Requiem for a Dialogue

by Savannah Garmon on January 27, 2012

As a femme trans woman usually attracted to other femme women, I am generally welcomed in spaces designated as ‘women and trans,’ and I have no shortage of queer cis woman friends, with many of whom I share a playful flirtation. But what I usually keep to myself is this: what I experience in these respects sometimes feels closer to tolerance than acceptance.

I am invited to more formal social functions, yet I often find myself outside the conversation, feeling awkward about my presence at the end of the table. My experience as a trans woman is often the most immediate story I have to share; yet as the other women nearby nod politely before changing the subject, I sometimes get the feeling I have only managed to other myself by sharing it. Unsurprisingly, this situation is not so conducive to meeting potential partners. And anyways, I sometimes get the feeling that my body does not have the same type of desirability.

Perhaps worse, there are moments when desire is expressed towards me in a context that I would prefer it not be expressed (more about that in a moment).

Previous to my transition, I was pretty deep in hiding. As a quirky intellectual-type with a good sense of humor I did attract women, but I often lacked the confidence to recognize attraction, much less act on it. And anyways it felt strange when others showed interest in my outwardly masculinized form.

Fortunately, as my physical body evolved during transition so did my confidence. And while I think my personality changed little, in
the end I became the opposite of my pre-transition self in one respect: where previously I had been more timid, today I am forward and flirtatious (and good at making you laugh!). Generally dating is a bit more pleasant, and I do feel more involved in the game.

However, there are moments when I wonder if there wasn’t some quick saturation point I should have expected to encounter.

Don’t get me wrong; I’m not saying that sex isn’t available. I actually turn down many who aren’t willing to share intimacy on terms that seem equitable to me. A good illustration of this point occurred recently on a dating site I use: a woman wrote to me a few months back with a great deal of interest based on my profile. She came on a bit strong for me, but I try to be open so I put in the effort of corresponding. After about three or four quite long messages I decided to disclose my trans status, just to avoid wasting time in case that would turn out to be a hang-up; unsurprisingly, I never heard from her again. While there is nothing so unusual about this, the fact that she was an academic with a Ph.D. in Social Policy and a Masters in gender studies had led me to believe she might be more open.

However, soon after I received an odd message from a second woman who was unusually forward and seemed to be looking for something specific. She insisted that I provide a description of my body while making it clear she was interested in a no strings sexual encounter, and further hoped she might eventually take me home for a three-way with her male partner. While I think we all get these kinds of messages occasionally, I noticed that these two women had visited my profile within a few minutes of each other, suggesting that the first woman probably tipped the second off about my trans status.

Put another way, once I revealed that I was trans I instantly ceased to be a viable romantic partner and instead became a potential fuck-toy; the fact that the second woman further insisted that I describe my body in detail almost screamed, “What have you got for us between your legs, tranny?!”

Indeed, it’s not unusual for me to hear back on conversations in which one cis woman will respond, “Oh, so you’re into kink” when another cis woman acknowledges she has previously dated trans women (including myself), implying that merely viewing a body like mine as sexually desirable is outside the bounds of ordinary human intimacy.

Hence I find myself in an unpleasant conundrum: de-sexed in polite lesbian society, yet hypersexualized at the margins (preferably behind closed doors, it would seem). Caught somewhere between untouchable and walking kink is a lonely place for any woman to live.

It is for these reasons, and more, that a group of trans women activists here in Toronto (with support from Planned Parenthood and an amazing cis woman Kate Klein) put together a recent workshop that was titled, “No more apologies: Queer trans and cis women, coming/cumming together!” The idea of the workshop was to provide an opening point for a larger dialogue about trans woman inclusion in queer women’s spaces/communities and social settings.

On the one hand, we addressed the manner in which trans women and cis women fight many of the same battles, as traditional sexism targets us all socially (among other ways), while misogyny undermines our common womanhood and humanity. On the other hand, we also addressed the various ways in which cissexism divides our communities from within. For example, trans-misogyny specifically dehumanizes trans women while further serving to alienate trans and cis women from one another, when we should otherwise be natural allies (if not lovers!).

Indeed, three key points we developed to describe the motivations for the workshop vis-a-vis the queer women’s communities were:

- Because trans inclusion means more than just saying “women and trans people” in our mission statements.
- Because welcoming trans women into our spaces is not the same as welcoming them into our beds.
- Because our actions are speaking louder than our words.

