

# Red Line April 25: TRANS!

April 25, 2022

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We put on this show to bring political clarity and a better understanding - and to ask some of the questions that many socialists and left-wingers feel afraid to.

- We're hearing from a transgender woman and two gender fluid young people about their journeys and experiences
- We're exploring the diverse anthropology of gender fluidity with the help of Dr Camilla Power
- We're discussing with Esther Giles and Sheeren Benjamin of the University of Edinburgh the need for free speech, why some radical feminists emphasise the difference between gender and the question of 'single sex spaces'
- Ray Goodspeed (author, Left Horizons) is giving an overview of the current legal, political and social situation for trans people.
- LGBT veteran Teddy Brown is looking at the many problems and aspects to conversion therapy

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9pwiS9Tv3Q>

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## Clip Reel

**Andrew Gold:** Let's go for this. Are trans women women?

**Guest:** No.

**Sky News Clips:** Trans people are very, very scared.

Having to constantly fight to be who you are.

I've had abuse for what I do.

**Interviewer:** You're on record as saying you can't cut your dick off and be a woman.

**YouTuber:** Jermaine Greer may have been an incredible, you know, feminist at the time making groundbreaking, you know, waves of change. However, her views on trans people is just so outdated and so awful that she really shouldn't be given a platform?

**Germaine Greer:** For fucks sake, it is simply not true that intersexual people suffer in a way that other people don't suffer.

**News presenter:** Gender has become a battleground.

**Marcus Evans:** This is political belief and ideology over rational, scientific argument.

**Interviewee:** These radical feminists, they'd lost the plot.

**Jordan Petersen:** Free speech. mechanism by which we keep our society functioning.

**Student:** There have been multiple, multiple recorded instances of trans people killing themselves because they are not being integrated into society.

**Trans kid:** If I couldn't live my life as a male or have the body of a male, I honestly don't think I'd be around by the age of 20, 30.

## Introduction

**Jackie Walker:** Good evening, and it's Monday at 7 o'clock and it's Jackie Walker with Redline TV. And today we're going to be looking at trans. Now let's just, before we start, just begin by saying that I think it's very likely that some of the things we'll say on the programme or some of the things other people will say will offend some people. And it's also likely that some people might make mistakes. Now the issue is here, the only way we're going to learn to discuss is by listening and sometimes allowing people to make mistakes and learn. Because the atmosphere at the moment on talking about trans just feels so dangerous. I mean, this is the first time we've ever had a program where we've had complaints before the program has even run. Now, this is about trans, as I said, but it's not just going to be solely about trans because we wanted to have some kind of opportunity for the opposing views to be put forward. And this is something that I feel very strongly about, the issue of identity, partly, of course, because of my own experience of race and racism and the way identity has been used, and also about the levels of abuse that there's been recently. So I'm hoping that we can actually talk to each other in a reasonable way. In terms of the chat, the chat is going to be open. If there's any abuse or unpleasantness, there will be a one warning for people. If that is not listened to, then you might well be removed if the chat becomes too offensive and too difficult for us to deal with. We'll just turn the chat off. Having said that, We've been looking forward to this programme very much.

**Mike Cowley:** Yes, very much. It's been a difficult one, as you said, to assemble. And it's a real testament to the determination of red lines that we have at Sermal Day, what I think will be a fantastic programme. My experience is a mediated experience. as a cis straight man limited to two areas of experience. One, which trans comrades in the civic and labour movement organisations, but more immediately and I guess kind of every day and routinely. My students have been working as a trade union rep and a further education college lecturer for around 20 years and there's two kind of key lessons that I've taken away. on what is a steep learning curve. And I'm hoping again as well as to speak and obviously to listen. My first kind of key lesson is about the humanity of my students. My students expect me and my colleagues to acknowledge their humanity. particularly within a public service environment, reciprocal is invisible.

**Jackie Walker:** Graham, I think you wanted to add something more to the introductory conversation.

**Graham Bash:** The Labour Representation Committee, which has historically hosted Labour briefing has got a clear view on this past of its 2019 AGM. I cannot read out the whole of the resolution because it would take too long. But it starts by saying this, the AGM notes that CUC Congress has supported the reform of the Gender Recognition Act to reduce the humiliating and bureaucratic obstacles that trans people are forced to go through to live as themselves and to give rights to gender non-binary people. It notes the Labour leader at the time, Jeremy Corbyn and the Equalities Shadow Minister Dawn Butler and the LGBT Labour have robustly and publicly supported the view. The LRC AGM believes the position taken by the TUC and the Labour leadership at the time is correct. that the achievement of rights by one group does not mean the reduction of rights to another, and that the greater visibility and empowerment of trans and non-binary people is a blow to the gender stereotypes that feminism abhors. And he asked the briefing editorial board to carry material along those lines. And the briefing editorial board did, but not exclusively, and it did allow debate from those who didn't follow that position.

**Jackie Walker:** Thank you very much. Tina.

**Tina:** When I heard that position, I thought, sounds all right, but it's actually, I think there might be room for improvement because clearly there are some differences, aren't there? is a degree of conflict between trans rights and women's rights as expressed on the left, which is of course what our program is about. And I think we have to start from a position of trying to understand each other and there are a lot of problems at the moment on the left with this issue, which is of course what our show is about. being a woman and having been involved in some struggles and having a small child, et cetera, you really do understand what sexism is in society and how much we still have to fight for to achieve anything close to equality in today's society. So I do feel, I'm not a feminist, I wouldn't describe myself as a feminist, but I very much feel that the fight for women's rights is hugely important It's an ongoing, hugely important fight. But there is a, I think there is a problem we're getting to, and we're getting to this show is where these conflicts, these interests conflict or seem to conflict. And, you know, that has pitted, I think, groups against each other who perhaps should be natural allies, actually, transgender people and women both suffer immensely in this society from sexism. But they do, they do, they're pitted against each other to a degree I think which has become quite unhealthy and we are trying to help overcome that. Of course, in the lead up to that show I wondered if we made it worse actually, but we are coming from a genuine place of trying to bring people together because sometimes the arguments I think have suffered on both sides. And there are, there's just two questions I think that while I was researching the subject really, made me stumble and I thought, is this actually correct? Do radical feminists really deny trans people the right to exist? Which is what I've been told, you know, I've been accused of facilitating that by having people on the show that are critical. Do they really deny trans people

the right to exist? And on the other side, are trans women really a danger to women in single sex spaces? Are they really a danger to children? I think there are arguments that are being pitted and brought to one sentence, are trans women women or not? I don't think these things are very helpful at all and we need to take a step back. and see where actually our interests perhaps can be united in the fight towards socialism, which is clearly really what we're all about, isn't it?

**Jackie Walker:** Absolutely. But I'm also interested in this whole issue of self-identification and conversion therapy and asking a whole load of questions myself, things I don't know.

