

Socialism and the fight against Transphobia

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Introduction

We have witnessed a number of debates that have sparked controversy within the LGBT+, feminist and socialist movements. The fundamental disagreement between trans advocates and trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) on what being a woman/man means continues to rage on. It is essential to recognise that the roots of trans oppression lie in the development of a class society. The connection between socialism and LGBT+ rights has a long history. Socialists must defend trans rights in an era where countries are making attempts to erase trans life from public consciousness as part of a far-right agenda; as seen under the Trump administration.

As trans people have sought further recognition, solidarity, and social justice within feminism and socialism, new narratives have arisen that further distinguish exclusionary practices and ideas from those deemed more inclusive.

This article is divided into three sections. Section 1 examines the roots of trans oppression and explores the connection between women's oppression and trans oppression under capitalist exploitation. Section 2 looks at the rise of Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism, its origins and common arguments. Section 3 looks at LGBT+ equality under neoliberalism and the potential for liberation through socialism for the trans and LGBT+ community in Ireland.

Section 1:

The family, gender stereotyping and locating oppression

As Lenin argued

‘[Our] ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalize all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation.’¹

Laura Miles locates the roots of transgender oppression within a system of rigid gender binary that is reinforced by the nuclear family;

‘All our lives are distorted by the kind of system that we are forced to live in and the state which defends that society’²

The forces of production and the roots of women's oppression

In his classic work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Karl Marx's collaborator Friedrich Engels outlines the rise and root of women's oppression. Through an anthropological and historical materialist lens he argues that egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies became divided not just into conflicting classes but also began to develop a family structure within which women were subordinate. Engels drew the conclusion that this was not predetermined or ‘natural’, rather a result of the changes in the forces of production and the impact this had on the different roles played by men and women in production and reproduction. Before this shift women were key decision-makers and producers in early horticultural societies but their role as reproducers now excluded them from the larger

productive roles in settled agricultural production. This shift in society also saw a quantitative difference in the level of existence experienced – it allowed for the rise of a surplus – and over time this surplus became concentrated in the hands of a minority of men. Chris Harman has expanded on this;

An interaction between biological imperatives and social needs underlies such changes in the division of labour. The human species has to reproduce itself if any society is going to survive. But the scale of its reproduction—how many children are needed from each adult woman—varies enormously... For agricultural societies, each child is, potentially, an extra cultivator, and there is the need to compensate for a higher death rate, the result of a greater vulnerability to infectious diseases, and the ravages of interminable wars... It is in the interests of the whole society (including its women) for women not to take part in activities (such as warfare, long distance travel and heavy agricultural tasks) which expose them to the greatest risks.³

The oppression of women can be linked, not to their biological body and the ability to reproduce per se, but to how the forces and relations of production shape the impact that biology has on the position of women and the development of women's oppression. Abortion is as old as the history of humanity, with references of women having or accessing abortion services frequently throughout history. Naturally, women have always sought to control their own reproduction and determine when and how many children they will have.

However, with the rise of capitalism, states began to make more efforts to regulate reproduction and to control sexual behaviour, especially of women. It soon became necessary to register all births and over a period of time access to abortion and contraception was clamped down entirely either via moral or political avenues. Compare this to the treatment of women's sexuality in the primitive communism that once survived in the Blasket Islands where a unique contraceptive was formed, weaved from moss and honey, which acted as a diaphragm of sorts. In a society where wealth was not concentrated in the hands of a few, and the accumulation of capital was not the sole goal, women's sexuality did not need to be controlled and the norms of the time reflected this.