To be clear, our intentions in the workshop were not to question anyone’s attraction. However, there is no question that social context and social conditioning inform sexual desire. And given the number of times that I have lost a cis woman’s interest—which at times has been accompanied by outright disrespect—precisely at the moment that my status as a trans woman has been revealed betrays the fact that crude social anxieties often play a role (think “how will my friends react,” or the particularly silly “am I still lesbian if I sleep with her?”).

It is with this hands-off acceptance of trans women in mind that one of our organizers, Drew Deveaux, proposed the “cotton ceiling;”
that is, the idea that queer acceptance of trans women often proceeds only to a point (that saturation point I mentioned previously).

However, there are other dynamics at play as well. For example, another project organizer, Morgan Page, has previously written about trans acceptance in 'queer and trans’ spaces, and how this often essentially means acceptance for trans men exclusively. Personally, I like to think that the situation in this regard might be improving here in Toronto, and that trans men and trans women are at least more likely to work together these days. But while leaning against the wall at a party or a club, watching while masculine spectrum individuals get most of the attention, it’s not difficult to see Morgan’s point.

Overall, I think the workshop was a huge success; many of us here in Toronto are still reflecting on it, and some have already begun proposing the next events (with most of those proposals coming from cis women!). With that in mind, I sincerely hope that No More Apologies might provide a breaking point for a larger dialogue about trans woman inclusion, not only in queer women’s social settings but also in queer women’s politics.

In the meantime, if you’re a beautiful woman and I meet you on the street, there’s a pretty good chance that I’ll flirt with you and try to make friends. If you show interest, I promise I’ll play it off real sexy, like it’s no big deal. But I admit it: deep down what I’d really like to think is that if we share sexual intimacy, then maybe we could do something real kinky:

Talk.

Yeah, that sounds nice.

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Tsipi January 27, 2012 at 5:39 pm

In our queer community (Tel Aviv) trans men and butch women are most highly valued, along with a sampling of diva-femmes for decoration. Trans women and cis-femmes are much more invisible. I don’t know how to compare it to the wider lesbian community, because I’ve never been part of it. It presents as very cissexist and ageist, so I never bothered.

I think we would probably benefit from a similar workshop 😊
What about butch trans women?

I once went on a date with a girl after talking to her for a long time. Her trans status was clearly stated on the dating profile I was using. We went on a kind of date, during which she told me how great of a girlfriend I would be and I may have liked her a bit too. After the first time we went on a date the conversation shifted to the fact that she wanted to meet a trans person. I told her I was trans and the rest of the car ride was very quiet and uncomfortable. I got a text a few days later that we should just be friends and then I never heard from her again. I'm not upset though since now I'm dating a very wonderful girl who just so happens to be trans as well so things do tend to work out for the better.

Tldr

Cis queer females might not be my best options for dating :/
and cis women, and it flew by. There were so many topics people wanted to discuss. The time constraint felt really frustrating because there was so much to cover, but it was really nice to hear people openly talking about topics that they’re usually reticent to broach. I guess the question then is how to segue said openness into real life? Prettyqueer is a good start.

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Savannah Garmon January 28, 2012 at 12:47 am

Thank you for sharing this beautiful and honest comment Katie. The sort of “how to approach things” question was one of the topics we discussed, although every trans woman is a bit different of course (I hope saying that doesn’t intimidate anyone who is reading this though lol). I think however it’s mainly about communication… so whether here or in Philly or wherever, let’s keep talking 😃

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Kelsey January 28, 2012 at 9:19 pm

YAY PHILLY DYKE CAUCUS please let that happen again this year.

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pink January 27, 2012 at 11:10 pm

this is just a beautiful, brilliant piece. thank you.

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Savannah Garmon January 29, 2012 at 8:58 pm

Thanks Pink, glad you liked it! xo -savvy

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Samantha January 28, 2012 at 5:50 pm

As an early stage femme queer trans woman this and similar articles dont give me much of a feeling of hope.
As a trans woman who’s been trying to get conversations about these things to happen for a long time, the fact that we’re talking about it actually does give me a feeling of hope.

Yay for this event! People have totally invited my GF and I to kink events since she came out as trans, and I’ve had to be like “uh no thanks”. We have sex many number of ways, but I’ve never thought of any of it as kinky, just, like, working with the available engineering in ways that don’t trigger anyone’s baggage?

Now I’m wondering what makes a thing kinky. Does one have to activity be like “oh yes this is so wrong/transgressive mmmmm yeah!” or is kink somehow objectively anything sexy As Not Seen on TV?

