

Sex, Gender and Backlash *in the Green Party*

BY THISTLE PETTERSEN

Grounded in existing international treaties endorsed by our party's national platform, the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights reaffirms the feminist understanding of sex as the basis for women's oppression.

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The topic of sex and gender has never been more contentious. Who would have thought, thirty years ago, that a popular trend would take hold in our society that denies the material reality of sex and promotes instead the ideology of “gender identity”?

While declining to take a position on these questions, the Dialogue not Expulsion (DnE) Caucus has organized within the national party to demand a conversation. Our party publicly affirms Respect for Diversity, Grassroots Democracy, and Feminism as key values. Yet it nonetheless engages in “cancel culture” to shut down such discussions at every turn. Women have been sanctioned and expelled from the party's National Women's Caucus for discussing women's rights. The DnE Caucus has documented multiple abuses of the party's values on its website.

I joined the DnE caucus and then became a Green Party member in my state of Wisconsin in March of 2020. I was active with the Campus Greens when I was in school in the early '90s. Later I would co-found Madison Action for Mining Alternatives (MAMA), organizing with the group for five years. My political values are reflected in what the Green Party promotes, but until this past year I felt disillusioned and frustrated with American party politics.

What changed was the Georgia Green Party's February 22, 2020 endorsement of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights. This document was penned by Sheila Jeffreys, Heather Brunskell Evans and Maureen O'Hara and is promoted by the Women's Human Rights Campaign (WHRC). Since its March 2019 release, the Declaration has collected over 13,000 signatures from individuals around the world and almost 300 organizational endorsements.

Grounded in existing international treaties endorsed by our party's national platform, the Declaration reaffirms the feminist understanding of sex as the basis for women's oppression—and counters the assertion that this oppression is grounded instead in “gender identity.”

As feminists, we understand that gender is a tool for patriarchal oppression. We believe it is gender (sex-based stereotypes), not biological reality, that we must reject in our efforts to end the oppression of women and to free men from their assigned roles as our oppressors.

Gender identity ideology is not only wrong about the objective reality of one's sex, but its adoption as public policy is harmful to the sex-based rights and protections women have fought for to become equal citizens in society.

No matter how much a man feels, believes he is, or identifies as a woman, it is simply impossible for him to actually be or become an adult human female. Even with plastic surgeries, or opposite sex hormones, one's sex is determined at conception and remains either male or female based on chromosomes, gametes and the reproductive systems associated with our sexed bodies.

Women have unique needs. Public policy must tell the truth about the differences between males and females. Women need secure, safe spaces when targeted by men's violence. Women and girls have a right to boundaries, privacy and dignity when changing, showering or tending to menstrual health in public facilities. In addition, girls and women deserve equity in access to competitive sports, etc.

As a radical feminist vitriolically persecuted by trans rights activists in my hometown of Madison, WI, I immediately was drawn to help defend the Georgia Party from attacks made by trans-activist Greens.

The backlash the Georgia Green Party faces for signing the Declaration has spilled over to target women who have risen to speak in defense of the feminist positions taken by the Georgia Party. Violent threats and doxxing of these Green women (including past candidates of our party) has been tolerated and celebrated without consequence in official party channels. These women have been silenced and banned from these same channels for having the temerity to speak up in their own defense.

On December 24, 2020, Margaret Elizabeth of the Lavender Caucus filed a complaint with the Accreditation Committee, seeking to dis-accredit the Georgia Party, a member in good standing since before the national party's FEC recognition. If this complaint is taken seriously by the Accreditation and National Committees, the Georgia Green Party is at risk of being expelled.

The fear that affirmation of women's rights harms the civil rights of people who believe in transgender and nonbinary identities is a fallacy that undermines the Green Party's commitment to feminism. Ironically, the vehemence aimed at those who defend the rights of women undermines the assertion by trans activists that there exists no conflict between the rights of women and the rights of men who identify as "trans" or "non-binary."

Feminism is simply the body of thought and action that is designed by and for women to break free from male violence and male-dominated culture. Methods of violent social control enacted by men and male institutions have injured and oppressed women for at least five thousand years. Feminism is about fighting back against male supremacy and male domination. Our resistance to patriarchal oppression has always been portrayed as hostility towards men. Now our understanding of biological reality is seen as hostile by all who insist that womanhood is a feeling, denying the material reality that it is based on being female.

"Wait. There are people who don't believe womanhood is based on being female?" you may ask. Yes. These people generally fall under the umbrella of what is called "trans activism"—seeking "rights" and services for people who do not believe biological sex determines whether you are a man or a woman. Some of the services they seek are plastic surgeries to alter appearance, cross sex hormones and puberty blockers to prevent normal adolescent development.

Trans ideology erases womanhood, which undermines the entire project of feminism itself. If we are unable to define what a woman is, we lose the language to defend women's rights. If sex isn't real, how can one have a sexual orientation? Trans activism is misogynistic and homophobic at its core. And yet the political left, including the Green Party, mouths support for the rights of women, lesbians and gay men, while advocating policies no

less destructive to our well-being than those advanced by our political opposition.

Surely a feminist party can acknowledge that we have a problem when 70-75% of publicly elected offices are held by men. Surely we must understand our obligation to encourage women to run for office and to support them in that endeavor. Facing a future of catastrophic climate change, civil unrest, endless wars, economic and ecological collapse, it is important to put women into positions of power, to hear the concerns of the other half of our species. Yet our party's National Committee has recently considered multiple proposals that would allow any man to self-identify as a woman or as "nonbinary," to seek election to internal party roles set-aside for women, or to compel the thought and speech of others to affirm these men's denial of their sexed bodies.

The issue of women's representation is specifically addressed in Article 6 of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights and is of particular import to the Green Party. Those proposals which would change national party policy to include men in leadership roles meant for women must be rejected. Men do not become women with the claim of a non-male "gender identity."

Article 6: Reaffirming women's rights to political participation on the basis of sex (a) States "shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country". (CEDAW, Article 7). This should include forms of discrimination against women which consist of the inclusion in the category of women of men who claim to have a female "gender identity."

In conclusion, the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights is an important document to consider and discuss—and to endorse when exploring the ongoing problem of sexism in our society and in our political institutions, and particularly in the Green Party.

If the Green Party is, with any integrity, to claim Feminism as a key value, it is imperative that we respect women's spaces and boundaries, and that we acknowledge that being female has social significance when living under an entrenched system of male rule, as we do today in the USA.



THISTLE PETERSEN

is a member of the Wisconsin Green Party and former member of the national party's Women's Caucus. She is a founder of Women's Liberation Radio News (WLRN), a radical feminist news and analysis collective that produces a monthly radio program with a women's world news segment, music, interviews and commentary. Thistle holds a B.A. degree in Sociology from Augsburg University in Minneapolis and an M.A. from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in Spanish Literature.