

Men's sexual rights versus women's sex-based rights

WHRC Webinar, 18 April 2020

Sheila Jeffreys

Intro:

Hello Sisters! We are all here because we are concerned about the destructive impact of the transgender activist movement, which campaigns for 'gender identity' rights, is having on women's sex-based rights. I am going to talk today about where this problem came from. I shall argue that the transgender rights movement is actually a men's sexual rights movement. It is one aspect of the phenomenon that has been taking place since the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, of establishing men's sexual freedom, their freedom to exercise the male sex right.

The so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s and 70s unleashed a men's sexual liberation movement which required that women and girls service men's sexual desires. From it grew the sex industry in the form of pornography and the toleration or legalisation of all forms of prostitution. What were once called the 'sexual perversions' were also released and seen as an important aspect of men's liberation. Their practitioners were relabelled 'erotic' or sexual minorities and they set about campaigning for their rights. The practices that men's rights campaigners sought to normalise included, alongside their use of women in pornography and prostitution, sadomasochism, pedophilia and transvestism, which is now more commonly called transgenderism. A men's sexual freedom agenda is in opposition to the rights of women to be free from violence and coercion, the rights to privacy and dignity, and to the integrity of their bodies. The transgender sexual rights movement threatens the very existence of the category of women in law and social policy.

The transgender activists deny that their interest in cross-dressing is a form of sexual fetishism because this would be harmful to their endeavour. The legislators, parents, judges, wives and offspring whose support these activists need to achieve gender identity rights, are unlikely to take transvestism, a sexual interest in cross-dressing, seriously as a rights issue. But, because they

pretend to be a special kind of person, one who through the exercise of a sorry fate was given a female brain in a male body in the womb, they are now receiving support from governments, councils, charities, human rights organisations, the UN, and the medical profession in their campaign to destroy women's rights.

Sexual rights:

Do sexual rights exist? There are no UN documents which talk about sexual rights. When sexual rights are a part of rights' speech, they are generally seen as a part of women's rights and specifically women's reproductive rights. The struggle to get recognition that women's rights are human rights has been long and hard. The original UN conventions omitted the rights of women. They were based on what was important to men, voting rights, rights not to be unjustly imprisoned, the right not to be murdered by the state. This was only remedied to some extent in the 'Women's Convention' or CEDAW in 1979, The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW though, seeks to expand traditional human rights understanding to fit women in. It does not cover issues that are fundamental to women such as violence against women and reproductive rights, though much work has been done by feminists to make these issues part of human rights discourse. Reproductive rights are now defined as human rights by organisations such as Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. There is too much opposition within the Human Rights system from misogynist religious organisations both Christian and Muslim for reproductive rights such as abortion to ever have a place in a UN convention.

Sexual rights are commonly understood to be part of reproductive rights by rights bodies and in rights documents. They are seen as an aspect of health and tend to refer to women's right to the integrity of their bodies and to be protected from rape and sexual violence, unwanted childbearing and child marriage. There is no recognition of men's sexual rights as human rights in rights documents because men are not a group in need of rights protections. Women's 'sexual rights' consist of women's rights to escape and be protected from the exercise of the male sex right, or to survive its consequences as in abortion rights.

The Male Sex Right:

Men do not require protection for the male sex right because this is not under threat. Instead, there is a recognition so axiomatic, so generally accepted that it requires no mention, that men do have the right to use women and children for sexual pleasure and to treat them just as objects for their satisfaction. This is clear from the way that governments and legal systems the world over have traditionally protected and promoted men's rights to use women and girls in the sex industry. This is beginning to change, with a few countries such as Sweden, France, Norway and Ireland now accepting that prostitution is a violation of women's human rights and enacting laws that penalise the male buyers in order to undermine the industry. But in the vast majority of countries, strip clubs, brothels, escort agencies, street prostitution, online prostitution, webcam prostitution and pornography thrive and are protected by the state. The assumption underlying this is that men do have what the feminist political theorist Carole Pateman calls the 'male sex right'. To satisfy men sexually male states, or pimp states, tolerate or legalise prostitution in which women are abused in the streets or hotel rooms or trafficked to the homes of abusers, are warehoused in strip clubs and brothels in which they often also sleep and spend their whole time. In some parts of Asia there are prostitution towns in which women and their girl children spend their whole lives servicing customers.