Also I’m tired of my bisexuality being equated with why I’m with V. I am bisexual because I’m into more than one gender (which… doesn’t necessarily imply men and women… hmmm) but one of those genders happens to be hard femme women and V is a hard femme woman. She’s not some Frankenstein of parts I like!

The one thing that being a cis bisexual makes me have in common with my mostly-lez trans GF is that we have both felt what it’s like to be on the fringe of dyke culture!

(By “yay for this event” I mean the Toronto thing, not kink events which I immediately go into talking about, sorry for the vagueness)
Savannah Garmon February 7, 2012 at 8:47 pm

Thanks for this comment Kelsey, sorry I neglected to respond to it sooner. And thanks for calling out the “of course you’re with her because you’re bisexual” thing… I’ve heard variations on this myself and it’s totally not cool. As if you’re with two different people when you’re with a trans woman? It doesn’t even make sense.

Also, I’ve noticed it’s one of those statements that appears occasionally in relation to trans women, but I haven’t often heard the same kind of statements about trans men. That’s just anecdotal, of course, but I do wonder why some might view it differently.

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 8:54 pm

I have heard it in reference to trans men as well, but only on the occasion that a very straight cis woman I worked with started dating a trans man. Nobody would believe she was “quite so straight” and insisted she must be bisexual or a closet lesbian (um). Interestingly, now that that same trans man is dating a cis man, I don’t hear anyone insisting that the cis man is secretly bi or straight. Hm.

Savannah Garmon February 7, 2012 at 9:18 pm

totally believable, yet totally ridiculous.

haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 9:46 am

It is absolutely ridiculous to accuse someone of being transphobic or cissexist just because they weren’t interested in you. People have their preferences. Sure, patriarchy and trans-misogyny inform people’s sexualities but taking it to this level is insulting and diminishes certain queer women’s self-determination.

You are right about the fucked-upness of the trans-chaser woman but come on aren’t you jumping to conclusions a tad bit?

This is yet another example to how white people create pomo discourses when things just don’t go the way they wish they did. –wahhh wah

Also your analysis, along with the No More Apologies event is extremely classist. You as non-sex worker trans women with PhDs and queer-celebrities should not be talking about “inclusion” or “fuckability” of queer trans women in alternative-culture-
“queer community”. Many trans sex workers in a global scale do not have the opportunity to experience their queerness because they are too busy making ends meet serving their cis-straight-capitalist clientele.

Your whole argument further marginalizes trans sex workers, especially the Non-Western ones, who do not and cannot subscribe to your elitist Eurocentric trans-queer discourse. You not only silence them, you stop from any anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist trans-feminist framework to emerge.

Please, have some respect.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 11:22 am

Your whole argument further marginalizes trans sex workers

This is quite fascinating, because the author of this article goes on to note that two key organizers of this event are very much well acquainted with sex work in their own lives — and they are both trans to boot.

Please, have some respect.

After you.

haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 11:40 am

Please don’t cherry pick my words and have a reactionary position- if you read the continuing part of that sentence you would have realized that the imperializing and universalizing effect of their standpoint is highly dangerous.

Also being a sex work activist is not the same as being a disenfranchised trans sex worker– especially a trans sex worker in Non-Western realities who do not have the access to write a blog entry let alone organize an entire conference. Please try to think materially for a second, and not construct your analysis through Eurocentric identity politics and queer activist realities.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 2:24 pm

So what I’m hearing you tell me and others here is that there is absolutely nothing anyone of a history of being a trans woman can say here of any merit, veracity, and/or validity.
And you? What is your upbringing? Are you living in the global South? Are you engaged in survival sex work? That you can articulate yourself in academic capacity — how are you and your class placed?

And as for the two organizers who know sex work well? On readings alone, I know that one was a tween runaway and hooked to eat for many years and is now alive to make sure it’s better for others who survive in similar capacity now.

Now, uh, maybe that wasn’t in a non-Eurocentric place, but I’ll be damned if hunger and homeless and hooking one’s vulnerable body feels any different in Rio than it does in Des Moines or Hamilton. And maybe being killed as a trans sex worker in Canada or the U.S. isn’t the same geographically as Uganda or Jamaica, but I’ll be damned if a death by brutality and corporeal violence for having a contested body is any less terminal or painful.

Your privilege to discredit the experiences of others also necessitates a reality check. If you cherry pick the experiences of trans women, then how is it verboten for others to cherry pick your cissexist tonality?

Seriously. Get real.