## Trans Experience

**Patricia:** Wasn't that like stereotypical like, always felt that like it should have been a girl or whatever. I just felt weird and I didn't have a way to articulate it. When I was growing up, you wouldn't have like LGBT inclusive education in school or I didn't really have a way to articulate what I was feeling. I only really got that vocabulary when I was older, 19 or 20.

**Jess:** I think I first started to discover these sorts of feelings. I was maybe about 7 or 8 years old. That was the first time I sort of started going I feel a bit different to others when you're sort of exploring those first wee romantic feelings in primary school. I was not around anyone that was queer, so I didn't even know that was an option. I also went to quite a strict Catholic school. That didn't help at all. It wasn't until I was about 15 though that I started finding the labels for the things that I was feeling.

**Taighe:** When I was growing up, I mean, I identified as a girl at the time and eventually came out as a lesbian. And so it's kind of just being able to find labels that are accessible at the time and you just kind of fit yourself into that box because there's not that much information, especially for me growing up. I grew up in like a Muslim country. It was just very taboo. And I did go to an international school, but even then there are norms in place that make it difficult for you to even be able to investigate this kind of. part of yourself. So then when I kind of came into middle and high school and I realized, I'm deviating from the norm, like I'm not conforming, was only then I realized, maybe something is wrong with me and I'm doing something wrong.

**Jess:** Coming from a black family, my parents weren't used to seeing this sort of thing. There's definitely a lot of specific LGBT plus stigma in the black community. because we've had to fight for so many things, as I'm sure you can imagine, that are seen as necessary. Something like gender or sexuality isn't seen as unnecessary struggle. My dad was very, very accepting. He had no idea what I was on about, quite honestly. And by that point, I had already stopped speaking to my mum. It's not a struggle that we are choosing. It is just as much of A necessary struggle as sort of institutionalised racism. It's something real that we have to go through and we have to deal with.

**Taighe:** Gender is such a construct and to even put labels on it is still a way to conform. Right now, I would say I'm a binary trans man, even though I personally know that my gender is more. it's more than that. But for ease, that's just what I said.

**Jess:** When I was younger, so I mean, when the feelings first started being recognised, I didn't have any words for anything that I was feeling. I just knew that I was different. And then into my sort of early to mid-teenage years, I was on Tumblr a lot. So I got a lot of my vocabulary from there. I was quite open about my sexuality from around around the age of 15, I first came out as bisexual. Anytime anyone called me a woman or a girl, it just didn't feel right. It felt like I just wanted to crawl out of my own skin.

**Patricia:** So I got referred to a gender identity clinic and these are like the only places you can really get at trans healthcare unless you want to pee through the nose for it. They're terrible. They're underfunded. The care you get is very patient hostile. There's like a lot of stuff in the media about how they're, you know, like they're having to get medication like sweets or whatever. If you speak to anyone who's used a gender identity clinic, that's not going to be their experience. their experience is going to be speaking to a doctor and a psychiatrist who basically don't believe them. Quite a few of the people who work in the field of trans healthcare just don't seem to like transgender people. It feels very like confrontational, which isn't. really what you want from health care. They're not going to hold your hand. They're not going to tell you like what treatments you can access. They keep very quiet about what they actually offer you. I had to like look up the official NHS care guideline, see what their actual treatment pathways are. Basically like ask them in an appointment if they could refer me to stuff because they weren't bringing that up organically. You didn't have to take on what's essentially like a second job trying to access the health care that's supposedly been put there to help you.

**Jess:** So I played about with terms like bi-gender, where maybe I felt like I was 2 genders, like part girl and part something else. And I finally came out as agender. I guess non-binary, femme, but personally when it comes to everything, I love the word queer. I know some people in the LGBT plus community don't love that word or they see it as a slur, but I've personally reclaimed it. I love being queer and love the scope to become anything basically.

**Taighe:** To have a society regardless of gender, regardless of sexuality to just I mean, we're just like little communists, so we just want everybody to kind of coexist and for that to not be a factor and there's still so much going on in the world and so much, aggression towards people like us.

**Jess:** Older culture, there were a lot of ideas surrounding gender that there was a lot more scope for that sort of thing. And I definitely feel like our generation definitely becoming educated. They are starting to realise that you don't have to be confined to these things. The idea of the gender binary isn't something that appears in a lot of indigenous cultures. I think that people will sort of go back to realising that some

people, especially if you've had to transition physically, it can definitely feel important, but that importance is sort of imposed on you by society. The fact that you were never allowed to just be you and exist and you had to come out and do all of this stuff to sort of prove yourself. I think that the world should just be ready to accept you with open arms just as you are and see you on to who you want to become.

## Anthropology of Gender Fluidity

**Jackie Walker:** Wow. Communists. Yeah, Well, we're going to have a look at that. And, you know, for me, even thinking about this programme, has been quite a journey because I've had to research and really think about all sorts of things that I didn't know about before. And one of the things was about the history of trans, because I thought that maybe one of the reasons that there was such conflict being set up is that this was all relatively new. But of course, when I went back, I actually saw all sorts of pictures of people going back to Victorian times, even during slavery and before. And then, and I know it's a completely different situation, when I started looking at what we call traditional societies, I found an even more different construction of what gender is. And shall we show one of these little clips? And I'm sure a lot of this one about the two-spirit people.

**Two Spirit Documentary Clip:** And Wiwa, in many ways, was an exceptional *klamana* or *bardache*, and stood out in most of the traits or skills associated with *bardaches* in Zuni culture. He was an accomplished artist, an expert in a variety of Zuni religious lore. He participated in the male *Kachina* society, which are the masked dancers. And at the same time, he did domestic work and he was an expert potter and weaver. And when they buried him, they prepared the body in the normal way and they dressed him in his normal female clothes, but they also put male cotton trousers over his legs. so that he had both male and female clothes on. Nobody at Zuni ever forgot that *Wewa* was a man. And when they were buried, they recognized that he started out as a man. At the same time, he was buried with the symbols that he acquired based on the preference for the activities that he wanted to do. And that it also has to do with the Zuni ideas about the raw and the cooked. And those are words. *Akhna* and *chapin* that the Zunis actually use, raw and cooked, to sort of categorize a whole variety of distinctions in their world. And one of those distinctions is between the person who is socialized as a Zuni and the person who is not, including young people and newborn infants who are considered raw. When they go through life and they go through religious initiation ceremonies, they become cooked, cooked people. When you die, you become a raw person again. So when *Ouiva* died as a raw person, he was male. That's how we started out. So that was recognized. As a cooked person, he combined that with female activity. So they buried him with both clothes and then they put him on the male side of the cemetery to acknowledge that he was raw. He

was returning to the spirit world. which doesn't have fixed forms, including male or female forms that are necessarily fixed.

**Jackie Walker:** So then I just thought, okay, I'm going to need to find out more about this because it was opening up a completely another world to me. So I went and had a conversation with the wonderful anthropologist Camilla. And I'm going to show you now her take Thank you, Camilla, for agreeing to come on to the show. Help me unpick this. What's going on in different cultures where you see sexual identities being played with, being changed, being changed back again? What is this that's going on?

