

DEBUNKING TERFS

A new Zine by

Resisting Transphobia in Edinburgh

Version 1.0 September 2023 rtie.org

What this is:

A short guide on how gender criticals operate. Ideal for understanding the language they use, their allies, and how they work.

What this is not:

A zine to help allies debunk transphobic talking points. See our previous zine for that.

HOW DO TERFS DESCRIBE THEMSELVES?

No longer radical, no longer feminist, they now typically refer to themselves as being 'gender critical'. This gender critical umbrella provides an unofficial support network that reaches from parliamentarians to right-wing anti-trans campaigners.

HOW DO THEY SUPPORT EACH OTHER?

They start from a shared core opinion that the trans community is in some way a threat to the safety of women and children.

They provide the ideology that pits trans women against cis women, either as a threat to cis women's safety, or as a competitor with them for what are seen as finite resources.

Anyone who takes this view, no matter where they stand on other feminist issues, is a candidate for positive media mentions, an air-brushing of misogyny, and even legal advice.

HOW DO THEY GET AWAY WITH IT?

By telling us that they are being 'silenced', via a compliant media, all of the time. They use words not facts, ignoring civil society when it suits.

They constantly exaggerate each other's importance, portraying each other as 'brave', 'brilliant', 'feminists', who have 'legitimate concerns', and are being subjected to 'bullying', 'erasure', 'hounding', 'intimidation', and 'witch hunts', because of their 'measured', 'gender critical', 'beliefs'.

They say they are being 'silenced', by 'aggressive', 'activists', who when not 'shrieking', their 'extreme', 'propaganda', and 'shouting', 'slogans', of 'insane', 'gender ideology', somehow manage to be 'bambis', and 'snowflakes', at the same time.

ARE TERFS A PROBLEM IN THE REAL WORLD?

Yes. They are heavily involved in lobbying and litigation in areas like health policy, social media and workplace discrimination law, always in such a way as to make life harder for trans women. This use of litigation bears close comparison with the tactics used successfully by US conservatives to erode LGBT and abortion rights in the United States over the last several decades.

Yes. They are largely silent over the issue of the institutionalised misogyny of the Met, while by putting the blame for Jimmy Savile on the BBC, they take the responsibility away from the establishment figures who supported him.

Yes. They remain silent when other parts of the LGBT community are under attack.

Yes. Because culture war is an effective way for our enemies to mobilise against us, because in a culture war the game is about what fears you can play on, what divisions you can sow or widen among sections of the working class.

In this they cooperate with a wider layer of social conservatives and with the Tories themselves, so it is not unusual to find aspects of their work being supported by right-wing, anti-abortion, misogynist groups.

DO TERFS HAVE WEAKNESSES?

Yes. They are selling fear in order to gain political influence, so any act of solidarity exposes what they say as a lie.

So an inclusive Pride with trade union banners, an act of solidarity across the LGBT community, a visit to a picket line with an LGBT flag, supporting buffer zones at an abortion clinic, an 'Everyone is welcome here' stickers in a shop window, all show them up.

They might be well funded and 'own' the media, but we own the streets.

REFERENCES

[Thatcher lobbied for Savile knighthood despite warnings](#)

[Activist linked to anti-abortion and anti-LGBT+ hate groups](#)

[BBC journalist draws parallel between trans women and Jimmy Savile](#)

[Responses to John McManus](#)

['The BBC are sleepwalking into another scandal'](#)

['Festival of Hate'](#)

[A statement from Scottish civil society on Gender Recognition Reform](#)

['Flying the paedophile colours, baby pink and baby blue.'](#)

[Sarah Everard's death was meant to be a watershed moment](#)

['A woman-harming and child-harming ideology'](#)

['Suspended from Twitter again'](#)

[Not so keen on free speech](#)

[MPs condemned for 'grim' response to mention of trans suicide](#)

['Looks like a pretty clear case of belief discrimination'](#)

[My cancellation has trapped me in one of my own sitcoms](#)

[Clapham stabbing: Two men knifed outside LGBTQ+ bar](#)

[Nazi salutes to be banned in Victoria under new laws](#)

[On NHS doctors choosing to wear rainbow flag badges](#)

[Chats in 'War Room' suggest dozens of women groomed](#)