The slavish servicing of the male sex right in wartime and in peace is so egregious that it does suggest that pimp states, which is all states that do not have comprehensive legislation to protect women against exploitation in porn and prostitution, consider that men do have a right to be sexually satisfied by having women and girls presented to them in all possible ways for their pleasure. Men presently exercise their male sex right in myriad ways which harm or destroy the lives of women and girls. The male sex right is expressed in the sexual harassment and rape that create a sexualised environment which women have to navigate with extreme care at work, at home, in the street, on transport, in places of entertainment. This constant sexual pressure which women are under is seen as 'natural', simply how men, are and women must accept it if they are not to be seen as manhaters.

In the book I am writing at the moment I am looking at the ways in which the male sex right constructs the world and women's experience of it. This goes far

beyond what may be understood as male violence. The ordinary exercise of the male sex right, commonly just called 'sex', involves men simply using women's bodies as masturbation aids whether women like it or not. The best example I have come across of this was listening to a Bangladeshi feminist, Farida Akhtar, explaining how men would come back to the hut from work at lunchtime to be fed by their wives, and would then take them out of the hut to penetrate them up against the back wall. In the UK marital rape was not a crime in UK law until 1991. Men still regularly use their wives despite their reluctance. Women's compliance is exacted by sex advice books like those of Bettina Arndt in Australia who last year won an Order of Australia Award, which tell women that they must service men for as long as those men require it. They must not, Arndt says, 'turn off the supply'. We, women, are the 'supply'.

There are numerous other ways in which the exercise of the male sex right constructs the world for women. It determines where women can go in a city, whether they can enjoy a night out, whether they have to technologise their bodies to prevent conception or seek abortion, how many children they have, the advertising that forms the backdrop of the city streets they walk down, and whether they have to live with the stress of unwanted sex or their male partner's anger. It constructs how they have to dress, the crippling shoes they have to wear and the masks they have to put on their faces. There are so many ways and I can't talk about them all today. What I do want to talk about is the new problems for women that have been unleashed since the 1960s sexual revolution and particularly since the development of the Internet and the pornography industry. This consists of the normalizing of what the sexologists, the scientists of sex, used to call the sexual perversions.

The sexual perversions:

The 'sexual perversions' represent more unusual forms of male sexual behaviour. Until the gay liberation movement of the 1970s, homosexuality was included amongst lists of the perversions but the gay rights movement was successful in getting homosexuality destigmatised and in 1973 it was removed as a psychiatric diagnosis from the DSM, the bible of US psychiatry. Homosexuality is about wanted sexual relationships between adults and does not have victims. The perversions are forms of male sexual behaviour which do have victims and have harmful effects on women's lives. Male sexuality is

constructed to be the sexuality of the dominant class, and in relation to women's oppression. Transvestism, or as it is more generally called these days, transgenderism, is the most significant in the threat it poses to women's rights in the present. In the late nineteenth century the new science of sexology began to map these forms of male sexual behaviour and give them names. Many took the form of what the scientists called fetishism i.e. concentrating sexual interest on objects that represented women such as high heeled shoes rather than on actual women. Men might then either wear large size high heeled shoes themselves or ejaculate into high heeled shoes. The objects might be related to women's bodies, such as hair. Men who stole women's hair to masturbate on, cutting off women's plaits for instance, were called capillary kleptomaniacs. Men's hair fetishism is why the vast majority of young women today have long hair which is extremely inconvenient but exciting to men.

Men who liked women to be dirty were named saliromaniacs, one version of this is paying women to mudwrestle. There was a very wide range of perversions recorded. The perversions included renifleurism in which men would gain satisfaction from smells, particularly the smell of urine. In urolagnia men get excitement from watching women urinate. There were gay forms of urolagnia too. In one case in the medical literature, a man would go into the men's toilets and get other men to urinate into his coat pockets. In coprophilia men were excited by shit and in coprophagia men seek to eat women's shit, by visiting prostituted women and eating their shit off t-spoons for instance. There are occasional media reports of men doing any or all of these things today. Usually women and girls are the objects of these practices and experience distress if not more serious forms of harm. Women do not have 'perversions' according to the sexologists, although they do not explain why. When it came to explanation, the sexologists very often said that the men's behaviour was the result of the way that their mothers having behaved wrongly towards them. They never mentioned the power relations between men and women which caused the sexual behaviour of the ruling class to be so distorted.

The normalisation of the perversions

One important tactic in the normalisation of men's sexual perversions, is changing the language. The language used by sexologists has changed

markedly over the last half century. The changes were designed to reduce stigma. The word perversion could suggest disapproval so it was replaced with sexual deviation and now paraphilia. Pedophiles became minority attracted persons.