The nuclear family and the roots of trans and non-binary oppression

In hunter-gather societies the lineage of children was often passed down through the maternal line, namely because you couldn't be assured who the father was. However, with the rise of private property in land the nuclear family model and the institution of marriage became a way to ensure paternal lineage was adopted as the norm and the inheritance of land was secured. This obsession with land and ownership went hand in hand with the rise of a class of clergy, particularly in Ireland but it was mirrored across the world, who became the moral police of sexuality and women's bodies. Men and women were prescribed rigid roles in the family, sexuality became more strictly regulated and homosexuality and other so-called deviant behaviours were more heavily proscribed. It is important to note that, as Sue Caldwell states;

this connection between productive forces and family structure is not mechanical—each new formation builds on what came before and is impacted also by battles between contending classes.⁴

Over time there has been a progressive subjugation of women and of variations in sexuality and gender resulting in a concentrated effort to exclude the colourful and diverse history of trans or gender-fluid people across civilizations. As we saw the rise of colonialism and the church, we also witnessed the brutal oppression of trans-people. As far back as 1592 there are references to colonizers in the Americas setting dogs on trans-people and gladly documenting the brutality and fervour with which they sought to destroy those that challenged the gender binary that was the cornerstone of the emerging family model. Unfortunately, this oppression is still prevalent today.

Brandon Teena was an American trans man who was raped and murdered in America in 1993. His life and death were the subject of the Academy Award-winning 1999 film *Boys Don't Cry*. Marsha P. Johnson was an American gay liberation activist and self-identified drag queen. Known as an outspoken advocate for gay rights, Johnson was one of the prominent figures in the Stonewall uprising of 1969. She was found dead in the Hudson River immediately after the 1992 Pride event – no police investigation was launched. Many who identify as trans meet a violent end in some of the most extreme expressions of oppression. Trans-

people have been burnt to death or gunned down with machine guns. Many have noted how transphobia is more widespread and extreme than homophobia. Transgender deaths by fatal violence have increased during each of the last three years in the United States.⁵ In the UK trans-phobic hate crime has tripled in the last five years, while prosecution rates have dropped and transgender people report lack of trust in the police. More than a third of transgender employees say they had to leave their job due to discrimination in 2016.⁶ A survey released by Stonewall reports that eight out of ten trans school and college pupils had self-harmed and 45% had tried to take their own lives.⁷ In the face of such brutality and inequality we must certainly put to bed the argument that someone might “choose” to be Trans. The consistent and measured attacks on the trans community, women and homosexuals point to how breaking the control on sexuality, gender and the family would be a severe blow to the system. Our oppression is woven from the same cloth and will therefore require an integrated approach to counter it.

Linking trans oppression and women’s oppression

The rigid gender stereotypes used as the bedrock for the nuclear family have transformed into a shower of pink and blue toys, acceptable clothing and deeply socialized norms in 21st Century capitalism. Women’s oppression

is the oldest oppression and will be the most difficult to overcome as the roots are located in an institution that shapes the most intimate sphere of human life, in relationships between men, women and children in the family.⁸ As Sue Caldwell argues;

“These gender stereotypes have remained a powerful force despite the many changes in women’s lives, opportunities and expectations, especially over the last 50 years. They help shape and justify the oppression faced by women and by anyone who might present in a way that challenges the expectations that come with their birth sex... In the absence of alternatives, the institution of the nuclear family and the expectations that flow from it appear natural and difficult to challenge.”

The trans community reshapes and challenges our perceptions of gender and sex, rather than as some claim, reinforcing it. Gender identity can exist without equating it to socialised gender norms or to a sexed brain. The brutal oppression trans people experience probably has something to do with the ability to challenge the very roots of a society that structures its repression around a binary system of gender. The roots of women’s and trans oppression are inextricably linked, and this should form the basis of united efforts to build a freer society that does not depend on the nuclear family.⁹

A common tool of the ruling class is to divide and



conquer – if the working classes are fighting over the crumbs that fall from the capitalist’s table in terms of access to resources, be it housing, rape crisis centres or refuges- then we have already lost. The power and potential of our class remains strongest when united to fight for an end to oppression in all its variations. The point is not to ask why trans people exist but to defend unconditionally their right to their gender identity. Socialists should support the proper funding and full accessibility of these services. We should also support, as a basic democratic right, the demand for people to have autonomy over their bodies and how they are described on official documents.¹⁰

