

Let A Woman Speak, Plymouth, 25/08/18
Transcript from YouTube

The Chairwoman is Louise Paine and her comments, and audience noise, are shown in italics for clarity. Timestamps are given approximately every five minutes. Unfortunately the sound quality or audience noise muffles speakers from time to time; these small parts are marked <unintelligible>.

LOUISE PAINE: Ladies and gentlemen, if you'd just like to take your seats, we're almost ready to start.

Thank you so much for coming, it's really heartening to see so many people in the room, so thank you very much and I know some of you have had quite a journey to get here. I believe one person's actually come all the way from Birmingham, thank you! It just goes to show how far-reaching people's concerns are about this; it's not just a flash in the pan. It's actually something we take quite seriously. So thank you, we are very heartened, especially as we're quite a new group as well, so that's really good – we're obviously doing something right somewhere along the line, so thank you for that.

I've got to do the boring bits first – we've not been told that there's going to be a fire drill, so if the alarm goes off then you can probably think it is real, so if you'd like to throw yourself bodily down the stairs that would be great, and out the front door. The toilets are just to my left, your right, and the women's are on the left, and this time the women's and the men's are equidistant from us.

OK. This meeting is going to be respectful. We will listen to one another. We will hear what one another has to say and we will respect what other people have to say. If anybody is being disruptive then they will be removed, so please just bear that in mind. The way that it's going to work tonight is that each speaker is going to have fifteen minutes to do their speech, after which we will hand the microphone over to the audience and people within the audience will have the chance to ask that particular individual any questions that they may have. At the end of the session there will be a more general question and answer session as well. And when we've done all that, we're going to go to the bar and have a drink.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to make two special mentions of people that I feel are doing a lot for us at the moment. One of them is #stickerwoman, whoever you are <audience cheering>, whoever you are, you are a real shero. And the other is Jean Hatchet – some of you may know Jean Hatchet, do you want to give her a round of applause? <applause> Thank you. For those of you that don't know Jean Hatchet, she does sponsored bike rides for people who have been victims of domestic violence, and she's just been recently diagnosed with a cancer that only women can get, which is ovarian cancer. So if you're watching this, Jean, we're all with you and behind you, we're all thinking of you, and just keep on keeping on. Thank you.

OK. We will start now, I will introduce our first speaker who is Stephanie Davies-Arai <corrects pronunciation of Arai>, I'm sorry, I beg your pardon, who is an accredited Communication Skills trainer who's worked with parents and teachers for over eighteen years as well as being the founder of a successful small school. She's also the founder of Transgender Trend, which she set up about three years ago and is taking a different point of view from what we may all be hearing from other trans activists at the moment. So without much further ado, I'd like to hand over to Stephanie

STEPHANIE DAVIES-ARAI: Hi everyone, thanks for coming to the meeting tonight. I represent the “bigoted anti-trans group” Transgender Trend <audience laughter> - in inverted commas, not really, that's just what's spread across Twitter and by Stonewall, and by everybody who wants to silence us. Which always makes me think that if you need to do that, you've not got an argument.

So, you know, as far as I'm concerned, let them say it.

So I want to talk today partly about the proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act to a system of self-id, and how that's already really happening in the world of children. We already operate from a system of demedicalised self-id, except that for children it is also somehow medicalised, and the fact that if the government does change to this legislation, everything that's happening in schools today, in both education and health for children, will be consolidated and we won't have a way of challenging it if the government affirms that model of gender identity.

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Transgender youth support organisations have been going into schools since at least 2008, laying the groundwork of cultural and social change so that legislation will inevitably be updated to reflect what is already happening. The proposed amendments to the Gender Recognition Act to streamline the process of self-id of sex is already effectively in place in schools. The changes are happening throughout schools, youth organisations and universities, and although it is framed as demedicalisation for adults and that is what is advocated for, an invasive medical pathway is aggressively promoted by the same activists for children, and presented as even life-saving treatment for children.

And it's these trans youth support organisations such as GIRES, Gendered Intelligence and Mermaids, supported by Stonewall, who have been given the power to dictate school policy along with writing government guidelines, providing training materials for government departments such as the Department for Education, providing training for the NHS, and advising on policy for public service organisations such as the police, child protection organisations such as the NSPCC and youth organisations such as Girl Guiding UK. These groups have ensured that any child's "trans identity" is socially reinforced wherever they turn, and that gender identity has already replaced sex as the distinction between boys and girls.

Never before has any minority political lobby group been given so much power across the whole of society so quickly. Children don't just come up with the language "I've got a girl's brain in a boy's body" or "I was born in the wrong body" by themselves. Trans youth support groups across the country have become well-funded business enterprises, gaining funding from, for example, Children In Need, The Wellcome Trust, and the National Lottery. At a recent conference at the Tavistock Clinic we heard from some of these charities about initiatives to increase their client base, such as setting up trans support groups for five to eleven year olds.

Across the UK trans support groups are writing schools guidance which local councils endorse as official local authority guidance on trans pupils. And the material we're finding in schools is not about teaching children to accept difference and diversity; it is teaching children a new way to conceptualise their difference. If you look at a selection of LGBT book for primary schools, which is a project I'm currently engaged with, you'll notice most of the lesbian and gay stories are about having two mummies or two daddies, so they're adults; whereas the transgender books are all about children transitioning, whether that's in the form of penguins and teddy bears – who conveniently have no genitals – but they're always children transitioning and the words used are always "brave" and "authentic" and they receive a lot of praise for doing so. So in those books as well, transition is presented as a normal thing – if you identify as a girl, you are a girl, simple as that. But, hormones, surgery. So the medical thing is brought in as a sort of minimised aspect of transitioning. This can only influence children to interpret their gender non-conformity as a sign they were born in the wrong body. And why would we want to risk creating that belief that their body might be wrong and in need of medical fixing. I don't understand why such a model of understanding of yourself is allowed to go into schools. And to present the idea to children that their authentic self is split off from the body is to create mental ill-health. This model of dissociation, presented as normal and

healthy – to teach children to see themselves this way – is to lead them unknowingly on the path to medicalisation which may sterilise them and lead them to surgery, particularly for girls who tend to have double mastectomies, and leave them dependant on invasive medication and off-label
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medication – for life. And I don't believe that any child or adolescent has Gillick competence to sign up for this when even the professionals themselves have no idea what the long-term effects will be on those children, either physically or psychologically. But UK transgender associations lobby for lowering the age at which children can access cross-sex hormones. In all the debate about best clinical practice, this is the most extreme view – but this has become the established view, those groups are now establishment groups. And of course we must support children who are suffering gender dysphoria and make sure they're not bullied, they deserve our acceptance and support like any other child, but nobody should be labelling a child transgender, for the simple reason that when a child believes themselves to be the opposite sex, we don't know the outcome and we can't predict it. What we do know is that around 80% of cases children's feelings resolve naturally during puberty, and that the majority will turn out to be gay or lesbian as adults. With pre pubertal children that's around 60%, but the percentage for boys is higher than for girls, so a lot of the boys are “pre-gay” boys, it's not such a high percentage for girls at that age. And of course we can easily see why that would be the case, that tomboys are accepted whereas a boy who behaves in effeminate ways is called the insult of being a girl, and it's a lowering of status to behave like a girl if you're a boy, so it's not accepted. The first gender clinics were only for boys, and it really was a worry that effeminate boys would turn out to be gay and that was the original reason that gender clinics were set up.

So the majority who are dictating policy on how all of these children should be treated are actually the minority whose gender dysphoria persisted, or those who didn't have gender dysphoria at all in childhood but who are late-transitioning males whose aetiology is completely different, or parents who've made that decision for their own children and so are very invested in validating their own choices for their own children. But basing policy on the assumption that all these children just are trans and will remain so is a failure to protect pre-gay children and all children who are likely to desist without any intervention, and that's why the established model for treating children with gender dysphoria is a watchful waiting approach. This still recognises that gender identity changes, but of course, everything changes in childhood, and despite really fiercely-held beliefs by children and by adolescents that “I will never change”, of course – change happens. And absolute certainty about who you are is just a symptom of childhood and adolescence. But every local education authority across the UK now has their trans inclusion schools tool kit, which advocates this new and experiment approach of affirmation and social transition for the youngest of children. This approach has not been driven by clinical research and evidence, but by activism and by the silencing of debate. There's no evidence to support the use of affirmation and social transition in schools. Schools are actually in a position where they're taking a more extreme approach than clinicians, you know, the professionals at the Tavistock Clinic, and teachers are finding themselves unwittingly complicit in an experiment on this generation of children. Of course for a little boy who is being affirmed as a girl by all trusted adults in his life, including his parents and his teachers, this can't help but have a self-fulfilling effect, because children believe adults. Social transition has already been shown to be correlated with persistence of gender dysphoria in a 2013 study by Dr Thomas Steensma in the Netherlands, and that's not a surprising result. Believing himself to literally be a girl, this little boy then fears the puberty which he now believes will change him into a boy, and that's how the fear is created, and the use of puberty blockers becomes inevitable.

