriarchy and capitalism as we know that their liberation is inextricably part of ours.

We are asking our cis male comrades to join us in these commitments. This isn't a 'women's issue'. This struggle isn't less important than the class struggle or anti-fascism, it is a part of those struggles as much as they are a part of it. Identity politics are about intersectionality not essentialism, and this benefits you as much as us and trans people. Don't let TERFs silence your support for trans people with accusations of sexism as those accusations are based on flawed assumptions of biological determinism. This is not a political lifestyle niche, it is an human rights issue. Its an issue of individuals having freedom from oppression as much as any anti-racist or anti-sexist fight, and we see that as a basic radical struggle.

A note to our trans comrades: Some of us are late to this fight and we apologise that it has taken us so long to see the danger that this bigoted group poses to you and the work that we're all doing as radicals and feminists and to the future that we're trying to build together.

\*Despite the Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist's declaring the term TERF as a slur, we continue to use it. We do not believe it is a slur although admit it can get used in place of one now. However the bad reputation associated with this word come from the behaviours of those that subscribe to an anti-trans way of thinking. We are using TERF here as a descriptive term to

firstly distinguish between radical feminists who are anti-trans and those who are not. We are also using it so that other people know who we are talking about as it is the most used term to describe this specific group of beliefs. We reject the innocuous sounding 'Gender Critical' as a poor attempt to minimise and hide the harm that comes from the belief system of those that invented it. We believe that, in time, when it is as unacceptable in our movements to hate people based on their gender identity as it is to hate someone based on their sexuality or race, that this term will be used to describe these people who opposed this overdue societal progress.

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