**Camilla Power:** Yeah, well, I mean, if you look at cultures all around the world, Gender identity just is very fluid and it comes about through ritual, really primarily, through initiation ritual, very strongly, but also through rituals like masquerade, all kinds of ways and means of getting the community in touch with the ancestors. And it just seems to be that gender in a very fluid state, very dynamic state of combining aspects of both sexes is the most powerful expression of reaching the other world, of reaching the ancestors. Our culture is completely peculiar in its rigidity, in its expectation of masculine over feminine and superior to inferiority. This is just unusual. And of course, unfortunately, as Christianity has gone storming around the world as the handmaiden of colonialism and imperialism, it's imposed that rigidity onto other cultures and it couldn't deal with and it attacked the rituals and the forms, the variable forms of gender all over the world. However, there's still many areas where that variability and fluidity remains and thrives. most especially areas like Carnival. Carnival is like a home, a matrix for fluid gender identity.

**Jackie Walker:** It's like a leftover bit of it, isn't it? And what I was really fascinated about, this came from a number of the trans people that we were talking to, that what they didn't want was to be shut into the sort of binary boundaries of what we were. And I felt that was a very liberating idea.

**Camilla Power:** We find again and again cultures all around the world. I specialize with African traditions of masquerade and initiation of it. People who are priests or shamans or diviners, they have this fusion identity or non-binary conforming identity that travels between one sex and another. This is seen as high status, sacred, privileged access to the sacred. And it's it is directly challenging to any kind of patriarchal hierarchy. So, if we think, if we're revolutionary socialists and we think, who do we have solidarity with? Do we have solidarity with people who are challenging and are in the forefront to challenge the patriarchal hierarchy. Well, I mean, it must be so. those people are in vanguard with their struggles of identity and their struggles to find space and to find validation. in that situation because for sure that sort of fluid gender identity is going to be challenging patriarchy. It's just inevitable. And you can see it in traditions like carnival. That is a space, a matrix, gay identities, trans identities. It's just, it's this wonderful plurality of bodies. Medieval carnival was this a very powerful force of popular uprising. People who don't know about it, I'd just recommend to go to Mikhail Bakhtin's work, *Rabelais and His World*, which is just this wonderful study of a medieval carnival. is ritually scheduled popular uprising. If

you went to Carnival, you went with one body and you went through Carnival and became all kinds of other bodies. If you went as old, you became young. If you went as high born, you became low. If you went as male, you became females. All those bodies just connected up. It's about connection, it's about linkage, it's about creating this plurality and diversity. That is something to draw on, to be taught that This is a power to us. It's a power to the community. And we should think about how to find that ritual matrix. You know, there's such an individualism in our culture, whereas that process really needs a socialization. It needs to be brought to wider community and integrated in wider community. The issues of self-identity, of gender recognition, in my view as an anthropologist, some such process as that to give What a wonderful idea.

**Jackie Walker:** It strikes me as being such a liberating thought. Now, we have become more and more defensive of our identities because that's what capitalism does. It separates us into these groups of I'm black, I'm a woman, I'm disabled, I'm whatever it is I am. When we look at Marx and when we think about socialism and even when we just basically think of being happy, that the way we get to happiness is to not to have those barriers. What we're seeking for is not to have to care if we're male or female or black or white. And yet somehow many on the left have done this, got entrapped into this building up, this competition between our identities instead of seeking that fluidity. What would you say would be the primary thing that your work looking at traditional cultures would say for all of us in terms of this debate?

**Camilla Power:** I mean it's not something that revolutionary socialists think of, but it's the recreation of something that's sacred. And we so desperately need it for the plight of the planet. Today we do. But the forms of sacredness, we just need to really throw out all this hierarchical top down. The forms of sacredness come from absolute enacted rebellion. The theatre, the performance in these gender rituals, they're funny, they're creative, they're transformative, they're beautiful, they're aesthetic experiences as well as being an enchantment. of various kinds because magic is happening, magic is being performed, people are transforming. And in this beautiful sort of social interactive web of transformation, it's this incredible gender fluidity in experience they have always been in the heart of that. They've been in like a sort of masters and mistresses of ceremony in the heart of the movement between worlds. And somehow what capitalism has done is disenchant our world so utterly that we can hardly, that we can we can imagine the end of the planet before we can imagine the end of capitalism. And this is the terrifying thing. That magic, with learning from and support to the experience of people who are really in that sort of gender struggle, that can be recovered.

**Jackie Walker:** What absolutely delicious thought that we could transform this conflict into something of mutual joy. Thank you very much, Camilla. Never looked at Carnival like that. Isn't it wonderful from Dr. Camilla Power? And I notice actually in the chat, people are not really understanding what she's saying. When she's talking about the sacred, she's not talking about religion as we know it. And she's not just

talking about Africa. She's talking about almost, as far as I could see it, all traditional cultures.

## Legal Discussion

So from there, I went and I had a discussion with Theodore Brown, who's a very well known black, gay activist. And what we were talking about was this issue about conversion therapy. And I'm sure some of you know that the recent conference which was talking about conversion therapy ended in quite a surprising way.

We wanted to talk to you about this A to Be Me conference. Could you tell us something about what it was about?

**Theodore Brown:** It was supposed to be part of the government's LGBT strategy in which they were going to look at all the inequalities that exist between the heterosexual or cis gendered people and gay people and queer people of all kinds. It was due to be launched in the end of June, the start of August, but collapsed when Johnson revealed that he was going to allow conversion therapy to continue to be used against transgender people.

**Jackie Walker:** Can you explain just briefly what is conversion therapy?

**Theodore Brown:** Conversion therapy is a procedure whereby spiritual, psychological or emotional techniques are used to try to change someone's sexual orientation or their gender identity. Up till now, back in 2018, Johnson promised that he would ensure that conversion therapy was made illegal if used against lesbians or gay people or bisexual people.

**Jackie Walker:** So why do you think trans people were excluded?

**Theodore Brown:** Part of the complication is that a number of young people before puberty were choosing to change their gender and it was considered inappropriate for people before their teenage years to decide what their gender was. because of extra complications of them trying to use hormone therapy in order to efficiently adopt the gender that they wanted.

**Jackie Walker:** So why didn't they just say, you can't do conversion therapy after 16 or something?

**Theodore Brown:** The majority of people, including Stonewall, consider it was really Johnson's attempt to undermine the whole issue of banning conversion therapy, partly because he promised to do something back in 2018. And absolutely nothing has been done in the four years since.

**Jackie Walker:** And was there solidarity across the gay, non-binary, trans community about how this was dealt with?

**Theodore Brown:** Yes, Several 100 organisations withdrew their applications. And in fact, a number of people were very surprised that Stonewall also withdrew, partly because Stonewall received some of its funding from the government, but also because

it was only five years ago that Stonewall decided to include trans people under the umbrella of LGBT people that needed protection.