My identity does not matter- sorry to break it to you but neither does yours or the organizers’. This is yet another example of self-and-other-obsession of North American queer/trans activist circles. Jumping to defend yourself and your allies’ only proves how little you and your ‘community’ is open for criticism. It is a shame, really- but I’m not surprised. Obviously being trans and/or queer in North American context will allow people to say/do/(re)imagine, (re)construct etc anything and everything at the expense of disenfranchising the third world marginalized bodies.

If you haven’t noticed so far in history, discourses are created in North American elitist, academic and identity circles and they are permeated to the entire world.

I am just bringing in a non-Eurocentric perspective and you are having a knee-jerk reaction by accusing me of being cissexist. Come on.

> My identity does not matter

Oh, ok, so you’re a rich white cis guy — I can tell because those are the only people who have the luxury of not having their identities matter.

Next!
While I think I get what you are saying, you aren’t so much bringing a perspective as you are just saying how terrible this all is because it comes from a North American white woman with a PhD.

And while it’s certainly not your responsibility to educate all of us, if you have any time/energy to do so please make a suggestion as to how an event like No More Apologies could not have been the terrible embarrassment of misguided energies that you (seemingly) characterize it as.

Should they have attempted to fly in trans sexworkers from other parts of the world? Would any discussion about themselves just have been an embarrassment of 1st world privilege, and therefore everyone should have just stayed at home?

Can any person in Canada ever actually talk about themselves without being attacked for ignoring the Third World?

I’m not sure if you just intensely pomo, or a concern troll.

I’m not saying it’s wrong that it’s coming from a PhD woman— obviously we live in a continent with millions of self-obsessed and self-righteous Queers, we are bound to read narratives.

What I am saying is that there should at least be an awareness that certain trans/queer voices get representation due to access and as a result the experiences of the poor-both in 1st and 3rd world- trans/queer people are being pushed out of this elitist-activist circles.

And I think it should be of concern that a trans-feminist and queer discourse is being created by people who are one way or another sitting at the ivory tower “discussing” issues that effect and are of concern of many people.

Also your sarcastic joke about flying in trans-sex workers from the third world shows how much of a disregard you have towards the non-Western marginalized bodies. It is simply not enough to disclose your privilege- the privilege is still there and is being acted on constantly.

I wish I could have attended the conference but I don’t live in Canada and can’t afford the airfare. But again, my race/gender/class/ability positionality does not matter. Queer people out of everyone should be able to take in criticisms and not dismiss an idea as a troll or elitist or cisexist, etc.
Tim C. January 29, 2012 at 8:30 pm

> But again, my race/gender/class/ability positionality does not matter.

No, but according to you, everyone else’s does. Why is that?

Reply

haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 2:48 pm

Also, simply stating that trans sex work murder rates are higher in Rio, Uganda and Jamaica when compared to Hamilton or Des Moines is not enough.

You may be or may not be trans and/or queer- but it is for sure that you are a fucking racist.

Reply

Savannah Garmon January 29, 2012 at 5:10 pm

It has already been pointed out, but I will re-iterate that trans women with backgrounds in sex work played a role in organizing the event and were participants in both the workshop itself and the dance afterwards.

You claim that these trans women are not aware of “the imperializing and universalizing effect of their standpoint is highly dangerous.” yet when these women talk about these issues they are extremely careful to say that their experience and their stories are *not* universal.

Also you complain about my article noting that non-Western trans woman sex workers might not have access to a blog… yet I note you have access to this site and nothing seems to hold you back from commenting all over the place about these issues. So again I ask, what are *your* privileges?

Reply

Tess Y. January 29, 2012 at 2:11 pm

“You as non-sex worker trans women with PhDs and queer-celebrities should not be talking about ‘inclusion’ or ‘fuckability’ of queer trans women in alternative-culture- ‘queer community’. Many trans sex workers in a global scale do not have the opportunity to experience their queerness because they are too busy making ends meet serving their cis-straight-capitalist clientele.”

Her privilege doesn’t diminish her experience. It just places it exactly where it is. I don’t think it’s useful to tell people not to speak about their own experiences, especially not on the premise that there are other people who are less-
privileged than them out there. Privilege-guilt ing people never moves the conversation forward.

Reply

haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 2:39 pm

identity!!!!
wah wahhhhh

Reply

cait January 29, 2012 at 4:46 pm

LOL, total troll.

Reply

Savannah Garmon January 29, 2012 at 5:16 pm

“identity!!!! wah wahhhh”

yet the *entirety* of your critique rests on my identity… so wahhh yourself hypocrite!