Class society and the need for gender stereotypes

The development of class society went in tandem with the oppression of women; due to the changing nature of the forces of production men gained access to economic resources while women were pushed further into the home and reproductive roles. This gave some men the ability to gain power and influence in politics and cultural life and therefore more of a say over how society should be run. While the rise in class society has pitted men against women it does not operate on the basis of all men subjugating all women;

‘Most of the men who carried through the burden of these new productive activities did not become part of the dominant class. Most ploughmen did not become princes and most soldiers did not become warlords, and neither of them made up the priesthood which often came to constitute the first ruling class and which never got involved in heavy work of any sort. But the new forms of production encouraged the breakdown of the old lineage based communal forms of organisation... The rise of classes and the state at the expense of the lineages encouraged male dominance among the lower classes once men were the main producers of the surplus.’¹¹

It is, as Marx said, that ‘women are the slaves of the slaves.’ Laura Miles expands on this when she notes that the ‘roots of oppression are material roots [they] exist at an ideological level in terms of the ideas that people have in their heads, but are rooted in the material circumstances of the society in which we live, therefore they are not born into us and not unchangeable.’¹² It is important to challenge the perception that men are

biologically destined to dominate women – in fact this argument serves as a further extension of divide and conquer. Although women and trans-people are most notably oppressed by the rule of a few old white men this is not as a result of a biological imperative in men to dominate. Rather it is the result of a system of oppression that has been consolidated through generations of colonialism and capitalism working in tandem to control the working classes and ensure a steady stream of profit. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* Engels presents evidence of egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies with non-hierarchical, non-oppressive relations between men and women then there is nothing to imply changing the nature of this society cannot pave the way for a very different world. Considering the severe and brutal attack by the system to silence the voices of trans-people, and following our tradition of acting as a tribune for the oppressed it is fitting that the trans-activist Laura Miles has the final word;

‘Change the nature of the society which you live, fundamentally, in order to undermine, end and destroy the various oppressions that we suffer’.¹³

Section 2: The origins of TERF/gender critical feminism

TERF as an acronym for “Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism” was popularized by an online feminist space in 2008 as a way to distinguish between trans-supportive or trans-neutral radical feminists and those who wished to exclude trans women from their feminism. The progenitor of the term, Viv Smythe, has noted that;

It was meant to be a deliberately technically neutral description of an activist grouping. We wanted a way to distinguish TERFs from other RadFems with whom we engaged who were trans*-positive/neutral, because we had several years of history of engaging productively/substantively with non-TERF RadFems (Williams, 2016)¹⁴.

This term Trans refers to transgender or trans individuals, which encompasses more than the minority of people who undergo genital surgery, and includes

those who take hormones, those who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, and those who perform a gender that does not conform to the Western binary (Bornstein, 1994¹⁵; Califia, 2003;¹⁶ Mohanty, 1984;¹⁷ Stryker, 1994)¹⁸.

Transfeminist theorists have traced the origins of transgender exclusion and connected them to misogyny and homophobia. Julia Serano argues that transphobia is rooted in sexism. For Serano, the origins of both homophobia and transphobia stem from “oppositional sexism”.

Oppositional sexism, as put forward by Serano is the belief that the masculine and the feminine are;

“...rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and non-overlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities and desires”¹⁹(Serano, 2007).

This is different to “traditional sexism”, which conceives of males and masculinity as inherently superior to females and femininity. Norton notes that transgender people are feared and excluded for challenging and undermining traditional concepts of “gender norms” and the gender binary. Norton argues that the male-to-female transgender person implicitly challenges “the binary division of gender upon which male cultural hegemony depends”²⁰ (Norton, 1997).