**Jackie Walker:** What led to that change in Stonewall?

**Theodore Brown:** Well, there's pressure from the gay organisations and lesbian organizations that trans people would be considered included in the queer community. This was brought to a head by the formation of an organization called LGB Alliance, who recently in the last two years gained charity status, which is being challenged by various organizations, argue that the existence of trans people undermines the rights of lesbian and gay people. They have become increasingly powerful and the threat that they pose to the rest of the community encourage people to work together. And when this threat by Johnson became apparent, People bonded together and said collectively, they were not going to attend the safe to be me if transgender people were not going to be included under the umbrella of that protection. There was a very crucial case recently of a woman who trans to male, and she brought a case against the medical practitioners who had helped her transition. accusing them of manipulating her and not acknowledging that she was underage. She won the case and that was central to the argument of the government and the Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, that certainly people under the age of 18 should not be protected from conversion therapy.

**Jackie Walker:** How do you think this is then going to go forward? I mean, are there any moves since this has happened in the gay community?

**Theodore Brown:** Everyone's waiting to find out what actually happens as a result. The Safe to Be Me conference was supposed to be a linchpin of the government moving forward with its strategy. We're just waiting to see what the next announcement is going to be.

**Jackie Walker:** It's very fast moving. issue, I think, Tilly, but thank you for being with us now.

**Tina:** That was interesting. Yes, I think there's an issue around conversion therapy, what it includes and what it doesn't. I think there's a bit of confusion about it, but certainly the government seems to be in a lot of confusion itself. I've spoken to Ray Goodspeed, who's an author of Left Horizons. We came across his articles on the issue of trans and gender. Welcome to Ray Goodspeed. You've written two very informative articles, we thought, on the issue of trans people in left horizons. Thank you very much. Actually a gay man who has changed his view on the issue of trans rights.

**Ray Goodspeed:** Well, I changed my view to some degree. I was never anti-trans, but I certainly shared many of the of the very commonly expressed concerns that people have about the question of women's spaces and definitions and the scientific, the dialectical materialist kind of idea of what science. What I discovered actually by talking to both sides is that the anti-trans side is mainly, their objections are kind of philosophical. They start with a philosophical position, then look for examples to support them. Whereas my real interest is the daily lives of trans people how they live their life, what they want to do, go shopping, try on some clothes, go for a wee, go to work, go to the toilet, come home, watch telly. not be just not be humiliated in public.

**Tina:** So could you describe perhaps what is actually involved? Because I don't think lots of people know that if you're, a 16 year old in school and you're thinking there's something, this doesn't feel right, I don't feel right in my body. What's involved with this process? You read some of the papers and you think you just, you know, you get medication, you get surgery offered like that. What's actually involved?

**Ray Goodspeed:** Well, there's three stages really to a transition and not everybody, not every trans person goes through all all three. Certainly under 16, if they transition at all, it's social transition. They change their name, their hairstyle, their clothes. They might try and change the picture of their voice. Over 16, but actually in practice much later, you can get actual hormone therapy, which is not the same as puberty problems, but hormone therapy, which can actually change secondary sexual characteristics. And then ultimately there's surgical interventions, which to varying degrees, which trans people have varying wish to have done. The biggest problem for trans people actually is the enormous weightiness. The idea that you can just somehow pop along to the doctor, go to a gender clinic the next week and get some hormones and get some surgery booked in is just so ridiculous because the waiting times for the first appointment is 2 years or more now. And then sometimes you wait another two years for the second appointment. So, you know, Then to get hormones, you have to go through endocrinologists and they have to give their consent. It's like a very long and evolved process. I think about 1% of the population are trans. I think not all of them are out. So in terms of out trans people, I think probably about one out of every 200 people. And of course, not all trans people have dysphoria and you don't need dysphoria as such, but the vast majority of trans people have dysphoria to some degree. and transitioning helps to relieve that dysphoria. It doesn't make you a woman or a man by transitioning. You're already that as an internal thing. What it does, it gives you... the ability to pass more in society, to be more identified and get respect in that gender in wider society. And it stops you from looking like the person you don't want to be.

**Tina:** What about the issue of puberty blockers then? When can you get them?

**Ray Goodspeed:** By no means the majority of people who go to gender clinics actually get puberty blockers. It's a very much minority thing. And they're overwhelmingly given, I mean, they're overwhelmingly given to people aged like 14, 15, 16. And it's prescribed extreme cases of dysphoria where you're trying to alleviate the distress of a particular trans youth. It just gives them a breathing space. It stops them from developing secondary characteristics because they may already have socially transitioned in school. They're reversible. Once you stop taking them, then your puberty kicks in. Of course, with every medicine, there are some side effects. Medical consensus demonstrates a hugely beneficial effect in some cases of some trans young people of taking this stuff, weighed against some of the side effects.

**Tina:** The current disagreements between some radical feminists and trans activists tends to be going back to 2017, I believe, when the government proposed that a change

to the Gender Recognition Act and there should be self-certification. Can you describe this issue a little bit?

**Ray Goodspeed:** The gender recognition certificates are purely to regulate a trans person's interface, if you like, with some aspects of the state. So it means you can change your birth certificate, which means you can then get married as a woman, you can then, or man, depending on which way you go. It enables you to sort out your pension, and marriage and that kind of legalistic stuff. Most trans people don't have one. There's only 4,000 been issued since 2004, which is when they started. It's been conflated with the self-ID issue, the idea that, oh, well, this is a new assault. If anyone can suddenly just decide they're a man or a woman, that's going to give a whole new layer of risk. And of course, nothing of the kind, because no one is ever asked for a gender recognition certificate before they go into a lady's toilet. No one's ever, there's nobody on the door of a changing of remarks in Spencer saying, please can I see your GRC? And if there were, by the way, you would have masculine looking cis women. pinched at the door just to check, are you really a woman or have you got your certificate? Let's see, prove it. Even women's refugees, even prisons, when they're deciding where to send someone, have not used the gender recognition certificates as like the absolute line. So actually the change to GRA would have no effect on women's spaces at all. That's just so bizarre about this whole debate.