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And these blockers have only been used in the UK for children with gender dysphoria under the age of 16 since 2014. The effect of blockers on adolescent neurological development are unknown. The sex hormones released at puberty trigger important and complex changes in the development of the

teenage brain. So what happens when we actually block those hormones? We don't know. The use of blockers is justified by activists based on research only on their use for precocious puberty, but using blockers during normal adolescence is completely different. There is a window for pubertal development, and what happens if that window is missed? Jazz Jennings is the poster child for trans kids, and Jazz now has a child-sized penis at age 16. What happens if Jazz decides it was all a mistake and wants to transition back? Will Jazz's penis grow to adult size? We don't know, but it doesn't seem likely to me, and I'm not a medical person, but Jazz has also never experienced orgasm and is infertile. The picture book "I Am Jazz" is one that is promoted by transgender organisations for primary age children.

There are no studies that show that blockers are truly reversible when used to treat gender dysphoria. Professionals have expressed concerns that we're locking children into a medical pathway they will not come off. At the Tavistock over 90% of children on blockers progress to cross-sex hormones at age 16, resulting in sterility. Certainly if they went on to blockers at Tanner stage 2 before gametes have developed, they will be sterilised. And risks of cross-sex hormones included cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, strokes, diabetes and cancers. These children will enter adulthood without ever going through normal puberty, because cross-sex hormones don't create the puberty of the opposite sex, they can't – they can only influence secondary sex characteristics, not reproductive development. What's most apparent from the trans inclusion schools tool kits that are universally adopted and endorsed by the NEU and the Department for Education is that girls are completely left out of the picture. Girls have not been considered. They are invisible and invisibilised by policies which do not recognise their sex. So so-called gender neutral policies advocated by trans youth organisations are not about challenging gender-based stereotypes, as the work for example of "Let Toys Be Toys" is, but they're about blurring the distinction between the sexes. And I ask the question: who does it benefit to blur the distinction between the sexes for children. So policies which do not challenge gender stereotypes include making male and female toilets gender neutral; using the words boy and girl – that is not about challenging gender stereotypes.

I think...there was a story, was it just last year, or earlier this year? about Head Boy and Head Girl positions being changed to Head Pupil? And guess what, both of those positions were filled by boys. This is another reason why we separate, because girls are disadvantaged if we don't, and the distinct rights and needs of girls as a sex, unless they're thrown into sharp relief and we recognise them, they fade away without anybody seeing, noticing or caring, and that's the position of girls and women in our society. Schools tool kits are misleading schools about equality law by advising schools that trans pupils should use the toilets and changing rooms that match their gender identity and that boys who identify as girls should be able to participate in girls' sports and sleep in girls' dormitories on overnight trips. And if a girl objects, she must be kicked off the team, or she has to use alternative facilities. This is a policy of grooming girls, grooming them into not recognising their rights, their own boundaries with the male sex, and their right to be in a female space, and their right to initiatives just for them, to help level the playing field with boys. This is a policy which erases legal recognition for girls. The buzzword which enables this erasure is inclusion. If I hear that word one more time... <audience laughter>.

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Girls have a right to exclude: the word girl itself is an exclusive word. It not only defines what a girl is – a young human female – but what a girl is not, a young human male. Girls have a right to exclude, and I would like to replace that buzzword with the word "boundaries". Girls have the right to exclude males from their private spaces for whatever reason, and to have and express their boundaries. Boundaries is a word that is absolutely crucial, you know, for safeguarding, for respect, for self-respect. It's a really crucial word that we have lost. We can't have it when we're blurring the distinction between between the sexes. Nowhere do we see how gender identity erases girls more

clearly than in the exponential rise in referrals to the Tavistock Gender Clinic, a 1900% increase since 2010, and hidden in plain sight almost 70% of those referrals are girls, and the boy:girl ratio increases to over 74% girls in the adolescent years. This is even more remarkable because in the late 60s, 90% of transsexual adults were male. So this is completely unprecedented that girls are transitioning in these numbers. There was only a tiny number of referrals to the Tavistock before about 2009-2010, around 50 a year. There are over 2000 referrals now, and in the past they were predominantly boys – now it's over 70% girls.

<aside: How long have I got?>
<You've got minus one minute!>
<Audience laughter>

Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, when girls are suddenly identifying as boys at puberty is a completely new phenomena which we don't understand. There's a fantastic study just come out by Lisa Littman if you want to check that. So what I want to say is that the Gender Recognition Act will solidify and ratify this approach and this model that's being taught to children in schools through schools resources and schools guides, and I urge everybody to fill in the consultation and to vote against self-ID, because otherwise I think parents will have no means of challenging what their children are being taught in schools. Thank you.

<audience applause>

Thank you very much. We'll just wait for my glamorous assistant who's making her way...who survived...just wait two seconds...who survived being violently misgendered last night on the caravan park <audience laughter> she did not explode into a load of glitter and unicorns, as we can see...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Because it was Friday!

Because it was Friday, absolutely. That's one thing you can tick off your bucket list now! So, anyway, this is the lovely Debbie McGee to my Paul Daniels. Has anybody in the audience got any questions for Stephanie?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You spoke about the Tavistock and the medical practitioners taking a more cautious approach, an approach of watchful waiting in comparison to schools. I was wondering if you could comment on the possibility, potentially the inevitability of, as gender ideology becomes more prominent, the possibility that parents, especially with the rhetoric of massive suicidality in trans children, moving towards private medicine. What would that mean in terms of, you know, standards – what would that mean, in terms of...there's a buffer, in terms of the NHS, how quickly could things progress...if you could comment on that?

STEPHANIE DAVIS-ARAI: That's a really good question, it's a really worrying area. We're seeing already that transgender youth organisations such as Mermaids are broadcasting on Twitter that they've lost confidence in the Tavistock. We know that there's huge pressure on the Tavistock Clinic, who are seen as gatekeepers, and they are preventing children from getting the treatment they need because otherwise these children will kill themselves.

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There is no evidence to support that claim, that children will commit suicide or are more likely to commit suicide if they are not allowed to transition or medically transition. In fact I think there have only been two cases, and I...suicide is tragic and I think this message being put out is extremely damaging and dangerous because children are getting this message as well. It's either transition or

die; that's a terrible message to be giving to children. But the evidence doesn't support it, you know, the two that I've heard of over the last couple of years have both been children who've been socially transitioned, are on a medical pathway, fully supported by parents and teachers. But of course it's a terrifying threat, an emotional blackmail tactic to use, which is the cruellest threat you could possibly give to a parent – because what parent would risk it if they thought that was a possibility. I think there's huge problems – I don't know if you know about the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy added gender identity last year, and so really, therapists and counsellors' hands are tied. I hear from therapists and counsellors that they – and I hear anecdotally – any child who is identified as trans is sort of passed on, because if a therapist helped a child to explore an underlying issue and then that child subsequently desisted, the therapist or counsellor may be accused of conversion therapy.

So it's an incredibly – to me it's a document that's based on ideology, a political ideology rather than clinical evidence. This word “trans”, “transgender”, it's a political word, it's not a clinical diagnosis, it's not a clinical or medical word. So there's two things going on there, and it seems that all of the medical organisations are going with the political, social justice aspect, and treating children with political and social justice rather than treating them with clinical professionalism. So the Memorandum is coming up for review in October, so I would urge anybody, now, if you have any experience as a professional or as a parent – I hear from parents all the time who take their children to CAMHS counsellors or therapists, and the therapists will only affirm their gender identity – they won't look at what's going on for that individual child. We know that thirty-five percent of these children are ASD, we know that there's a very high rate of troubled children from care homes, children in foster care, children with pre-existing mental health issues, previous trauma and sexual abuse. There's a really high rate in these teenagers who are coming to the Tavistock Clinic. If all we will give them is social justice therapy “yes, you're transgender and isn't that great”, we are totally failing the most vulnerable children in our society. So I urge you to email to the UKCP and give them your experience of, your thoughts on affirmation and informed consent therapy, particularly if you're a professional, if you're concerned about how that restricts your professional practice, or if you're a parent of a child who has been affirmed but you can see that they need actual proper therapeutic support. Write to the UKCP, email UKCP because it's coming up – the review is coming up in October. Did that answer your question? I think we need to be worried, certainly.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: I read somewhere that there's a class action in the States about the use of Lupron and the puberty blockers that was originally prescribed because of early-onset puberty, but that the health problems with that are becoming apparent; and I understand, I've heard also that there are legal cases by detransitioners who feel that they weren't given the proper counselling and support during the process. Do none of these things have an impact?