Gender critical feminism:

Gender Critical Feminism (GFC) is an alternative term for Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism, as there is no major ideological difference between them. Both argue that because sex is a “natural binary”, trans people are always the sex they were assigned at birth. Intersex people either do not exist or are “anomalies” produced as a result of birth defects (Yardley, 2017b)²¹. Those who support the TERF/GCF view the term TERF as a slur, and prefer the term “Gender Critical Feminism”. However the term “Gender Critical Feminism” has been a source of confusion for many, as being critical of gender as a social construct is inherently part of feminist practice. Moreover, the original proponents of this view have now ceased identifying as “gender critical”, preferring to self-define “transsexuals” or “transsexual males” (Yardley, 2017a)²².

To the mainstream trans rights movement, womanhood (or manhood) should be a matter of self-determination. To radical feminists, it tends to be a fixed biological condition. There has been a recent call

by leading proponents of the TERF movement from the margins of the trans community to re-centre the debate around what they regard as a material reality (Yardley, 2014). This, broadly, has stated that;

- 1 human beings are sexually dimorphic mammals;
- 2 transwomen are biologically male;
- 3 human beings are subjected to sex-based socialisation which begins at birth;
- 4 the lives of transwomen are different to the lives of women;

They also argued, of course, that ‘rape and death threats directed at lesbians and other feminists are wholly unacceptable’. (Yardley, 2014).²³

TERF/GFC espouses a narrative that sees transgender people as a new or recent phenomenon (Dworkin, 1974).²⁴ Whereas TERF/GFC has a history of a few decades, transgender and gender nonconforming people have been well documented across cultures and societies – with more recent research looking at in-depth details in the turn of the twentieth century (Skidmore, 2017).²⁵

Is TERF a slur? Some see TERF as a simple distinction, whereas those it is applied to see it as a mischaracterization of their positions and a slur. The linguist Deborah Cameron²⁶ provides an accurate and even-handed description of whether the term is a slur; “Terf does not meet all the criteria that have been proposed for defining a word as a slur, but it does meet most of them at least partially”. But significantly, she added this: “Terfis now being used in a kind of discourse which has clear similarities with hate-speech directed at other groups (it makes threats of violence, it includes other slur-terms, it uses metaphors of pollution)” (Cameron, 2016). Given the fact that socialists, while being clear in their support for trans rights, should strive for unity and comradely engagement it soon better to avoid the TERF term and use instead trans or gender critical.

Common myths, arguments and misconceptions

Some portrayals of gender nonconforming people go as far back as Ancient Greece and later in the Roman Republic. In the Roman Republic a group had primitive gender-reconstructive surgeries and thereafter took female dress and referred to themselves as female. In ancient India, the Hijra are a caste of third-gender, or transgender group. In more relatively modern times – the late 19th century – Albert D. J. Cashier (whose

birth-name was Jennie Hodgers) was an Irish-born immigrant who served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Cashier adopted the identity of a man before enlisting, and maintained it for the remainder of his life. Albert became famous as one of a number of women soldiers who served as men during the Civil War, although the consistent and long-term (at least 53 years) commitment to the male identity has prompted some contemporary scholars to suggest that Cashier was a trans man. From Botswana to Mexico and throughout history there are multiple records of people asserting a gender not defined by the genitalia they are born with. The prevalence of non-gender conforming people across cultures and time is met with another common thread, their repression. During the colonial period in Canada a European system of beliefs and values was imposed on the First Nations. Missionaries made some of the first observations of LGBT + practices among native populations. A Jesuit named Joseph-François Lafitau spent six years among the Iroquois where he made important discoveries about Iroquois society. He later wrote, “If there were women with manly courage who prided themselves upon the profession of warrior, which seems to become men alone, there were also men cowardly enough to live as women.” Through the eyes of the colonizer we perceive the rigid gendered roles the sexes were expected to live by, and the contempt shown to those who refused to do so.