**Tina:** You're actually in favour of counselling though, aren't you, for trans people?

**Jackie Walker:** They should have counselling.

**Tina:** I mean, not all.

**Ray Goodspeed:** Trans people need counselling. Some trans people just know they're trans and that's fine and they can get on with it and they can live their life to whatever they want. However, I think a lot of young people, especially and older people, don't answer absolutely sure. They come to the whole issue with their own kind of questions and doubts and the need to talk it through with a professional. who's talked to other trans people. So it's beneficial, I think, in the main for people to have this decent discussion. Of course, if you're talking about actual medical intervention, then of course there is a duty of care before somebody gets irreversible medical treatment to make sure that they're sure that they're not doing something lightly or like-mindedly, particularly if they're younger. I think you do need to make sure that people aren't going to take an irrevocable step that they later regret. It's in no one's interest to have loads of people making a mistake and then detransitioning. It just, it's a bad look for the entire trans community anyway. You see a lot of statistics result 70% of young people change their mind and then they turn out not going, well, fine. Of course it's true that you get 5 year olds who play with dolls or they're very sort of tomboyish and then by puberty they suddenly bloom, so to speak, and become more fit in more with their biological kind of gender, as it were. That's not a detransition. You can't say, oh, a five-year-old who thinks he might be a girl and then he changes mind. That's not detransitioning. Detransitioning is when you go to a clinic, you declare yourself trans, you live as trans. It's A persistent feeling through puberty and adolescence.

And then you perhaps take some sort of medical intervention and then you desist. Of those people, it's probably about 1%, 1% of people detransition. And of those, there's some research that suggests that more than half of them are people who actually still consider themselves to be trans but don't get enough social support or family support and they think twice and they delay their transition and sometimes after say 10 years when they're living more independently or have moved to a different state they come back and complete their transition. Of course anyone who makes a mistake and take surgical surgery or hormones and indeed transition, that's a tragedy. That's a massive personal tragedy and it's in everyone's interests to prevent that from happening. We want more counselling, not less of it.

**Tina:** Getting to the issue of being trans, nurture, nature, bit of both, similar to the gay issue, isn't it?

**Ray Goodspeed:** Well, it is. You said that. I mean, can I just hit on the head 1 myth? Trans people do not deny the reality of biological sex. I mean, certainly The issue of biological sex is a lot more complicated at the margins than people ever thought it was. In general terms, there are most people fit into two biological sexes, and we all know what that means. Trans people are more aware of those differences than anybody else in the world because they obsess about them. But also, the medical consensus clearly is that gender which doesn't match with your biological sex also exists. Gender is socially constructed. Now what does that mean? In most cases, the gender will match biological sex, but in some cases it doesn't. And this is a social construct. Now that doesn't mean that it's a choice. You can just decide on Wednesdays and Fridays that you're going to be a woman or a man. This is a deep-seated psychosocial reality, very similar to being gay. Now the issue is, are you born trans? Just purely for my own situation here, I do not believe that people are born gay. A lot of gay people do, and they get a great deal of comfort out of that. because it's not my fault I'm gay, I was born this way. But I don't actually think it's genetic, but I do think it's laid down in early life. It's part of the core personality, just like being homosexual is. It's probably just, you know, like most things are, an interplay of genetics and society and epigenetics is where you have the kind of, you know, as you develop in society, that also changes your brain. Trans people evidently exist. Medical, psychological consensus is that they exist. And there's not really anything you can do apart from that. You can either make their lives harder or not make their lives harder. That's the choice we face, really.

## TERF Debate

**Jackie Walker:** Yeah, we've certainly got the chat going, haven't we? And I think this is going to carry on because we're now going to have a live chat between Esther Giles, political activist, and Cherie Benjamin.

**Tina:** There's Cherie.

**Jackie Walker:** Hello, welcome.

**Tina:** Thank you very much for joining us. I'm just trying to find Esther. There she is. Hi Esther, thanks for joining us.

**Esther Giles:** Can I say thank you very much for organizing tonight's webinar. I think it's really important that you've done it, so thank you for doing that.

**Jackie Walker:** Thank you. What we're going to start with is really a discussion about free speech, because this is where our starting point is, that we believe that as socialists, we need to have a dialogue. And we need that because that's the only way we inform ourselves and change. And I have to say that I also feel that just actually researching this program has helped to inform my views and my attitudes. And the first thing I'd really like to ask you is, What do you think could be done to improve the dialogue between the differing sides? What would you be able to offer to have that dialogue happen in a calmer and happier way?

**Tina:** And can I just say also, I mean, we have talked to Esther about this previously many times because Esther's actually been cancelled a couple of times and no platformed. And we really, really opposed that, especially because it was about a meeting that also had nothing to do with the issue of trans. So we are trying very hard in this show to have debates and have discussions and have them in a calm and comradely manner. So over to you.

**Jackie Walker:** Who wants to go first? Yes, okay, Shireen, thank you.

**Esther Giles:** I think where we are, we've got a conflict of rights. Conflicts of rights aren't new. I don't think women's rights and the rights of people who identify as transgender are always in conflict by any means, but there are specific places where there are conflicts. And when you have a conflict of rights, the Equality Act is set up for that. What you need is respectful, evidence-based discussion to arrive at solutions that will protect everybody. So I think that's why it's so important that we have that discussion. Now, my experience, and I think you as hosts of this programme have had some of this in the last few days, is that when we ask for that discussion, we're told there is no debate, there are kind of cliches that are invoked to discredit us, and if you go straight to a cliché like trans women or women, well then there's nothing more to talk about. You need to, if you're going to have respectful debate, you need to acknowledge that the people that you're in conflict with have a rights claim. Now we as materialist feminists acknowledge that transgender identifying people have a rights claim and we want them to be properly treated and we want to have a world where transgender identifying people aren't subject to harassment or discrimination or violence. You know, we all want that. But we need, in response, there needs to be an acknowledgement that we too have a rights claim that in some places sex matters, that we still live in a sexist society and that the provisions and spaces that exist for women are for a reason, and that they're not there because we want to exclude trans people, they're there because we want to exclude male people, and we still need those provisions on the basis of sex. Now, I don't think it's beyond the wit of us as socialists, as the wider policy community, the wider cultural communities, to resolve those conflicts of

rights. But you do need good faith on both sides. And I'm just not seeing good faith from the group that I call gender identity ideologues. And that doesn't include all trans people by any stretch of the imagination. Lots of trans people don't take that absolutist view, it's all or nothing. But there are in this movement some ideologues who simply say every time you want to engage in conversation, no, there is no debate. And that's what makes it toxic and that's what makes it impossible.

**Jackie Walker:** Can I just say the refusal to speak wasn't just on one side. And also certainly the abuse that I experienced on social media was not on one side by any means. But also I think we also have to consider the fact that for many trans people, what they see is a whole body of reaction against them on some of the most reactionary media. Anyway, Esther, what about you have been somebody who, like me, but for different reasons, have been no platformed?

**Sheeren Benjamin:** Yeah, I enjoyed listening to the talks at the beginning from Jess and \*\*\*\* and so forth. And one of the things that struck me is there were many points upon which I agreed with those young people. The discrimination and oppression they felt because of societal pressures to behave, to conform. in a certain way. So, and I say to Jess and I say to Tate, just be you. Don't try to get into a box. Just express your personality. Just be that person. And we completely agree on many, many things. Women who are gender critical, for example, will say, I'm oppressed because of my sex, but actually it is the gender that oppresses me. not my sex. So there are many, many points that we have in common, women and transgender people. However, as part of the discussion, we also need to establish definitions and we need to gather evidence because evidence based discussions that lack any evidence and that lack any definitions. may tend towards emotional reaction and interaction, which gets us nowhere. So I would say, yes, let's look for the areas that we have in common based on a political analysis.