STEPHANIE DAVIES-ARAI: A lot of these things..well, the study on...there's a class action against Lupron, there is also a study from the States which showed that...people don't understand the importance of distinguishing between male and female in medicine, because most of the kids who

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are given puberty blockers – Lupron is one version – for precocious puberty were girls, and so the devastating effects on a large percentage of now-grown women – there was a study only recently in which I think, I think it was last year – but there's been no link or no joining up of dots of “why are we giving these puberty blockers to kids for gender dysphoria?” but it was the first study to come out and these things take time. Lupron, I think, have never responded to any class actions as far as I know, they've not. But I have heard, and I've been contacted by detransitioners in the States who have successfully sued surgeons – but then, the settlement included a gagging order. So they can't talk, they can't write a post about it, they can't talk about it, and I think that's probably what will happen. I've heard cases of success, you know, a woman in the UK who successfully sued because

she'd had a double mastectomy and then regretted it. But we don't hear about these cases. I do suspect that there will be...you know, these cases are before this massive increase in referrals, which has only really been over the last five years, even three years, there's been this really unprecedented increase. So I think in the future we will start hearing about these cases, but these things take time and it may be a decade, it may be even two decades before it starts, and particularly that it starts coming into the public consciousness and people start asking questions.

Anyone else? Yes, right at the back there...(I'd watch that one if I was you <laughter>)

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: Last year and the year before, I went through hell with my daughter wanting to transition. Talking to...I watched quite a few interviews with you, thank you, you're such a star. You put me on the right pathway to challenge the school. They changed my daughter's name at school without permission, I went through absolute hell. I am now pleased to say my daughter has come out as a lesbian <audience cheers and claps> As a mum...Oh, the school were horrendous, pushing her down totally the wrong path. In a way they were supporting her but actually not knowing...when I went into the school they had no idea what they were doing, and I'm pushing this forward to actually look at their policies, but I don't think they will, I think they're too scared or ashamed, they're not actually educated enough to challenge what they're being told to do.

STEPHANIE DAVIES ARAI: Thank you, thank for speaking out. There is a huge political pressure on schools to be, to have inclusive policies, to get their Stonewall badge of approval, and it's all about LGBT - but actually it's about trans. If you look at the Stonewall schools guidance, most of it's about trans and gender dysphoria is not mentioned except as a postscript in the glossary. This is not about children who are suffering gender dysphoria, this is identity politics and queer theory in schools, and if you look at the medical organisations, so the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, for example, their section, their good practice guideline on diverse sexualities is written by Meg-John Barker, who is a queer theorist and activist and it's crazy, you know, because queer theory is impenetrable. It's not like I'm not clever enough to understand it, it is impenetrable. But this is being used in health organisations and educational establishments, and I think most people don't understand, and it's presented as “you don't understand and you need to be re-educated”; that people, including teachers, are taking it at face value.

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Please do see me afterwards, anybody who wants one of these – this is the Transgender Trend guide for schools, which explains the difference between sex and gender. It's got a legal section, it's got case studies, and it's got really practical guidance on how to deal with these issues in schools without breaking, without being in breach of the Equality Act and have a really sensible policy, both for the children who are suffering gender dysphoria who identify as transgender, and for all other children in the school to balance their rights. So come and see me at the end, these schools packs have so far been distributed, actually, all over the country already, these schools packs are going into schools. So if anybody wants them, come and see me at the end and let me know which schools you're taking them to, and hopefully we will have – and I know that we are having an influence on schools across the country already, and hopefully we can get teachers to be more confident of using their own common sense and their own judgement. Because teachers are experienced in dealing with vulnerable children, so this guide just gives them the confidence to trust in themselves that they know what they're doing and not to be blinded by “science”, or lack of science, in the usual trans inclusion schools tool kits.

One last very quick one...

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: It's just a follow-up, actually. It's just to follow up with regards to the schools – the tool kit. Are they going into schools because somebody, a teacher's contacted you, or is there any sort of way of it going out to all schools or...I'm just wondering how it's working.

STEPHANIE DAVIES-ARAI: At the moment we're sending them out to parents and teachers, and we've had PSHE leads, we've had safeguarding leads, we've had teachers and parents who have requested them from us. So we sort of broadcast it on Twitter, we put it on, across various Facebook groups, and I will be writing a post, actually, I thought it was about time I wrote a post and put a blog about it. So at the moment it's going out that way, we're dealing with people who've requested it, and once we've done – we're collating what data we have from all the schools it's gone to, and after that it will be a targeted campaign, it'll be a very careful campaign to get other schools, and that's how we're going about it.

I'll just wait for the mic to come back to me...Thank you, Stephanie. I'd just like to introduce my next guest – our next guest. Our next guest is Dr Nicola Williams, who is a spokesperson – or the spokeswoman – for the women's rights organisation Fair Play For Women. She is a research scientist specialising in human biology and has held a number of senior scientific positions within the pharmaceutical industry. She is now dedicated to her full-time volunteer role as a writer and speaker on the Gender Recognition Act and its impact on women and children. She is the author of a recent study on transgender prisoners and has submitted written evidence to the prison planning enquiry conducted by the Commons Justice Select Committee and was a participant in a parliamentary meeting for MPs to hear women's views on GAR reform. Dr Williams has an excellent working knowledge of the laws designed to protect women and the transgender community and has written a series of easy to read fact sheets...That's it, sorry <audience laughter>

<audience applause>

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DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: Thank you, what a great introduction! OK, well. So, I'm the spokeswoman for Fair Play For Women, and I hope people have heard of Fair Play For Women. We are a group of unpaid volunteers, lots of women from all walks of life, different professions, different life experiences; and we've all come together, we are all united in the common belief that we're concerned about what's happening at the moment, and that women's voices are not being heard or valued in this debate. So, Fair Play For Women has three aims, really. One is to be an information source for women. Women need to know what their rights are if we want to protect them, so our website is full of reliable, evidence-based information. I'd like to think that's the place to come first to find out what's happening.

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We also want to be a voice for women, a voice for the women that can't speak. So not just in the media to talk about these issues, but also to have a seat at the table when decisions are made by the decision-makers. So, Fair Play For Women has been invited to a number of meetings with the government Equalities Office, the Equality Commission, things like that. So we're speaking for women. Our third aim is to actually help other women speak as well, not just to just speak for the women but to help you speak. And that's really a big focus at the moment as we're focussing on the Gender Recognition Act consultation. And what we need to do there is to get as many women and men as possible to find their voice and fill it in, fill in that consultation. The government is asking for the public's views, and this will be the only time they ever ask us. So everyone in this room, please, if there's one thing that you can do, it's fill in the consultation and get a friend to do it too. That would be a major step forward to defending women's rights.

So, the consultation – there are eight weeks left, we're halfway through the consultation, and this is really – the government are asking for our views, the public's views on how it might change the law to allow people to change the sex on their birth certificate. Because that's what the Gender Recognition Act is. It's about what your legal sex is considered to be and what your birth certificate will have written on it. <unintelligible due to audio fault> We're launching a campaign, it's going to

start next weekend, and we want to get as many people as possible to find out about the consultation, because not many people even know it's going on, and we also need people to be motivated and fill it in. We are providing guidance, we've got a booklet that's going to be published next week which will be like a step by step guide to help people fill in the consultation. You know, the public – we need to reach out into the public now. We've got people, the gender critical community, who know what's happening; the public needs to know now and needs to react. The public are on our side, remember, because with a recent YouGov poll, we know that only about 20% of respondents actually supported the self-id system for gender recognition. So 80% of the public actually know that it's a step too far, and support our view that really we should not make changes to the Gender Recognition Act that would impact on women's rights.