Pedophiles were the first group of men who had previously been seen as 'perverts' to emerge demanding their sexual rights. Though the vast majority of the children who are sexually abused are girls, it is not heterosexual pedophiles that came forward to lead a movement for their rights, but gay men. The pedophile movement in the 1970s was composed of gay men. The groups that demanded abolition or reduction of the age of consent so that they could have legal sexual access to children were gay male groups like the Paedophile Information Exchange in the UK or Nambla in the US. They did not demand their own rights, however. No, they said, they were simply campaigning for the rights of children to have their own sexuality which would include wanting to be penetrated by middle-aged men. The pedophiles campaigned, they said, for children's sexuality rights!!! They were defeated at that time, particularly by radical feminists. I was in a group in the late 70s which fought to keep the age of consent. They have started campaigning again in recent years as minority attracted persons. They use many of the old arguments but also claim to be an oppressed group who are made very unhappy by social stigma and the difficulty of coming out to their families and friends. They are still predominantly gay. Heterosexual pedophiles who want access to girl children do not campaign in this way.

It is feminists who have fought to place limits on men's demands for the male sex right to be extended. We have had to fight the Left. In the 1970s the pedophile groups were supported by mainstream gay organisations and publications in the UK. But also, the Paedophile Information Exchange was affiliated to the National Council for Civil Liberties, which is now Liberty, the main rights organisation in the UK, for several years without any objections. In the early 1980s a number of members of PIE were prosecuted for sexual acts with children and the group PIE was disbanded in 1983. The pedophile movement was as acceptable in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the transgender rights movement is today. Then, as now, feminists opposed the men's demands and the Left supported them. There are fascinating similarities.

The new movement of minority attracted persons is seeking to gain recognition of pedophilia as a sexual orientation. By saying that they have a sexual orientation like homosexuals, pedophiles imply that they cannot help themselves and demand sympathy as an oppressed sexual minority. In the 1990s another group of those who would once have been called perverts, began to campaign for their rights and they are the transvestites.

The transgender rights movement:

The transgender rights movement was created in the 1990s by heterosexual men who are transvestites. These heterosexual men are the force behind this movement and constitute the vast majority of those involved. I will not consider today the women or the gay men who transgender but am happy to answer questions about how they fit in. In the early part of the twentieth century the scientists said that these men simply had the sexual fetish of transvestism or cross-dressing. They did not suggest that they could change sex. In the mid century the technologies that enabled the scientists to change people's bodies were developed, plastic surgery in particular. They began to create what they called transsexuals, and to see these men as a different category from the ordinary transvestites because they wanted to impersonate women all the time instead of just occasionally. To justify this, they developed the concept of gender identity disorder.

The name change

The diagnosis of gender identity disorder entered the DSM, the US Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, in 1980. Some saw it as a substitute for homosexuality which was removed from the DSM in 1973. The transgender activists of the new transgender rights movement did not like the fact that their sexual interests were called a disorder and applied pressure to get the name of the condition changed, in 2013, to 'gender dysphoria. Transvestic fetishism remains. There are now two diagnoses, men who are sexually excited to wear women's clothes, transvestic fetishists, and men with 'gender dysphoria' which supposedly represents a more permanent condition which may, the scientists acknowledge, develop from transvestic disorder. Men can graduate into thinking they must really be women after years of cross-dressing.

The history of the changes in the way in which transgenderism has been understood and described in the DSM and sexological literature is fascinating and shows the degree of pressure that the transgender rights movement has been bringing to bear. Because the literature is technical, and not read by many feminists, we have not been able to observe how the ground has moved under our feet until recently when the new confidence of cross-dressers has allowed them to step out of medical textbooks and into our toilets. The new confidence came from the way that the pornography industry normalised their fantasies and the Internet enabled them to create like-minded support groups and communities. Pornography has supercharged many of men's perversions, furies, nappy fetishism, pedophilia, sadomasochism and transgenderism. There are separate and profitable porn niches for all the perversions.

Though most of the medical profession now seems to accept that there can be such a thing as an innate but misplaced gender identity, many have resisted this idea and continue to see all the heterosexual men who cross-dress as sexually motivated, a problem they call autogynephilia, or love of the woman in themselves. They do not entertain the idea that their patients can really change their gender or sex. This group including Ray Blanchard, Michael Bailey and Anne Lawrence, who is a cross-dressing man, maintain the understanding that transgenderism is not about an essence of femininity, but sexual, and they use the term autogynephilia to explain this. On the basis of having studied and treated these men and collecting their fantasies and testimonies, they say that they seek masochistic sexual excitement by engaging in imitations of women in a variety of ways.