**Jackie Walker:** Can I just ask you there, because you've just brought something up that I'd like to ask you about. Why do we need definitions?

**Sheeren Benjamin:** What is a woman? What is trans? So we need to understand those things if you want to have a discussion about conflicting rights, for example, because if you merely say trans women are women, then you end up in a circular discussion because if trans women are women, there is no conflict. So we need to be clear what we mean by certain terms. And certainly, when it comes to, when it comes to law, for example, and if we're identifying something where gender is important, we need to understand what gender is. So I just think we know, we need to know what we're talking about before we can, or as we talk about it.

**Tina:** Can I ask, I mean, you describe yourself as material feminist, is it? Material feminist. So you know, you're born with a.

**Sheeren Benjamin:** Yeah, I think so.

**Tina:** Can I just ask what's the, I mean, it's also material reality that about 1% of the population feel they're in the wrong body and they just, they don't want a penis or they want breasts or whatever. I mean, is that, do they not have the right to

make those changes and to use, the best medical facilities, et cetera, to change, to feel better?

**Sheeren Benjamin:** I'm not denying that gender dysphoria exists and it's part of my definition. So what is a trans person? Is it somebody that has gender dysphoria because Ray said that not all transgender people have gender dysphoria? What is it we're talking about? And certainly not denying the existence of people who have difficulties either with their sex or with the expectations of their performance on gender. And we just need to understand what we mean by those terms if we're going to be able to discuss them respectfully.

**Esther Giles:** Can I add to that? When I say I'm a materialist feminist, for me it's the branch of feminism that takes Marx and Engels as its starting point and looks back to the way that women's labour was appropriated, women's sexual labour, women's reproductive labour was appropriated and the kind of norms and practices and laws and rules and regulations and expectations and social roles that have then grown up over the intervening centuries. So you've got sex, which was the basis of oppression. And then for me, gender is all those things I've just talked about, the socially produced apparatus, the structures that have grown up, but then are the consequences of sex. And now to me, those are external, they're coercively imposed and they're not internal. And when you're thinking, you know, as feminists, when we're thinking about how do we address the consequence of sexism, we've got sex based oppression, and then people to greater or lesser extent can live comfortably with those external oppressive forces that are acting on them. And it doesn't surprise me that each end of the spectrum. You've got people who simply cannot walk through this world, move through this world with the sexist stereotypes that are forced on them. And I have every sympathy for those people. But what we're seeing is a huge increase at the moment in numbers of girls who are identifying as transgender. This has come from nothing. There were hardly any young girls who identified as transgender or non-binary. There've always been small numbers of boys who've done so. This increase in the number of girls. And I really think we have to look socially for many, many causes. There's a review called the Cass Review that's being done by NHS England at the moment, which the interim report came out, I think, last month. And they said what a lot of us have been saying, that there are complex causes for the increase in numbers of girls who are identifying as transgender, which are psychological, which are cultural, which are social, maybe to do with...

**Jackie Walker:** And they're also political, aren't they? They're also political, because let's face it, for example, the positioning of black people has changed hugely. And the way black people are able to talk to them has changed hugely. And I have to say, I do find the kind of rigorous adherence to what Mark says a bit concerning, because there's all sorts of things, for example, that Mark didn't and couldn't possibly have said about identity because he wrote when he was writing then. And I have to also query your sense that, or I want to echo really what Ray's saying, that there are some trans women who have felt that they are women, have understood themselves as

women from the beginning. They don't see themselves as having been socialized. They see themselves as women from the start.

**Esther Giles:** I agree those people certainly exist. And yeah, they're certainly documented in our societies for the last 70 years. And we know them as children who had childhood gender dysphoria from the beginning. But one of the things that's interesting when you look at the cohort of children, pre-puberty children, which have overwhelmingly been boys who've felt themselves to be girls, will quite often insistently say, but I am a girl, not I feel like a girl, but I am a girl. For around 80% of those children, and it does vary a bit according to diagnostic protocols and according to social pressures, but for around 80% of those children, puberty resolves that feeling. But you can't know during childhood which of the children for whom it will resolve and which of the children for whom it won't resolve. So It's really difficult. I do teacher education. What I wanted to know is we've got a lot of children for whom gender dysphoria would resolve and some for whom it wouldn't. Some who are always going to need to move through this world presenting as the opposite sex.

**Jackie Walker:** You see, I'm not surprised that it was mostly boys because as we all know as teachers, if you're teaching a mixed group, it's always the boys that put up their hand and the way that the difference between the way that the genders as seen as acculturated means that that's so. I don't actually see that as a huge issue of telling me anything in particular. we could also relate that to how many women have been saying that they've been raped. I mean, those rape figures have gone up hugely. So, you know, one of the problems I find is that when people start to have an argument about figures, I always ask, where is your evidence for this kind of thing? And actually, somebody has just put in the chat something that I really, I think is something else we want to speak about, which is this issue about prisons. And this is something that is continually brought up, you know, what do you do in prisons? What's the actual figures in prisons? Do you know?

**Esther Giles:** Figures of what?

**Jackie Walker:** Of people who, women who feel that they have been assaulted by trans women in prisons.

**Esther Giles:** I think, okay, so I just want to say about the boys before we left that, the figures on number on proportions for whom dysphoria resolves during puberty, those are medical figures that go back 70 years. There are very established medical records on that. So that is a known phenomenon. On prisons, I mean, there's more than one issue here. So I would want to say at the outset, we lock too many people up. And as socialists, I hope we all, I think a lot of us would believe that we want fewer people in prison. The population in women's prisons, honestly, many of them aren't a danger to society. We shouldn't be locking them up. So I just want to get that out there. The women's prison population are a very, very vulnerable group. For sure. A lot of them, most of them, the figures do vary. There are different studies, but in studies of women prisoners who are victims or survivors of sexual assault, that goes upwards from 80%. Some estimates are in the 90s. So you've got a really vulnerable population

of women. Now, if you're a woman who's been sexually assaulted, you're likely to have a trauma response to being with a man or somebody that you recognise to be a man, somebody who is male bodied. And even if a male bodied person who has identified as a woman who has been assessed as no risk may be of no risk to you in terms of doing you harm or assaulting you, Just being locked up with that person for somebody who has a trauma response is really, really problematic, because women in prison can't get away from the communal spaces in which they're locked up by somebody who their senses are telling them is a man, even if that person is identifying as a woman and is presenting no risk. And I was talking about this with Rona Hotchkiss, who's recently retired from being the governor of Cornton Vale Women's Prison. And she tells stories of women who were getting their lives back together, suddenly becoming problematic in prison. And when she's talked to them, what they were saying was they were feeling scared and traumatised by the presence of people they thought were male. But not only could they not get away from them, but they also couldn't name them as male because they would be accused of bigotry and they would then be punished. So it's a real problem. But I don't want people who identify as women, I don't want them to be unsafe in the men's estate either. So I do think this is one of the places there's a conflict of rights and we need to look at better solutions. Now, for me, a better solution is to lock fewer people up. Let's do that. But if you are going to lock people up, let's look at third estates, ways that people can be kept safe so that you're not putting a man who is presenting more like a woman into a male jail if he's going to be at but also you're not putting vulnerable women in a state where they're going to be re-traumatized, even though the numbers who are actually being attacked is still fairly small.