So, next weekend, we're launching out campaign, we've got some great campaign literature...I'm hoping that there's going to be a great buzz next week and for the next eight weeks. We've got groups all around the country, local groups are going to get out and hand out leaflets, talk to the public and really get this campaign going, to get the word out, basically. So, you can help too, and what I'm hoping – and the reason I've driven for four hours to speak to you tonight, is to try and get a group within Plymouth to do the same. I've got leaflets with me tonight that a group of you, if you could come together to do some leafleting for Fair Play For Women and talk to the public, that's what we really want to happen. Like I say, we've got over...well, over at the moment, over 150 women signed up to do this across the country, you know, there's a lot of people now realising this is the moment to speak. So if you are interested in doing any campaigning on the street, I'm going to have a sheet of paper on that table; just put your name and your email address and I'll get back to you, and let's see if we can make a good group here.

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Now, if you can't do that, not everybody can be out in public necessarily or would choose not to do that; so an alternative route is that you can actually order from our website a campaign pack that you can...that will have in it a guidance book and also some leaflets so that you can just show your friends, maybe your family, and just do some individual campaigning around the people you know. Just spread the word, basically. And if you want to get hold of that pack, subscribe to the Fair Play website and we will send you the information on that next weekend when we launch. If you can't do any of those things, just fill in the consultation yourself, because that's important – everyone in this room really must fill that consultation in.

OK, so the campaign itself is about saving women's rights. Now, the government has said it wants to make it easier for transgender people to change the sex on their birth certificate. Now we have to look at some of the things they're proposing there, some of the ways they want to make it easier, will clearly impact on women's rights; and so we as women have every right to say “actually that impacts us, we need to be involved in this debate and the decision making”. This is not about being anti-trans, I should think everyone in this room is pro trans rights – we're probably the most liberal, supportive group that there could be – it's just that we actually are able to stand up for our own rights too. It is allowed for women to stand up for their own rights as well as everyone else's. This is the time when actually, we do need to do that. Now the government has actually acknowledged that changes to the Gender Recognition Act that will increase transgender rights does not have to come at the expense of women's rights. Now they've said that and we need to hold them to that. We need to tell them in the consultation how women's rights are going to be affected, because they are ignorant as to how they will be impacted. They actually think they won't, and so this consultation is our chance to make sure they know how it will impact us.

So, we've got...in the consultation, it's quite a long consultation document, there are five key areas that we really need to get a good message across to the government with. You don't need to fill the whole consultation in, just some key areas, and I just want to mention the five key areas for you now. The one, the biggest one for me, is that there must be a clear message to the government that

gender dysphoria and the diagnosis of gender dysphoria, must not be removed from the process. At the moment someone must have a doctor's diagnosis of gender dysphoria before they're allowed to change the sex on their birth certificate. Now, it's crucial that that stays, because if we think about what the Gender Recognition Act is and how it interacts with the rights of individuals, it's actually, you know, women's rights are based on the Equality Act and the female sex as a group. That's our right, these are our rights, what describes women and protects us. Now, we are all in that category through birth, OK, and the Gender Recognition Act is simply an alternative way into that group by someone who reassigns their gender, and so it's basically a way for male-born people to enter into the female category. So that needs to be regulated, it has to be regulated, and the only way to regulate that is through having a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. That's all we've got, so if they do remove it, there will be no assessment and it is at that point what we call self-id, people will be able to self-declare their sex and get it written on their birth certificate, that they were born that sex. So someone born male could have a birth certificate saying they were actually born female.

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That clearly impacts women's rights because the very definition of woman and female will then include men and people born male. So males will then be on female crime statistics; the gender pay gap will be – men's pay would be reported as female's pay for example. So if we want to combat sexism, we need the language at a very basic level to know who's male and who's female, so if we lose that we won't be able to fight sexism and we won't be able to put things in place that women need to combat that.

So that's one area, the government needs to know that gender dysphoria has to stay. The other issue is around privacy, because not only does the Gender Recognition Act give someone the ability to change the sex they were born, that was written on their birth certificate, it also gives them total privacy as well, so that no-one can ever find out that they weren't born female, and so in fact it's only the courts and the police that are able to find out that information. It's actually a criminal offence for an official to reveal to anyone else that the sex on that birth certificate is not the sex they were actually born. We won't even know who was male-born any more. Women sometimes need to know if there's a man, or someone who is born male, around. You know, if I'm sleeping in a room with other people, I want to know if there's someone born male, and if nobody knows and nobody can ever find out that they are born male, then how can I give an informed yes or no as to whether I want to be in that room. I can't. So it's crucial that those privacy laws are looked at as well.

The other area is around access to male-free spaces. Sometimes, women need access to male-free spaces; when they're sleeping overnight, in sports, certain services and certain job roles. Now the Equality Act actually acknowledges that birth sex is important and women do need to know, and have spaces free from people who were born male, and we have special rules in the Equality Act that makes it legal to exclude male people, including people who have reassigned their gender, including people who have even changed their legal sex status and it says female on their birth certificate. If they were born male, they can be excluded. Now, the government has said it will not change that law, and because of that it seems to think that women's rights will be fine, you know, "we're not touching your law, there's no problem". Well, what we need to tell them is that laws on paper mean nothing, it's what happens on the ground, and if those laws can't be enacted then they're worthless to women, and that's what the GRA changes will do. It will make it impossible for male-free spaces to actually be *<interruption>* maintained. So basically the problem here is this privacy issue; how can an organisation know who was born male - they are legally entitled to exclude people who were born male, but the GRA stops them finding out who is born male. So there's a conflict there and that needs to be sorted out.

And then the final thing I want to mention before I finish is prisons. That's the other message we've got to give in our consultation. Now, if we go to a self-id system, it's not just any male - any male prisoner could also change their birth certificate to female, and under the prison rules at the moment

that means they'll be eligible to move into a women's prison. The only way that a prison can stop them from doing that is to make a risk assessment to say they would be far too dangerous to be in a women's prison. Now basically the prison officers seem to think they've got it covered, but just this week we've got news of a prisoner, a male prisoner who's been into jail quite a few times, always in male prisons. This time, when he was sent to court, he said he wanted to be a woman. He's called Karen White. He was sent to a female prison and within days he's allegedly assaulted four women prisoners there. He's been charged now by the police.

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Now, the prison officers who passed that risk assessment clearly got it wrong. If they're going to be wrong with just a handful of requests, then if the law changes where hundreds or thousands of requests will come, then I've got no confidence that they'll get that right. So, there are so many issues that we need to have addressed before these laws can get changed. OK, so I'll end there – last just to say: fill in that consultation please, spread the word as best you can. You don't need to be an expert, and come to the website Fair Play For Women and you'll get all the guidance and help that you'll need. Thank you.

<AUDIENCE APPLAUSE>

Thank you, and I'm so sorry for interrupting your flow. Has anybody got any questions? Yes, right at the back, in the pink.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: Hi, I just wanted to say that I find it very concerning how inconsistent the government are on this issue. So you have Penny Mordant kicking off the GRA consultation saying “We start from the position that trans women are women”, and then when she gets challenged, when there's a challenge by, I think, Caroline Flint, she says “we need to listen to these women, women's rights are important”. And then you have the petition with 11,000, 12,000 signatures, so it got a response from the government, and they're saying “yes, women's rights are important, we're not planning to change the Equality Act, therefore there won't be a problem with using the exemptions”. But then you look at the law and it says...although this isn't in the primary legislation of the Equality Act, they are saying, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and the sort of code around that, the guidelines, of “it has to be on a case by case basis”, which makes it virtually unusable. Certainly not usable for a women's refuge to completely exclude males. I just wondered what you thought about that.

DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: Yes, well...government are confused on this, they're being...they've been lobbied hard by the trans lobby groups – Stonewall have been in. Fair Play For Women have asked to see Penny Mordant and we've been rejected, but I'm sure she's had meetings with Stonewall. It is an unfair playing field, and it's a real David and Goliath fight, I think, but we've got to just do it and keep banging on, making an irritant of ourselves, in a way, so that the government can't just ignore us. I think, you know, actually, although we've got a long way to go in terms of re-educating the government, in a way, or getting them to understand how to balance the rights of all of the people, of all of the people of the UK. We've...the pressure that we've all been putting on the government has actually led to them making some statements like “yes, we must now listen to women and we mustn't...” and in the <unintelligible> petition it's stated that trans rights does not have to be at the expense of women's rights. Now these are actually major shifts by the government compared to what we would have had if we hadn't been doing this work; so, you know, they would have ignored us, they wouldn't have even mentioned women's rights, it would have been off their radar completely. I suppose what I'm saying is that we've made good progress, but we've got to keep on it, you know, and that's why this consultation's so important because this is the time when women are being asked, we're being invited to give our views, and if we don't, in enough numbers, the government will be able to dismiss us as a fringe. That's why we've got to get as many voices and recruit the public, not just us, you know – people that have never heard of it before need to find out

and fill in that consultation to influence the government. It really is now or never, I think.

