

Sappho had a Party and...

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"Women of Ideas: Feminist Thinking for a New Era"

This feminist event is for all women who denounce the escalating violence and oppression that mark the 21st Century, who rage against the continued exclusion and silencing of women throughout the world, and who are convinced that a strong feminist response is essential for the creation of a fairer future.

Sappho gave a Party and..... The proverbial has been hitting the fan ever since

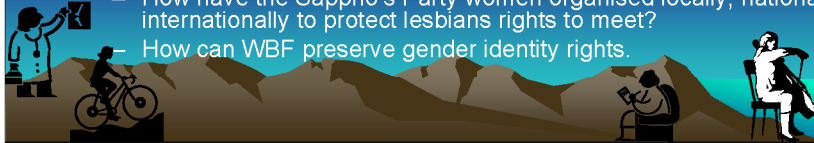
A few questions and some statements on the legal, identity and community issues arising from a lesbian-only event in South Australia and the resulting EO complaint of alleged exclusionary behaviours.



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Background and overview

- Complaints by M→CF trans against lesbian rights are occurring in Australia and across the world and consume lesbian energy and resources.
- This paper is presented
 - from the heart space where women born female and raised as girls have valid human rights to that gender identity and
 - in search of a positive way forward as allies of transpeople
 - without relinquishing lesbian gender identity rights.
- We define "lesbian" as a woman, who was identified at birth as female and who was raised as a female and who is recognised as a lesbian by a lesbian community.
- This paper will raise the following questions
 - Do lesbians have valid gender identity rights to their woman born female (WBF) identity?
 - How have the Sappho's Party women organised locally, nationally and internationally to protect lesbians rights to meet?
 - How can WBF preserve gender identity rights.



M→CF = Male to constructed female as per Janice Raymond Transsexual Empire 1979

Bare Bones

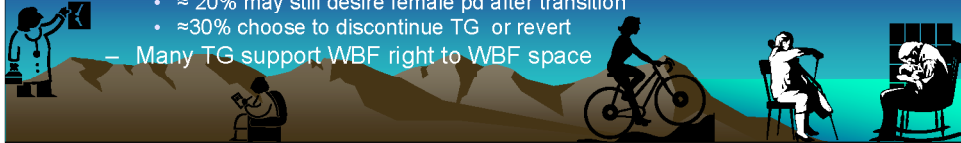
- Lesbians organised a private residential event in January 2006 and refused to allow TG in either direction to attend.
- M→CF TG complained to EO tribunal
 - Conciliation took place April 2006 and failed
 - EO now pays TG's legal costs in this case and the lesbians have to raise funds within our small community (\$5000- \$9000)
- Been a diversity of response from lesbians who attend leso feminist gatherings.
 - General feel of not confronting directly, through to wanting to fight and take a stand.
 - Other more important issues than women's/lesbian space and identity
- Two of us are preparing for Tribunal with support from a number of other lesbians and het feminists.
 - Our reasons are to defend women's space- not just a lesbian issue it is a women's issue. Women = woman born female
 - Biology is not destiny but woman born female is a part of identity
 - Global ramifications eg health budgets, education and welfare
- What medical texts call Gender Dysphoria 2-4X more frequent in males Globally - More laws protecting TG than lesbians (LEORR) research



It seems that the debates over inclusion or exclusion of M →CF's in lesbian and women's spaces highlights the contrasts between female and male socialisation. Males are socialised to expect to take up space, so although M → CF's are claiming to be women, those who demand access to women's spaces are demonstrating a very male expectation of taking space and prioritising their needs over ours. Women's socialization trains us to take care of everyone else's needs before our own. Is it any surprise then how many lesbians are concerned about the tough time M→CF's have and want to open our women's spaces to them, often prioritising M→CF wishes and criticising those lesbians who state the wish to keep our spaces for women and lesbians only.

Do lesbians have valid gender identity rights to their woman born woman identity?

- If yes - What are these rights?
 - To have some lesbian only space even if all lesbians don't want to be in that space
 - To have some women born female only space even if all women born females don't want to be in that space
 - To organise as lesbians, without having to go underground
 - To have an out and proud community, proud of our identity and able to publicly announce the existence of our community
- If no to above then do WBFs get WBF space only when TGs do not want to be present?
- Dramatic difference between M and F socialisation
- Australian population 21M so women ≥ 10.5 M
 - Lesbians 1:7 \rightarrow 1:10 \approx 1M lesbians in Australia
 - TG >24 per year,
 - \approx 20% may still desire female pd after transition
 - \approx 30% choose to discontinue TG or revert
 - Many TG support WBF right to WBF space



http://www.femininebyte.org/sapphos_party/

Building Bridges http://www.femininebyte.org/sapphos_party/m2cfspeaks.htm

In Australia possibly 10000 to 20000 intersexed people and a few hundred TG

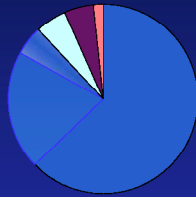
How have the Sappho's Party women organised locally, nationally and internationally to protect lesbians rights to meet?

- Researched equal opportunity cases
 - Nationally and internationally – all we can find
 - Both win or lose about TG rights to lesbian space
 - Unless a lesbian or women's org is defendant, women have not claimed a voice in the courts - usually it is a government department that is defendant in TG initiated cases
- Established LEORR
 - Online discussion group Lesbian Equal Opportunity and Rights Research Group
- Sappho's Party Website and fundraising through PayPal cheque and cash
 - http://www.femininebyte.org/sapphos_party
- Presenting and keeping the conversation going
- Inspired some legal support
 - but still need money to pay their costs

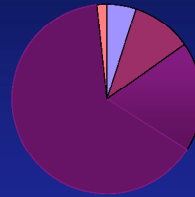


Statistics from SPI attendees

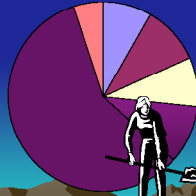
83% - essential or very important that S's P is for lesbians raised female?



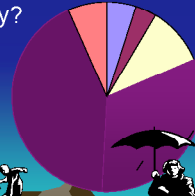
83% - said reasons for coming not fully met if open to all self-identifying women



69% - not wanted to come if open to all self-identifying women, attracted to women,



75% - do not feel adequately represented by the GLBTI, or queer community?



60 WBF answered out of about 90 attendees

How can WBF preserve our gender identity rights.

- Get the debate going at legislative level
- Organise for WBF voices as a community of interest at all EO cases
 - When global TG were attacking SPI got lots supportive emails
 - Canada, England, Michigan
 - Speak up even when it feels awkward
- Is it
 - “I feel guilty for being a feminist so must acquiesce to any one being more oppressed than me”
 - I don't want to be accused of being a man-hating lesbian and so chose to allow WBF to be disenfranchised rather than risk this attack
- Sort out in your own mind sex, gender, biology and identity
 - Do men become women? Did Michael Jackson become a white boy?
 - And if you believe that is true, please be more clear than
 - “its just because they want to”
 - “I don't want to be exclusive”
 - “I don't want to be accused of being discriminatory”
- It's fine if you don't want to be in lesbian only or WBF only space, but can you ethically and morally disenfranchise WBF because you personally don't want WBF space?



Thus paper has not attempted to address the questions, desires and rights of intersex people. I will point out that intersexed people do not automatically feel aligned with TG positions. Some writings express feelings of colonisation by TG.