Gender as an “ideology”

Feminists are right to critique the highly socialised gender norms women and men are forced into as a form of oppression, and they are right to challenge their dominance within society. The distinction we must make however is that gendered roles are an expression of oppression and not the root of the problem. As previously discussed in this article, the roots of oppression can be located in the rise of class society. The trans community have wrongly been accused of reinforcing these rigid gender roles and it has been claimed that “accepting” the existence of Trans people reinforces gender stereotyping and the oppressive ideology it begets. For example, Trans-women who choose to wear make-up, shave body hair and wear dresses have been seen by some as further perpetuating the beauty standards that capitalism imposes on us and upholding an idealized version of femininity. There is,

however, a clear difference between socialized gender norms and Gender Identity. Gender Identity is the personal sense of one’s own gender – it can correlate with assigned sex at birth, or can differ from it. To assert one’s sense of gender identity can often overlap with the desire to conform to the prevailing gender norms and to be accepted by wider society as your gender identity. It is deeply unfair to heap the responsibility of countering regressive gender stereotypes onto the trans-community.

The science, psychology and biology of transgender has been under a microscope of late and run through many of the debates currently circulating around the question of gender identity. The formula often used to describe the difference between sex and gender is “Sex is biological and gender is socially constructed”. This differentiation highlights the profound social influences on the accepted norms for masculine and feminine behaviours. However, this formulation rests on a false separation between the biological and the social. Marxist biologists Steven Rose, Richard Lewontin and Leon Kamin argued against this dichotomy over 30 years ago: “The relation between organism and environment is not simply one of interaction of internal and external factors, but a dialectical development of organism and milieu in response to each other... All human phenomena are simultaneously social and biological”. (Rose, Lewontin and Kamin, 1990, pp275 and 282).

Gender and the “sexed-brain”

Debates also rage on with regards the existence of a ‘sexed brain’. In her book *Testosterone Rex* Cordelia Fine argues that: ‘Although there are sex/gender differences in brain structure, brains do not fall into two classes, one typical of males and the other typical of females, nor are they aligned along a “male brain—female brain” continuum...we should shift from thinking of brains as falling into two classes, one typical of males and the other typical of females, to appreciating the variability of the human brain mosaic.(Joel and others, 2015.) To claim that the trans community further impose a gender ideology, not only misses the point completely but seeks to wrongly locate the source of oppression. Transgenderism blows the typical and repressive gender binary that has concreted the oppressive family structure, which capitalism has reified, right out of the

water. It points to a whole human mosaic of sexuality, genders and relationships that do not conform to any norms. And while there is no definite answer with regards what defines our gender Identity one thing is for sure – it rests on an array of complex social, biological and psychological forces and has the potential to challenge one of the oldest oppressions of women and the working class- the nuclear family.

Gender and predation

Another common thread among Gender-Critical or Trans Exclusionary Feminists is to fire out a list of examples where cis-predatory men have claimed to be Trans-women to gain access to women's refuges or prisons. This anti-trans propaganda seeks to portray Trans-women in particular as men in make-up whose agenda is to infiltrate safe spaces to attack vulnerable women. In 2012, Christopher Hambrook assaulted women in two homeless shelters in Toronto, gaining access by falsely claiming he was a trans woman. Tabloids like the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun* have been running a series of articles on child murderer Ian Huntley that claim he wants a sex change in order to leave the male prison he is incarcerated in. Most of these tabloid stories rely on unnamed prison sources and have some inconsistencies throughout. Regardless of its merit and with regards to the assaults that do take place at an alarming rate against women (which mostly occur in the home or in the streets and not in gender-neutral bathrooms), these narratives can sometimes be used to reinforce the idea that cis-men have an innate urge to hurt or harm women. It is an argument that depends on a biological essentialism that is often at the crux of Trans Exclusionary Feminists arguments. To assume all biological men have an innate desire to harm women takes the debate out of the material roots of oppression and into a defeatist, fatalist realm. The attacks on women, be it the expression of cultural sexism manifested in rape or domestic violence or structural via the lack of crisis centres, housing and refuges has everything to do with an unequal system that divides along sex and race to uphold itself and not human nature. Engels' work *The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State* is exemplary in providing anthropological arguments to uphold this. Furthermore, IF cis-predatory men are using the (limited) rights Trans people have gained to attack women (and we can't ignore the massive and consistently brutal attacks Trans-

women also face) we must fight to ensure that they are not the ones setting the parameters of our battles. The #MeToo movement highlighted how prevalent sexual assault was, in the office, the home and the streets – why would we allow these men to further exercise the power they attempt to wield by allowing the trans community be further excluded? Why would we allow this behaviour to weaken a movement that seeks to liberate all from these abuses of power?