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AUDIENCE MEMBER 6: Hi, I work for a union – I shan't name it – as a full-time officer, and it's a cross-sector union so it covers employees in everything, private and public. My personal experience of the awareness of legislation in the workplace in the way it affects men and women is that it's as brutally hierarchical and sexist as society, by definition, because it is, and that laws are – there's a word in Glaswegian, “gallas”, which means sort of bolshy and cocky. Laws are broken on a daily basis by employers and managers until somebody forces them to stop, and that's the experience of daily work. I know that the application of the Equality Act is extremely difficult in the workplace in its current state, to the extent where just in the last six months I've had four serious sex discrimination and maternity discrimination cases which the union wouldn't pick up for various nefarious reasons and which employers get away with. So employers get away with discrimination on a daily basis.

Male-dominated workplaces aren't going to be affected by this. Female-dominated workplaces as a result of – and with the greatest of respect to all the men in the room, I don't tar everybody with the same brush – but the type of personality who demonstrate arrogant behaviour, the types of personality 80% of whom will retain full genitalia and insist that they are women and demand access to space. That personality type, that behavioural type is not going to be concerned by a convoluted and complex change to the Equality Act. It is almost impossible to apply it on the ground in a successful way. So with that really depressing message in mind, how can we feed into this law change in such a way that it can be successfully applied on the ground. Because that's what needs to happen. There needs to be clear instruction within the Act or within the way the Act is changed that can be successfully applied, which take into account the differences in male pattern behaviour and female pattern behaviour which are retained after transition and the impact of that in the workplace. Because people like me want to be able to use it far more successfully than I currently am, and I'm extremely worried about the impact of this change in the workplace and the impact it's going to have on women in work. Goodness knows, we've suffered enough.

<audience applause>

DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: I suppose...what I'm going to say to that is that you're right, women's rights are already hanging by a thread. It's not like we've got, we've achieved, we've got good laws and rights already; they are hanging by a thread and that's why this GRA consultation will just tip it over the edge, it will just be worthless after that, and that's really why, in the very first instance, the first thing we must do, is stop the GRA from coming into effect with self-identification, because that will be the end of sex rights, basically. But the after that – that just keeps us where we are, which isn't in a great place – after that, the job has got to be strengthening those sex exemptions, for example.

Things like...we really need to start having a proper discussion about the difference between sex and gender, having that clearly defined and things like having it clear in the Gender Recognition Act how it impacts and interacts with the Equality Act, for example. There's no mention, in the Equality Act about the GRA and vice versa. It's as if the two laws don't know the other one exists. And they've done that on purpose because it's too complicated, whereas one of the things we need to try to make happen in this reform is to get those...to get that linkage written into the law to say “this GRA exists, but the exemptions in the Equality Act apply”. At the moment that's not clear. The thing

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is, none of those things are going to change anything and make everything suddenly OK, but at least these step-changes that we do...I'm hoping that when the consultation's over and we get a good...the government hears a strong message that women's rights are important, then people like Fair Play For Women and other groups will be part of that decision-making around the table, will be able to

say, “well, we need this, this and this in the reform”, and that's the next challenge, in a way. How we do that will need to be debated and thought through, but I'm hoping that there'll be ways that we can try to strengthen women's rights, as well as just stop the encroachment and getting lost.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 7: Do I need a mic? Thanks very much for the talk. I was wondering about the issue of female sports people from a campaigning perspective, whether there are any of those sports people who are kind of on our side in this and whether you can recommend we might try to make contact with such women, given that they potentially have a big reach in terms of who they can communicate to, and also I feel the public trusts sports people in a way, they seem to be politically neutral, and if there were sportswomen who were bothered and feared about it in the way that we do, whether they might get behind it.

DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: All I can say is that I'm – within Fair Play we're constantly looking for any famous person of any description to give even an inkling of understanding and support, because that's what we need, we need people to be able to stand up and speak, if people are scared to do that. There is no sports person that I know yet, we did try Martina Navratilova at one point, we haven't been able to quite get there yet, but in terms of sport, the trouble with sport is that the changes to the Gender Recognition Act won't impact the elite sports people yet, because the way transgender participation is decided in places like the Olympics or even at the county league level, it's about hormone levels, so they have testing. So if someone says “well, actually I was born male but I now identify as a woman”, they'll test their hormones to see if they fall within an acceptable range even though that's not necessarily, it's not the end of the story, testosterone is not what really matters; people are still larger, they've got different bones, skeletons, things like that. So it's about hormone levels, in those areas.

But it's really the grass roots level that will be impacted – the club down the road won't do hormone testing, the only thing they'll be able to do is self-id, which will mean that any team that says it's a woman's team will just be full of people who say they're women, and so at the grass roots level it will be impacted, but then eventually that will feed up to the elite level, because grass roots is where elite people come from. And so if they've been – if girls have been beaten by the males, they'll miss out on scholarships, they'll miss out on the fun of sports; and women's sports will be destroyed, there will be no such – women's sports will have nobody in it that's worth watching. So we need to get that message out to sports people, because their profession is going to be decimated from the ground. So if anyone ever sees anyone on Twitter that's starting to be interested in this, flag me and get me to see it, because we do need those big voices to start to get people to listen.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 8: You mentioned about getting people out on the ground in Plymouth – we're not all here from Plymouth, I'm not from Plymouth...so there are two things; one, were you meaning that you would become, like, a little subgroup of Fair Play For Women with your friend delivering leaflets; and two, is it possible to find out where everyone's from?

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DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: Well, basically, what we've got are groups all the way across the country, that will basically be supporters of Fair Play For Women for the next two months; and they'll be out on the street handing out our leaflets, we've got some Fair Play t-shirts, things like that, so they can represent Fair Play For Women. So yes, really, I want a local group from Plymouth to be part of that as well, you know, that's why I'm here with people that potentially support us. But there are other groups; if you're really interested in being part of that somewhere else in the country, message, email me and we can talk, and there will be potentially another group nearer to you that you might be able to join.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 8: We're near Taunton area, Taunton near Somerset.

DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: OK, well there'll definitely be a group...if you email me, nicolawilliams@fairplayforwomen.com I can connect you up with the right people. Everybody that we can get out on the street will be such a bonus.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 9: Hello, I just want to say thank you to all of you here, because I think it's very difficult to stand up and speak as you are doing, and you're giving us the strength to go and speak about this. I also want to say thank you to the mother over there, because I also have seen and gone through a very stressful time with all these adults that want to guide children into a path of self-hate and self-destruction, really. I happen to know six girls, some of them very dear to me, and some of them were lesbians to begin with, the opposite that happened to you, some of them still are there, others have grown out, others say that they're bisexual now; there's a lot of discovery that needs to happen and these "helpful" adults are actually stopping them in their tracks and not letting them grow. And it is pushing them into these personas that are really not healthy.

What I just want say is that doing what you are asking to do – going and talking about this – is difficult because of the opposition, and nobody wants to say that the Emperor is naked. That's the metaphor I think you need to use with people that don't have that knowledge, we don't have all the knowledge that you have, but people can understand that women don't have penises, that people don't have different brains, you know, girl brain and boy brain, so that's really what is important to tell them, and that's why people don't want to say it. Because everybody's playing ball, people want to say yes, it's beautiful, your clothes are beautiful, and nobody says you are naked, you know, you are wrong. I don't...I'm not a biologist like you, but I have read somewhere that men have more in common with chimpanzees than with women...<audience laughter muffles speaker>...you can take it there if you want. But there is a difference, we are different, and it is – we need to be equal in the differences, that's what we want to keep, that distinction between the sexes, and sexism – we cannot speak about sexism, as you said, and that's the other thing they are playing with, these transactivists, with sexism.

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Because it's like with sexism, you are damned if you protest at it all, and you are damned if you smile to the camera because if you smile he will just come and do something else, maybe talk to him, that if you protest he will say oh, you wish or whatever <unintelligible>. I just also want to say is that is how they play with us, they play on the emotional blackmail of women and partners with the suicide threat and these women say "you're going to make the life of these people so much better", but as you said a lot of them are not perhaps people that...no, it wasn't you, it was somebody over there that said these people have a personality that is very imposing, and that's where we need to keep our values like it was 70%, don't let them impose on us.