**Jackie Walker:** Can I just say, having worked in a women's prison for some time, I think there's a high risk for all women in women's prisons for all sorts of things. And wouldn't it be wonderful if there was that level of concern being shown for a lot of issues that go on in women's prisons? But yet again, we come back to this issue that we don't actually see figures. And I'm sure, you know, it must be possible to have figures for what the level of this is.

**Tina:** I'm not sure we need figures necessarily. I think Shireen made a really good point. You know, you don't have to have an actual crime happening in a prison, a women's prison for women who've been sexually assaulted to feel bad, you know, if there is.

**Jackie Walker:** Absolutely.

**Tina:** But I do wonder what the solution there might be. Esther, do you have any idea how to what that solution could be without saying, it's they're a danger inherently. It's I don't think they are.

**Sheeren Benjamin:** It's a safeguarding issue, isn't it? It's some men are some men are a risk to women, so from some spaces all men are excluded and it's not that it's not all men and it's possibly a similar sort of issue, but this is the sort of thing that

needs to be discussed based on evidence and based on based on understanding of the issues, including the psychological and trauma response issues.

**Jackie Walker:** Can I then just take us on, let's go outside of the prison situation. There's been a lot of talk on my page about safe spaces and the infringement of safe spaces. for women. Where would you see that happening? Where is the infringement for women's safe spaces happening?

**Sheeren Benjamin:** We've already talked about prisons, haven't we?

**Jackie Walker:** Yes, but I mean, most women don't go to prisons. I'm saying for the majority of us as women, most of us, you know, I've been in a prison because I was working there, but most women don't go to prison. Where is it that we're in danger?

**Sheeren Benjamin:** So I mean, people have talked about hospitals and the NHS at the moment isn't clear as to whether single sex exemptions still apply. Certainly rape crisis centres, there's a discussion taking place on that too, because there's the same trauma response issues apply in rape crisis centres for women. There are other areas where we're not talking about danger but we're talking about fairness but perhaps that's another discussion such as in sport which has been in the news a lot recently so all of these are important areas that need to be debated and solutions found to potential if not actual conflicts.

**Esther Giles:** I think one area that I've been involved in is youth hostels when the YHA changed its policy. You can't separate dormitories simultaneously on the basis of sex and gender identity because women can't tell who If somebody looks like a man, you can't tell whether he means you any harm. And if somebody is identifying as a trans woman, you can't tell. We're not saying that all trans women are dangerous to women, most of them aren't. The point is males as a class are more dangerous to women than females as a class. So safeguarding works for us to keep all males out. We cannot tell which ones, most men don't present any harm, but for reasons of safety and privacy, we have spaces for women. Now with youth hostels, the way their policy went was they said that people could identify into the shared accommodation of the gender with which they identified, which meant that the dormitories aren't necessarily single sex anymore. So again, you've got the issue with women who are survivors of abuse, who many are, who could be re-traumatized. Also women who for reasons of dignity simply want to enforce boundaries and want to be confident that they're not going to be in a space where somebody who is visibly male is going to be. And what we're seeing is women self-excluding from youth hostels. Now, that's not a problem for women with a bit more resource who can stay in other kinds of accommodation. But it is a problem for women who don't have very much money, who can't therefore afford hotel accommodation where they can be guaranteed a single room. So I think you don't have to go to prisons and domestic violence shelters. to see that there are effects all over the place.

**Tina:** My problem on this issue is that if you do look at figures, it turns out that trans women are far more likely to be victims of sexual violence than perpetrators. Far more, I mean, at least one in two transgender women report they've been, you know,

since they've transitioned or in transition, they've become victims of sexual violence. But that the way it's being presented, perhaps, by you and your organizations, just turn that around. they're being presented as potential perpetrators when the reality is actually the opposite, and that very, very few transgender women, That's, I think, where we do actually need some figures. there's this one prison woman who's always quoted, who's obviously, you know, got a lot of things. Apart from that, where are the actual, where's the actual evidence? And if there isn't, if that doesn't really happen very much, shouldn't our organization say, well, that's not actually true. You know, you might feel scared and we understand you feel scared, but the evidence doesn't bear it out.

**Esther Giles:** So, I mean, first of all, if trans identifying people are scared, That's a real problem and that should be addressed and we need to look at ways to address that. But the way to address that isn't by making single sex spaces no longer single sex. That's not a good resolution because it puts everybody at risk by default. At the moment, the research that exists, so what you're basically asking, or some people are asking us to accept, is that there's a subset of males, because it's, you know, the reason we have single sex spaces is to separate males and females. So we're being asked to accept that there's a subset of males who are less dangerous to women than the full set of males. And bearing in mind that we're not saying that every male is a danger to women, absolutely not. But because males as a class present a greater danger to women than females as a class, that's why we have one of the reasons we have separate spaces. Hang on, hang on. If I can just take that point through. So you're asking us to, well, we're being asked to accept that there's a subset who are less dangerous, but there isn't evidence to support that. So the evidence that exists, there's a Swedish, so far I think we need more figures, I would agree with you on that. But the figures that do exist, the statistics that do exist from a Swedish study and from the study of trans identifying women in prisons, show that the male pattern violence is the same for perpetrators who are identifying as women as for the male group as a whole. I think as the population changes, I think we need more studies into that. But at the moment, there's no evidence to support the theory that the subset of trans women are less likely to perpetrate crime or perpetrate violence than the broader set of males. Male pattern violence does seem to persist. And we're also being asked to accept that not only is this subset less of a potential threat to women, but the criterion for being part of that subset should be on self-declaration. So somebody can say that they're part of that subset and we should accept that they necessarily are. So I think those are the two problems with it.

**Jackie Walker:** Okay, well, I mean, I've got differences with you in the way that you kind of club males together in that way, whether or not. people, there seems to me to be a lack of recognition of trans women there. But we're going to have to bring this to a close in a bit, really. And I just want to finish with one, if you like, interesting perspective, which is the level of difference between the generations in how this is seen. The fact that younger people seem to me to be much more comfortable with seeing

gender as something which is fluid. And wouldn't that be a good place to go to? Either of you.

**Sheeren Benjamin:** That sounds like a confusion between sex and gender, because I agree that gender can be fluid. We can be any gender we want, but we can't change our sex. So it sounds like a conflation. And I think that conflation is really a big part of this issue. If we were absolutely clear what we mean by sex and what we mean by gender, I think it would be a much simpler discussion.