One group of autogynephiles is interested only in wearing what they see as women's clothes. They might only want to wear women's underwear, probably frilly and uncomfortable, under their work suits, or they may want to walk out in public looking like a porn star. Some of this group will have a past as teenagers when they were snowdroppers, meaning that they stole women's underwear from washing lines to masturbate in or on. Another group likes to engage in what practitioners see as women's activities. Some like to knit, for instance. Others in this group will visit prostituted women and demand to be 'forced' to do the housework while dressed in a pornographic French maid's costume. These men will not do any housework in their own homes though,

because they see it as degraded women's work. Another group of autogynephiles seeks to emulate women's biology. These men like to pretend to menstruate by using pads and red ink, or by seeking used tampons in the women's toilets and stuffing them up their bottoms. Others wear rubber female body parts, either just a vulva or a whole-body suit in which they will stand in front of a mirror and fondle their rubber breasts, for instance. The most dedicated seek permanent physical alteration by using hormones or having amputations, and these are the ones who would once have been called transsexuals. Almost without exception these men seek to censor any suggestion that they are doing these things for sexual reasons because that might inhibit the sympathy of the public and restrict their freedom.

Men who transgender are likely to have other sexual perversions as well, called co-paraphilias. These may include a clearly related paraphilia called apotemnophilia, or Body Identity Integrity Disorder, in which men are excited by the idea of being amputees and may seek to have legs amputated. One man who calls himself Chloe Jennings-White, real name Clive, has a female gender identity but also a paraplegic identity. He is very fit and a mountain climber but wants to find a doctor to break his back so that he can be paralysed and experience the excitement of being 'transabled', as he calls it. He presents as a woman in a wheelchair but is in fact an able-bodied man. The co-paraphilias may include nappy fetishism in which men engage in what they call age regression and may imitate babies in nappies and even demand that their women university lecturers or social workers change their soiled nappies.

The threat to women's sex-based rights:

The transgender rights movement has campaigned since the 1990s for their right to the protection of the law for the expression of their gender identities. Their demands have gradually escalated. International bodies, national legislatures and many local governments and organisations have been overwhelmed by the huge money and influence of the movement's sponsors. These include the pharmaceutical companies that profit from putting people, often from childhood, on their drugs for life, and billionaire cross-dressing philanthropists. The transgender activists demand that they should be able to be recognised as women in law and have access to all the spaces, sports, opportunities that have been allocated to women to alleviate the severe disadvantage and violence that women suffer under male domination.

Women's rights are based on biological sex, not gender. The Declaration explains the ways in which including men with 'gender identities' in the category of women undermines or overturns the rights that CEDAW and subsequent international documents have assigned to women based not upon gender, but biological sex. All of these are explained in some detail in the document, so I will give only a couple of examples here. Where once transvestites would have quietly masturbated into high heeled shoes or dressed up in frilly underwear at special weekends away or attended clubs where they could 'dress' in private, they now feel entitled to pretend to be women in women's spaces. They get particular sexual satisfaction from being 'recognised' as women, so we are all conscripted into being unwilling bit players in these men's sexual fantasies. They might seek to shake a woman's hand in the women's toilets, for instance, and imagine that she sees them as female. They get naked in women's changing rooms and compete on women's sports teams. They do all this with the backing of large swathes of the Left, of governments, local councils, rights organisations. They have been much more successful even than the pedophiles were back in the 1970s but the fightback is well underway.

The fightback:

It is feminists who have fought the way in which exercise of the male sex right harms women and children. We have fought against rape, prostitution, pornography, pedophilia and sadomasochism. We have a new fight on our hands against the transgender rights movement. In this fight we find ourselves up against men's fury at the idea that we might try to limit their freedoms, particularly their sexual freedom. We are struggling to get the weight of male sexual oppression off our backs and can seem to always be on the backfoot. But we have had some considerable successes and, in this struggle too, we are gradually making ground. It would be good to be able to concentrate instead on building women's community and women's culture, creating real alternatives for women and girls as we did back at the time of the Women's Liberation Movement. That time will come again, but first we have to extirpate the idea that men have sexual rights and can require recognition of their sexual fantasies and seek to inhabit and thereby abolish women's rights as human rights.