DR NICOLA WILLIAMS: Thank you <audience applause> I mean, you're right that getting out onto the street and talking to people is difficult, and it's going to take bravery and a bit of courage for this, but you know, over...people are starting to talk, and the only way we're going to get to a point where this is socially acceptable to talk the truth is when eventually enough women – and men – start to say it. So it began...a couple of years ago Stephanie was the only person who would speak about some of these things on the radio...I joined her, Hannah's on the radio – we're all starting to get out there, and the reason we're doing it is to inspire the next lot of women to get out there. And at some point there'll be a moment when you think to yourself "this is the time to do it", because at some point you're going to have to do it because otherwise these meetings are for no reason. We can talk about it forever, but we've got to talk about it to others. I'll just say, try to be brave. I'm nobody special, I'm just trying to get into this area and there was an opportunity, and I just thought "OK, well, I'll do it", and...I've got no special skills, I'm not a media person, I'm literally just...I'm a shy person really that doesn't get out much! <audience laughter> thrust into the limelight. But we're doing it to try to inspire women, you know, because every single person...and then your action, if

you get out, that inspires someone else. That's the great thing about this, it's that domino effect. So I want to see, next week, all these women across the country, we've got almost 200 women signed up to do it getting out there; you're not going to be on your own, it's going to be happening all over the country. And that will inspire another 200, and eventually this will be...everyone will be able to talk about it. We've just got to get to that point. It's going to take bravery there's no point denying it, and it's scary – I'm scared when I'm on the radio, doing this, but in the end you've just got to do it, that's what it comes down to in the end – just be brave.

<audience applause>

I'd just like to give a quick shout-out to Alison Moyet, if she's there (hi Alison!).

Our next speaker is Abigail Roland, she is a poet, writer and former teacher. She's also a sexual abuse survivor, and what we would call these days a “trans widow” - or was, she is no longer. So Abigail...

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ABIGAIL ROLAND: Hello, yes, it is scary. I'm scared. I was scared last time at Truro when I stand myself on my feet talking to everyone about my experiences. I didn't plan to do that, so in a way that was OK. Tonight I'm here by intention, and it kind of feels different so...I'm hoping that I'll get through this without actually crying. I might. If I do, don't worry.

Why am I here? Well, I was interviewed by the BBC camera team when they said something like that, “why are you here?”. Well, I'm here firstly because I believe that the thing called autogynophilia exists. A lot of people I know are denying that. I didn't know what it was when it happened to me, I've learned about it since, so just hold that thought for a minute.

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I think that it exists and that it's an important factor in the debate that needs to be had about the way in which the changes to the Act would impact on women's rights and protections, so that's one reason. The second reason I'm here is because I am a survivor of grooming, sexual abuse, rape. Before I was 15 I had been shot in the eye. So extreme male violence, and that wasn't handled well in the early 60s. The establishment response was pretty punitive, to be honest. I made a promise to myself then that I would never again be silenced by fear and when the issues around self-ID first came to my attention and I began asking one or two questions – and that's really all I was doing, really saying “hey, has anybody talked to or asked how women feel about this?”, I was shut down in a quite brutal and bullying way by people that I thought were my friends and my colleagues, political comrades, and it was a shocking thing for me. And quite a triggering thing too, because here we are again, being silenced; so that's the second reason why I'm here.

The third reason is because Nic spoke about “a voice for the women that can't speak”. Now my experience of living in a close relationship with an autogynophile man goes back 15 years and the fact that it goes back 15 years means that I can speak about it. I don't think I could have spoken about it at the time that it was happening to me because it's just devastating. The humiliation, the loss of self-esteem that is felt by women who are placed in that situation; and I know there are women out there – I read recently a heart-rending thread on Mumsnet of “trans widows” - and recognised, in some form or another, everything that was being said there as being related to my experience. Now when it happened to me, I wasn't really a trans widow then because it was 15 years ago and it was way before the trans explosion in this country. I didn't know anything about this stuff. I just knew that I was being made to suffer. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about my relationship with my husband – ex-husband – because I'm kind of speaking for all those women who are in the middle of this nightmare now, and also because I need to tell you and people out

there that men like this exist. Whether we call them trans – and lots of people have said to me “well, yes, he's a nasty piece of work but he's not trans” - whether we call them trans or not, they are out there and if self-ID is brought in then they will abuse the opportunity that is opened up to them by the law. So, this is how it was for me. I married a man, who, I'll be honest, I knew that he had certain – maybe emotional difficulties – he came from a Catholic family, he had, I thought, a lot of guilt, and I thought I could handle it. For many years I lived with him, believing that he suffered from depression. He told me that he was very depressed and that's why he would go away for long periods of time, that's why he was emotionally unavailable to me, that's why we got lots of wrong numbers, that's why he spent lots of time in places where his mobile phone didn't get any signal.

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I spent many years of my life trying to understand why this man, who apparently wanted to be married to me – I didn't force him – wasn't there in my marriage. I believed that I could help him, I suffered, I believed, I read a dozen books on male depression, I tried to talk to him. He would turn away, quite literally, he would turn his back on me and he just refused to engage with me at all whenever I strayed close to any kind of “what's the problem with our marriage?” conversation. I began to think that he was having an affair – naively – I tackled him about it. No, no, he was outraged. Not only was he not having an affair, he was working very hard, working away from home. I was emotionally unstable, unbalanced, for nagging him about the fact that he was behaving in this way. I bought it! I bought it hook, line and sinker. I thought “You cow!”, I thought, and I started to try “What can I do? How can I help, how can I be even more supportive?”.

More wrong numbers. More strange visitors. And finally I twigged. I knew that my husband had a workspace not far from my home, and one day – I can't explain this to you even now as I stand here – one day I just had an epiphany. I thought “If I go inside that workplace, I will find my answer”. And did I. Did I ever. I stole his keys – my Bluebeard story – and let myself in to his workspace. And there I found a whole array of female clothing. Wigs, size nine stilettos – but worse than that, video recording equipment. Cameras. Thousands and thousands of photographs of my husband with a whole range of partners engaged in a whole variety of sexual acts. I'll spare you the details. It turned out that my husband's preferred business was making and distributing specialist pornography over the internet, and that some of the videos that he had in his workspace were actually made in my home. In my kitchen, in my lounge, in my bedroom, while I was teaching classes at school so that I could pay all the household bills.

Now, I'll cut here, because you can imagine. There were scenes, there were recriminations, there were long talks, and eventually my husband spoke to me honestly. He told me things about his life that I believe to be true. He told me, for example, that although he was obsessed with the idea of being a woman and desperately, desperately needed – needed was the word he used – to pass as a woman; he didn't want to lose his penis. He actually told me that his penis was far too important to him as the primary site of his sexual gratification. But, he did fantasise about having breasts, and he was obsessed with having breasts. He also had, shall we say, developed an interest in pregnant women.

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He was a difficult man at the best of times, but in this persona he was impossible, I couldn't talk to him at all. What he wanted was for me to accept this. He actually wanted me to participate in this world, although quite how that would happen I don't know. So I'm going to finish, because I'm being brought to order here, with some points about about my husband that I learned over the ten, twelve years of our relationship, which I think are valid here.

One, he was obsessed with his own image. Literally. Witness the thousands and thousands of printed images I referred to earlier.

Two, from the age of 11 or 12 or thereabouts, he told me that he had engaged in masturbation using

his older sister's underwear, and that he'd been heavily involved in pornography since that time.

Three, if he was a man – presenting as a man – he was the vainest person I have ever met. He was also, when it came to women, very judgemental. He was always making comments about my, other women's weight, clothes, make-up, that kind of thing.

For him, the sexual act was linked with performance. It was as if he was watching himself making love to himself. That was how I made sense of it.

He wasn't picky. I soon realised he would have sex with pretty much anyone, and it didn't really matter to him what sex they were or whether they were attractive or not, because the important thing for him was that they were prepared to go along with the idea that he was a woman. Some of his partners, as seen in videos and photographs, were downright ugly. But I don't doubt that he liked to think of himself as “the pretty one”. Some of the pictures that I saw showed him with people that were disturbingly young.

He was utterly deluded about his ability to pass as a woman. He was 6ft3.5, and he was a competitive motor racer, and so he had the upper body development of somebody who was used to swinging a big car round a race track.

He was an exhibitionist. He liked to be naked in public spaces and he liked to engage in sexual acts in public spaces. He once told me that one of his favourite things to do was to walk naked along the hard shoulder of the A30, so that he could get a reaction.