There should be a concentrated, united effort to stop allowing predatory men to define the narrative of how we treat and respond to other communities that are under attack. If we want to directly target every expression of sexism and homophobia which is exhibited in these attacks, we cannot ignore the deep and ingrained roots of oppression that rose to prominence with the rise of class society. And this is where we target our energy- not in the exclusion of minorities but in the strengthening of the working class who will take the fight to the source of the class conflict and strike a fatal blow to the capitalists who profiteer while we fight for crumbs- in the factories and the work places where exploitation starts.

Section 3: Fighting for trans rights within class society

Different societies have always defined and practiced gender in their own ways depending on culture, society, the multiple stories competing during a particular time and space. While socially-circulating narratives of gender have shifted over the years, feminists and socialists have consistently found themselves looking at the issues around autonomy and the gendered body.

In remembering the history of Stonewall, we cannot forget the incredible people who were at its roots. Two often-forgotten people who made an impact that night were transgender women of colour: Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Rivera was a 17-year-old Puerto Rican drag queen on the night of the riot. Rivera was in the crowd that gathered outside of the bar and is cited as one of the first bystanders to throw a bottle, a big deal given the power dynamics of the situation with police. Rivera remembered; "This was started by the street queens of that era, which I was part of, Marsha

P. Johnson and many others that are not here.” After Stonewall, Rivera became an outspoken activist who rallied against racism, sexual violence and, after she began identifying as a woman, transphobia.

As iconic as Stonewall was to the gay liberation struggle that blossomed in the 1970s, it became a symbol of a largely white, male movement that relegated people of colour and women to its margins. The radical roots of Stonewall provided the foundations for LGBT+ liberation – an inclusive grassroots liberation which challenged the capitalist status quo, and echoes our need as socialists to reclaim the radical agenda in fighting for full liberation in a neoliberal society.

Convenient equality within neoliberalism in Ireland

At the present moment the Irish State, and particularly the current leadership of Fine Gael, it is convenient to present themselves as advocates of ‘equality’, provided of course that does not mean economic equality.. In Ireland, the government coalition that has established Ireland as the golden child of Europe’s austerity states – gladly imposing vicious cuts across society and lapping up the approbation of the troika – is now attempting to rinse all of that away with the success of a single political campaign, in which they demonstrate support for a single group.

The marriage referendum enabled the Irish state to pinkwash its migration regimes, thereby naturalizing harsh policies that reproduce gendered, sexual, racial, economic, and geopolitical inequalities. The language and logics of the same-sex marriage referendum interfaced with the Irish state’s strategies for managing the diaspora, tourists, and family reunification for migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. 2018 saw the 25th anniversary of decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. In 2015, Ireland became the first country to affirm same-sex marriage through the popular vote, and we witnessed the introduction of the Gender Recognition Act (which enables trans people to achieve full legal recognition of their gender and allows the acquisition of a birth certificate to reflect this change).

Recent successes for the LGBT+ community in Ireland have been subsumed within Irish neoliberalism, where traditionally socialist campaigns with radical agendas are portrayed as apolitical, neutral and liberal as soon as they became a success. This results in a diluted, watered down vision for LGBT+ issues, and invisibility

and exclusion of trans people within key LGBT+ issues. The rise of an assimilationist “gay normality” is being used to define a sexual politics that adapts to the parameters of neoliberalism rather than challenging them (Drucker, 2015). Along with the popularity of the Marriage Referendum came the commercialisation of LGBT+ culture. This sees LGBT+ issues and community-specific events as marketable goods – but it is essential that marketization must not be conflated with acceptance in a neoliberal society. Stonewall (the biggest LGBT+ organisation in the UK) withdrew from PRIDE in 2018 due to its lack of diversity. In 2018 in Ireland, the price of marching saw contingent rates of €500 for 25 people to march and €2000 for 150 people to march. LGBT+ campaign groups stood on the sides, while multinational corporations donned floats to promote themselves as gay-friendly employers.