**Jackie Walker:** Okay, and what about the generational difference between?

**Sheeren Benjamin:** I think, I mean, Sharon can probably comment on this better than I can, but certainly gender studies and replacing women's studies, the development of queer theories and so on, those sorts of, these are relatively new phenomena, aren't they? Both in our education system and in society in general. And younger people, yes, they're growing up with these concepts, but Nonetheless, I think the conflation of sex and gender still exists and needs to be understood. And we can't actually address these issues without addressing that.

**Jackie Walker:** Okay, thank you very much. Right, I think we have seen here a very interesting conversation and where the divisions lie. And I think the more we can have conversations about it, certainly the better it will be. And I think Patricia has something to say about that one of the trans women that we interviewed?

**Patricia:** I really think trans people should like engage with left-wing political projects. There's a danger of trans people becoming disengaged from systemic political beliefs, so like socialism, Marxism. When you put yourself out there in a wider political sphere, it can feel really like demoralising. Like the newspapers, you hear all this horrible stuff said about transgender people. Sometimes you're even hearing it from people on your own And I think that makes it easy to disengage from mass politics, to kind of like retreat into singlish view, completely focused on trans equality and to be more attracted to not quite anarchist, anarchist adjacent beliefs were very suspicious of like systems. I guess it might seem a bit hypocritical because I quit. the Labour Party, but when I was a member, I did try to participate in more than narrow LGBT and trans equality campaigns. And just like the realities of organising, you're going to have to work with people with views that you don't really agree with. I think you need to be pragmatic about who you're organized with. Like you can't vet everyone on the left for 100% ideological purity. At the same time, I don't think that means you have to compromise what you're actually fighting for. Like you might be working with people who are a bit iffy on trans equality or whatever. That doesn't mean like personally and for the wider political project that you need to jazz in those ideals. There has to be a line where you're just like subjecting yourself to being insulted. If I was to like sit up with someone and they'd just spend the entire time calling me a man or a male or... male-bodied or whatever, insinuating that transgender women are like a safeguarding risk or basically like predatory. I kind of don't think it's worth doing that. Like sometimes you just got to have a bit of self-respect and not put yourself up there to get insulted. I think for some debates it's more of pageantry, everyone getting

their little rhetorical barbs in and... looking good on YouTube clips or whatever. I think the places where it's most valuable, like smaller spaces where people are like organizing inside parties, inside their unions and stuff. I think just the experience of people working and organizing together makes it easier to kind of convince people to challenge the preconceptions they might have by trans people.

**Jackie Walker:** That's a really nice comment there from Patricia. I have to say, I've been thinking about this, particularly as a black woman and thinking to myself, can you imagine if I only ever spoke to somebody who agreed with me on race? I mean, I would be in a tiny room all by myself and nobody would ever speak to me. I have to say as well, what I don't understand is this level of fear. I don't have a level of fear and I have been the victim of sexual and domestic abuse. And it really disturbs me the way that the issue of trans is instantly equated with male violence. What do you think, Tina?

**Tina:** Absolutely. I mean, it's the comments we've been getting in the run-up to this show have been quite mind-blowing. I mean, it's been pretty, pretty unpleasant trying to put this on. I think our programme actually showed that you can have discussions and debates. I thought that was quite good with Shireen and Esther. I think we're actually, I think if we did more of this, like Patricia said, I think if we did more of this, I don't think there would be quite the level of hostility, which has gone extremely out of the window, all rationality. And it's splitting left groups in half. It has split groups in half. And for years, people are being silent on it rather than trying to overcome it somehow. And as socialists, I mean, if we cannot even unite oppressed people on a sort of basic level to talk to each other. I mean, there's no chance we can ever get close to socialism until we sort something like this out. And I should also say one thing that I had to post today on social media is like, if we're ever getting close to challenging for power, People will come to you with more than words that are going to hurt you. We're going to have to be robust. We're going to have to be able to organize and to be a bit more, be vicious, but also take some arguments and debate it because it's going to be brutal. It's not called the class struggle for nothing and the class war for nothing. There's going to be tough times coming. So we really need to become more robust in the way we are trying to sort out these this issue amongst ourselves because it's going to get a lot tougher.

**Jackie Walker:** Mike, what do you think?

**Mike Cowley:** Jackie, I've been listening with and reading the chat with the great interest and it's been difficult. And I appreciate some people find what has been said difficult, whether in the interviews, the recorded interviews or the chat box. My experience, and I was going to share this at the top of the show, I think I had some connection problems. So please don't thank anyone that this is the final word on the matter by any means. And it should be said the show will be available on YouTube, but I'm sure the discussion can go on in the thread there. So my experience is a mediated experience through my students, some of whom you saw earlier on, and comrades like Patricia. And there's two things that strike me. One, that my students

are wonderfully articulate, humane, determined about their sense of who they are. And particularly within a public service environment, I work in FE, I'm a trade union rep there. That reciprocal respect is indivisible from effective working relationships and not being humbled by the students I've met. And what's interesting in terms of what they raise is say, and I absolutely understand that on occasion taken to platforms where people are going to deny your humanity is going to be too much for some people. But I really warm to what Patricia said about engaging. Tony Ben told us to toughen up, didn't he? And I think that's a critical maybe last lesson to leave us with. And what my students have been really powerful, revisiting and re-examining is something surely that we can all agree on tonight. The gender is a construct, it's an ideological construct, it manifests in a particular way under capitalism. And if we can find safe spaces to talk to each other, we will find more and more common ground. And we'll find more and more common ground, as Patricia says, in a wider socialist and class-based project that will liberate us all at some point, liberate us all at some point.

**Tina:** Jackie, what I like best, actually, which was the three comrades that Mike interviewed, I thought they were great. And then when one of them said, we're all little communists, and it's actually... They, perhaps because the left has been so bad over the last few decades and so disorganized and so split, their way of rebelling or, being asserting their themselves as socialists, as communists is saying, you know, you have two fingers up to your constructs, you know, to your male, female, you have to be this, and this. And when you grow up, you have to do this, but you, we're doing what we want. I want to experiment with my gender. That's my way of being a communist. It's not what we need to overthrow capitalism, but it says something about the failure of the left and actually how we have to engage with people to reach them. That's quite interesting.

**Jackie Walker:** And you know, if what we're saying, you know, is that race is a construct and gender is a construct, then part of the project of socialism is to get beyond those constructs. And really, what does it matter whether you have a penis or a vagina? It matters who you are and what you are within the community. And that, I'm not saying we're there now, but that surely has to be our aim. But thanks everybody for coming this evening, those of you who did come. Even thanks to the people who will watch this later on because they thought they better not come. In 2 weeks time, we're going to be looking at the environment in our different way that we do. And yeah, good night to everybody. And let's just think about the kind of world that we could really imagine being. Night, night.

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