He had a criminal past. He lied for fun, for pure entertainment. Sometimes he would tell the truth in a way that made you think it was a lie, or a joke. For example, he once joked in mixed company that his business was just a cover for his porn film empire. Everybody laughed. Including me.

He found it exciting to shock other people, to transgress, and push against their boundaries. He liked to be in places where he knew he shouldn't be.

Finally, and this is an important thing that I learned, it took me a long time to learn it. I learned that I don't hate him. I hated his behaviour, I hated his cruelty and his lies, but I don't hate him. I have learned to pity this person, who was a man with a whole raft of mental health and emotional problems.

<1:35:00>

Now I don't know whether, if this was all happening today, my husband would be an out-and-out trans. I don't know that. I do know that he wouldn't be seeking surgery, because he told me that. But what I do know is that this is not a person who should have free and unfettered access to female spaces. This is a person who, given that access, it would be like giving them a golden ticket. Willy Wonka, a ticket to ride. Thank you.

<audience applause>

Thank you very much, Abigail. Oh yes...I'm going to ask if there are any questions, but I'm also going to ask if we can keep them quite brief because we have slipped with the time quite significantly and we've still got a speaker to go...

AUDIENCE MEMBER 10: Thank you very much for that really amazing and moving account and for opening our eyes to this new situation you've described so eloquently. I have a friend who because of her experiences isn't able to come out to talks like this. When she was a very young lesbian and she was a foster child and all the rest, very vulnerable, she got into a relationship with a

woman who was quite abusive to her, and it took a long time for her to find out that actually this abusive person she was in a relationship with used to be a man, and she didn't get to hear this until quite late on. And it's destroyed her ability to trust people, and it's the reason she doesn't come out to lesbian only events because she just doesn't trust that she's in a safe space anywhere any more. So, sadly she's not going to be here and that's why I'm mentioning this; your situation is also going to be happening to lesbians as well, and that this change of the Gender Recognition Act will just make this whole situation so much worse for very vulnerable people, especially when it's their first relationship.

ABIGAIL ROLAND: Just to respond briefly, thank you for saying that. It's so hard because we are, as women, socialised to support and be nice to other people, to care for them, and so it's very important that we learn to speak out, but also very hard. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 11: Hi, thank you very much for coming, it's amazing that you can get up and speak about that. I just wanted to affirm what you're saying and say that I knew someone that wasn't perhaps quite as disturbing as your husband, but had a similar mix of strange beliefs and thoughts and behaviours that includes autogynophilia. This idea that you actually have to make love to yourself and think that you're making love to yourself, imagining yourself as a woman and...I shouldn't use the word love, perhaps...

ABIGAIL ROLAND: I think it fits the bill in this case!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 11: ...as a medical person we need to stop thinking about this as something simple, that you're either trans or not – these are really complex interactions between lots of thoughts and emotions and behaviours and that everyone is very different.

<audience applause>

As I say I am going to push on now as we have slipped quite badly with time, there will be opportunities afterwards to have a chat with people. OK, I'd like to introduce our final speaker now, who on our flyer was advertised as being “iconoclastic”, which is “criticising or attacking beliefs or institutions”, and the synonyms for that are “sceptical, questioning, heretical, rebellious, subversive” - I'm in love - “renegade” <audience noise muffles final words>. Ladies and Gentlemen, I don't think she needs any more introduction – there's at least one person here who wants to have a selfie with you later – ladies and gentlemen, Miranda Yardley.

<audience applause>

<1:40:00>

MIRANDA YARDLEY: Thank you for that!

<audience laughter>

It was like “Call My Bluff” or something!

This building is amazing. This building was one of only two buildings in this country designed in this Egyptian style, by a chap by the name of John Falsome CHECK and it was designed in 1920...19?...1823, almost two hundred years ago, and I think we really have been able to bear witness to the nadir that is, the pit, the cesspool, of what transgender activism is, that this magnificent 200-year old building has been defaced with graffiti on the side of it that says “FUCK OFF TERFS” and a “tranarchy” sign spray painted next to the entrance. I was outside and two of the local boys were hanging out – I say boys but they were in their early 20s, but everybody looks about either 12 or my age, old, - and they were absolutely appalled, they said to me “what is this?”

and I said “it says Fuck off TERFs”, they said “what does it mean?”, I said “it means fuck off, women” and they said “I don't understand why they would do this, we all love this building, why would anybody do this to this building?”

Of course, in the run up to this there was a campaign by a group of people in Plymouth – I had to remember where I was then for a minute as this seems to happen rather a lot – to shut this event down, and they of course decided that, you know, 26th August in the summer when everyone's on school holidays wasn't a great time to do it. But I think it's worthwhile to try and understand why it is that these people do this. They do this because the people who come to these events, people who speak to these events – we stand for women and girls, and we stand for women and girls even though we are threatened and stalked and violently confronted by these people. We don't go along with fashionable beliefs that are held by a vocal minority, views that harm women, girls, and also transsexuals. We don't believe that trans women are literally biological women. We also believe that the rights of women, lesbians and girls; the right to political representation and even the right to name their own bodies, their own female bodies, are hard-won rights which mustn't be threatened by opportunists who are disguising themselves as activists. We also believe that we all should be allowed to discuss changes in the law that directly affect us. The people that seek to stop us directly talking about these things are undemocratic. They don't want us to speak and when we do speak, as we all know, they will attempt to ruin your life.

So what's brought us to this? The position we're in at the moment is both institutional and systematic. We are all being utterly controlled with what is known as political language. There are real-world effects of this – things like “your genital preferences are transphobic #rileyjpenis”. This is a great example of language which is not just used to hide reality, but hides meaning, and it also disguises power. It's men's power over women, it's men's power over women's right to self-determination, and it's men's power over our own right to set our own boundaries. This comes as, through the political language of equality. Equality is completely meaningless. Never fight for equality. Everyone is equal in a prison, but nobody is free. Fight for liberation.

<comments and laughter from aside>

Thank you! Shamelessly I stole that from Germaine Greer, but she is absolutely right!

<audience applause>

Diversity is another buzzword that gets thrown around. What does diversity mean? Well, usually it means a group of mainly white men saying “we're women, we're diverse women!” because having a penis is a diverse interpretation of what it means to be a women...a woman...a women! *<audience laughter>* And the amazing thing is that when it comes to diversity there is one type of diversity which is utterly forbidden – and that is your right to have a diversity of opinion. *<audience applause>*

<1:45:00>

Inclusion...whoa, there's that word again...inclusion, sexual orientation and biological sex are by definition not inclusive. We see words like “discrimination” - you're not allowed to discriminate, you can't do this because it discriminates. We are all allowed to discriminate, we have the human right to discriminate. We even discriminate, remember, when we decide what we want for dinner.

The characterisation of the trans debate has become threats, violence and attack on freedom of speech. We cannot, we in fact, we are being prevented from talking about what is the defining social issue of this time. It's like being in an abusive relationship. Think about it. Threats, lots of threats. Controlling language. We are banned from social media. We try to meet and we get more threats.

It's...we're kept separate, we can't even meet to discuss how we feel about things. We can't even discuss, we can't even meet to discuss our internal lives as to what we think about what is going on. It is just exactly the same as being in a narcissistic, controlling relationship and it's like the entire country has fallen for this. The whole world is falling for it. Why is it – why is it that this is allowing a damaging culture that is foundational upon the worst aspects of men's rights activism, and yet this is hiding from us in plain sight. There is control over language, there is control over censorship, there is a shutting down of debate. Again, we can't meet in private. We are in what is a dystopian present and this week in the news, there has been a great example – my last one was Jess Bradley; we have, presented on a plate, the head of David Challenor. David Challenor was hiding in plain sight, a sexual predator, controlling, children in care. A conviction for being abusive towards animals, not in a...apparently they had a house with about thirty different animals in them and he was even apprehended at one point for keeping seven goldfish. Yet he was a scout leader, and a teacher. And his son – Ashton, Aimee – managed to win the heart of the Green Party and win the heart of Stonewall and pretty much anyone else he came into contact with. And as part of Aimee's campaigning around the Green Party, he campaigned to erode the sex-based protections that women enjoy. He was lauded by Stonewall and other groups. He used social media to get his own way. In fact, Aimee was hiding in plain sight, whilst concealing some of the most unusual aspects of transgenderism, which include sex. He was a furry, you can find his “fursona” page. There were his attacks on women's rights. There was the use of misogynistic language.