LGBT+ Equality as inconvenient for neoliberalism

Where we see equality as inconvenient is when we look past a tokenistic surface to key issues that are still having a huge impact on the LGBT+ community. There is a huge disparity in achieving true equality with issues that the government are failing on such as mental health, hate crime and employment discrimination. According to the Irish Council for Civil Liberties Hate Crime Report (2018), Ireland has one of the highest rates of hate crime against people of African background and transgender people in the EU, but has no laws to address it (9% EU average). 13% of trans people surveyed reported having been physically or sexually assaulted or threatened with violence, in attacks either wholly or partly motivated by transphobia. This is highlighted most by the refusal to acknowledge LGBT+ sex workers by abolitionists. Sex work is consistently portrayed as cisgender and heteronormative, while the people who suffer the most from lack of support systems are trans people. A shocking amount of people are still not comfortable being out and open with their sexuality or gender identity at work in Ireland. 78% in Ireland said they have hidden their sexual orientation or gender identity at work at least once.

Towards trans liberation

Trans and non-binary rebellion are not only a subculture, but a politics. The marginal place of trans and non-binary sexualities in the homonormative

dominant regime makes the trans community a potential component of the broad anti-neoliberal alliance. The gay social-liberal or liberal-left have largely made their peace with neoliberalism.

As socialists and activists, we need to look to our roots and the actions of activists who brought us here – we must think of Stonewall and remember our history. We will never achieve through change without discomfort – we need to reflect on why we are complacent and accepting of a tokenistic equality. We need to constantly question and interrogate the portrayal of LGBT+ liberation – is it inclusive, is it consistent, is it hypocritical, is it self-

contradicting? Most importantly – who benefits from this narrative?

The intersection of oppressions under a neoliberal society must be matched with a socialist intersection of liberation – unless we are fighting for all members of the community, the community will never be free. When rights are only accessible to a few, these rights become privileges and trans and non-binary people will continue to face barriers. However it is also essential for socialists to recognise that the real enemies of trans people are not radical feminists but the ruling class in capitalist society, the enemy of all minority groups.

Notes:

- 1 Lenin, 1902.
- 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajlTYkkArwQ>
- 3 Harman, 1994.
- 4 <http://isj.org.uk/marxism-feminism-and-transgender-politics/#footnote-10080-69>
- 5 Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a civil rights organization for LGBTQ Americans.
- 6 Yeung, 2016.
- 7 Weale, 2017.
- 8 <http://isj.org.uk/marxism-and-womens-oppression-today/#138mcgregor22>
- 9 <http://isj.org.uk/marxism-feminism-and-transgender-politics/#footnote-10080-69>
- 10 Ibid.,
- 11 Harman, 1994.
- 12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajlTYkkArwQ>
- 13 Ibid.,
- 14 Williams, C. (2016) *Radical Inclusion: Recounting the Trans Inclusive History of Radical Feminism*, Duke University Press.
- 15 Bornstein, K. (1994) *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, New York: Routledge.
- 16 Califia, P. (2003) *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism*, San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- 17 Mohanty, C. (1984) *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, *Boundary 2*: 333-358.
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- 23 Yardley, M. (2014) We Need to Recentre Trans Debate, [online], Available at: <https://mirandayardley.com/en/we-need-to-recentre-trans-debate/>
- 24 Dworkin, A. (1974) *Woman-Hating: A Radical Look at Sexuality*, New York City: EP Dutton.
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- 26 Cameron, D. (2016) What makes a word a slur? [online], Available at: <https://debuk.wordpress.com/2016/11/06/what-makes-a-word-a-slur/>