Just like Jess Bradley, Aimee Challenor is a great example of a mentally ill man who has been championed about the system of power and instrumentalised in the war on women. Look at his power. Look at social media bans. I no longer have a Twitter account – well, I do, ha ha. Still tweet the same stuff. I lost my Twitter account for tweeting “Aimee Challenor is a man”. It's an observation, it's a statement of fact. There's only something wrong with it if there's something wrong with being a man.

<aside: you've a minute>

Oh god. I'd better fast-forward, then. He's got power. He's allowed to have post-publication amendments done to articles on the BBC website. At the moment, before your very eyes, his relationship with his father is disappearing off social media. With no meaningful mainstream coverage, there's been talk of whether or not there has been some sort of injunction over the coverage of this case. But true or not, this is cleaning his history before whatever storm is gonna come out later on.

<1:50:00>

We saw today the Green Party released a statement about this, and it was tweeted, and it was screen capped, and then it was removed from the website, and they said “no, that wasn't us” even though it was on their website. Think to yourself, what understanding – and I'm not blaming Aimee Challenor for the awful things his father did – what understanding does Aimee Challenor have about boundaries or consent? How can he possibly? The power that I've been talking about, the power that's allowed him and his father to hide in plain sight – city lawyers have been backing LGBT organisations. I say LGBT organisations, what I mean in practice: it's the T. They are offering pro bono services to allow people to protect their reputation, and it is creating formidable problem for people who are trying to do nothing else but speak about the truth. This is exactly what is being done to hide things in plain sight.

So, what can we do about this? Protest. Resist school policies that put the needs of a small number of pupils ahead of the rights of women and girls. Women, don't allow men to speak for you or over you. Hold LGBT organisations to account for the absolute shit show that is going on at the moment. Hold the political parties to account. Hold political parties to account for the fact that they seem to be incapable of understanding the concept of material oppression and instead are looking towards

identity as a way of defining problems that affect people in real life. Recognise also that this is a broad human rights issue and that we are in the middle of what is in fact an all-out political war on waged on women by a men's sexual rights movement. <audience applause> This movement and its allies do not care about you and they do not care about your children. Do not be bullied into submission by aggressive transgender activists. There is too much at stake. I will finish. I will paraphrase Andrea Dworkin: "Tear this movement to pieces, pull it apart, vandalise it, destabilise it. Fuck it up."

<audience applause>

Thank you very much <audience applause> Has anybody got any questions for Miranda? And can I ask you again to keep them very very brief cos we are running quite late.

MIRANDA YARDLEY: Also I've not had a drink yet.

<audience laughter>

AUDIENCE MEMBER 12: Thanks everybody on the panel for speaking, it's been really interesting, first time I've been to one of these meetings. For ten years I've been doing anti-sex work work, and the sex work lobby is totally interconnected with the trans lobby, and they are the same people and all the things that you've said about the trans lobby, I would say is a pimp mentality and also a pander mentality. I mean, I was a prostitute for 14 years and I am told constantly that anything I say about the violence of prostitution is just a lie, you know, and I'm an ex-prostitute. I'm called a SWERF, you know, which is like...obviously I self-hate myself so much. And you know, we have to interconnect with each other, because I think women are being silenced all the time and have been for 2000 years, or 3000 years, there's nothing new about silencing prostituted women, they always have been silenced. And we are beginning to rally, to get a voice now, but our voice is silenced even by feminists, and we are still treated as subhuman by most groups. And this is something that...I get very emotional about it because I think as long as we don't...as long as people see prostituted women as subhuman, there's never going to be a way forward.

<audience applause>

<1:55:00>

MIRANDA YARDLEY: Would you like me to comment on that <from aside; yes, yes, sorry> That's OK. I agree completely with what you say, that the prostitution lobby and the transgender lobby are intertwined, in fact, you will see that all the time they use the same rhetoric, the same language and the same tactics to shut people up. They...it's all one and the same organisation. The issue is whether or not people think it's culturally acceptable for men to buy access to women's bodies, whether women's bodies are commodities, indeed, whether or not women are human beings. I think it's an important question.

<audience applause>

AUDIENCE MEMBER 13: I'd like to ask, how are we to do this, how are we to fight this? It looks to me from documents I've seen on Twitter, as though they've got huge amounts of funding behind them. Where's our funding? My experience is that women tend to have less money than most, call me old-fashioned. I mean, how are we going to fight it? Where do we get the money from? Can we apply to any grant-making trusts for some funding to support the work, the valuable work, that people in front of us are doing? Does anybody know the answer?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 14: And where does their funding come from?

MIRANDA YARDLEY: Soros. There's no doubt about it that they enjoy a lot of funding; if you look at Mermaids they get the funding from Children in Need, I believe that they get funding from the National Lottery <to Stephanie Davies-Arai> You've looked at this in detail?

STEPHANIE DAVIES-ARAI: Yes, yes.

MIRANDA YARDLEY: From the National Lottery.

STEPHANIE DAVIES-ARAI: Yeah, Children in Need, National Lottery, <unintelligable> trust funds, Gendered Intelligence. Mermaids now get funding from the Department for Education to go into schools.

MIRANDA YARDLEY: And to add to that, most people out there are like “oh yes, I'll support transgender organisations” without actually having the first clue as to what on earth it's all about. The answer to your question is: I don't know. I don't know where the money's going to come from; I think it really is a case of people just being bloody awkward and getting under people's skin. I have this fantasy in my head of storming the gates of the Palace of Westminster with torches; you know like in the scene from Frankenstein when he's got the villagers outside. I've got that idea in my head, I don't know where that came from, I was a boring middle-aged accountant until a few years ago. But yeah, I think we need a revolution. I mean, seriously, I'm not joking about it, I think we need a revolution. We need to bring this power system down.

<audience applause>

AUDIENCE MEMBER 14: Sorry, can I just add to that and say that all the fund-raising that's done, you know, the crowdfunding, Man Friday sell t-shirts and badges and apparently we're building an empire on them, but all of those things you can do, they put money towards our leaflets, they put money towards our actions, we do everything with our time for nothing. But we are being heard because we're getting the message out there to people, just by spamming leaflets everywhere we get noticed, so we have turned the tide on no money. So we don't necessarily need the funding, we just need the people to talk about it, so you know, Jean wrote something wonderful on Mumsnet about how we were doing it with £1.67 and a can of pop <audience laughter> and I think that's why this works.

MIRANDA YARDLEY: I think it was absolutely inspired what Man Friday did, going out and invading men's spaces. To me that's great, that's really subversive, that really is sticking it to the man. Man Friday! <audience applause>

AUDIENCE MEMBER 15: Can I just say – I don't need a microphone – from Birmingham. Women do not have penises!

<audience laughter and applause>

AUDIENCE MEMBER 15: #stickerwoman. End of.

MIRANDA YARDLEY: Stickerwoman!

<audience applause>

Thank you very much. I'm going to bring the meeting to a close now, there'll be a chance for us to chat, socialise and network after we've finished talking; the bar is open. I've just got one or two things left to say. I hope that some of the speakers here tonight have inspired you and have

invigorated you to actually do what you can. There are a multitude of opportunities for you to contribute to this sort of campaign that doesn't involve you handing out leaflets if that's not what you want to do. So use those opportunities that are available to us to get the message out there. Slightly on the line of funding, there are stickers – in the shape of penises; there are cakes – that are not in the shape of penises; there are badges, postcards and even little crocheted uteruses, or is it uterii? <audience laughter>. These are all available for a donation – and badges, sorry, forgot badges and postcards as well. These are all around, help yourself, put a donation in, or alternatively if you don't want to have any of our tat, then just put some money in the pot anyway! There will be more of these meetings and then..although this is only the second one, we have increased the contact that we've made from the first one, so there will be more meetings, there will be more opportunities for us to speak out; and we are looking at possibly, maybe, moving out of the south-west, possibly..I mean, I'm from Cornwall, I came over the Tamar last night <audience laughter> <muffled comment> So keep your eye on social media, keep in contact with us, speak up and speak out. And I'd just like to close by quoting the badge I was quite kindly donated tonight: “I incite this meeting to rebellion”.

Before I finish I'd like to say a huge thank you to two people who have worked night and day, their fingers to the bone, blah blah blah, however you want to say it, to make sure that this happened. I get to sit here and talk, and be on YouTube, woo, but that's not the hard work, the hard work has been put in by two other individuals who I do think we need to show our appreciation to. A round of applause for our two organisers!

<audience applause>

I now declare the rebellion started! If you'd like to go to the bar and get yourselves a drink. Thank you very much.

<audience applause>