Reply

Gauge January 31, 2012 at 9:15 pm

Oh good, I can stop reading your useless drivel now that you’ve made it blatantly clear you have no intent to actually discuss anything.

Reply

Tim C. January 29, 2012 at 3:16 pm

So what were/are your experiences doing sex work like?
I find it incredibly privileged (for lack of better word) to dismiss a trans woman as privileged for having a Ph.D when attaining that level of achievement as a member of a marginalized group requires ten, maybe 100 times as much work as it does to attain that credential as a white cis het guy. Why does it ruin one’s street cred to have busted one’s ass and defied oppression?

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Tess Y. January 29, 2012 at 3:39 pm

Totally. I also hate how wary we are of each others’ achievements that our histories of oppression have to be laid out to somehow be “deserving”. Truth is, we never know the whole story, and why would we need one to be able to determine whether someone is worthy of sharing their experience? Especially an experience that isn’t getting coverage elsewhere.

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Tim C. January 29, 2012 at 3:42 pm

Pull yourself up by your bootstraps! Oh, except on the off chance you succeed, we’ll silence you by calling you elitist and irrelevant.

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SC February 6, 2012 at 6:55 pm

In the United States, a higher percentage of transpeople have graduate or professional degrees than in the general population (http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/ntds is my source) — 20% for transpeople, 9% for the general population. According to that survey and a quick Google search to get the general population numbers, it’s an even bigger difference for PhDs — 3.6% of transpeople against less than 1% of the general population. Are you suggesting that transpeople are just 360 times harder-working than the general population? I’m trans myself, so that’s flattering, but I suspect it’s, well, a bit exaggerated.

This whole thread of conversation in which everyone tries to shut everyone up by claiming they’re too privileged to have an opinion that matters is stupid anyway.
Tim C. February 6, 2012 at 6:58 pm

Sounds like that sample is unrepresentative. Of course people who have the privilege of being out as trans are more likely to be educated than the general population, especially if the sample is skewed towards trans men. The people who are least privileged are not the ones who are going to feel safe about answering surveys to say they're trans.

SC February 6, 2012 at 11:13 pm

Getting a representative sample is the hardest problem in statistics. But it’s not as if this was self-selection or a mere convenience sample: “Additionally, we distributed 2,000 paper surveys to organizations serving hard-to-reach populations — including rural, homeless, and low-income transgender and gender non-conforming people, conducting phone follow-up for three months… This effort resulted in the inclusion of approximately 500 paper surveys in the final sample…Both the paper and online surveys were available in both English and Spanish…Our geographic distribution generally mirrors that of the general U.S. population.”

The sample is absolutely not skewed toward transmen, which would be clear had you looked at the survey before dismissing it. “Primary gender identity today” breaks down as 26% male, 41% female, 20% part time in multiple identities, and 13% other. “Sex assigned at birth” is 60% male/40% female. So if anything it’s skewed the other way.

Your assertion that the sample is more privileged than average is similarly unfounded, since the survey also found that those who responded were almost four times as likely to have a household income under $10,000 and about half as likely to have a household income over $100,000, compared to the general population.

No one is saying that the sample is perfect, but as far as I can tell the only reason you have to believe that it’s off by a factor of four on this (or the forty or four hundred you seem to have anticipated) is that you don’t like the conclusion on this topic.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 6, 2012 at 11:51 pm

And yes, whilst anecdotal, I shared a face to face with my not-terribly small university’s senior health clinician about the demography of his trans patients — namely, students.

He noted that the spread of his trans patients were disproportionately CAFAB folks right
now. This is irrespective of whether they opt for exogenous endocrine intervention (many do, many others don’t or don’t yet). The ratio was around 5:1. He added that his trans masculine patients are disproportionately more often in graduate-level study than his CAMAB women/trans feminine patients, who tend to be in undergrad.

This made me, a trans woman (who isn’t out as trans and is placed as cis on campus and elsewhere), a bit of an anomaly for him because I’m in graduate study — there aren’t many like me there, he noted. I also research urban sociological relationships and how these tie into a variety of areas, including public health. Our conversation began because of his mention of public health journal articles on trans health he had recently read, and he was curious to hear my thoughts. I introduced him to Dr. Viviane Namaste’s 2000 dissertation, *Invisible Lives*. On the day of that talk, a bit sleep-deprived, I wrote this summary.

In the second health clinic, one not affiliated with the university, where he works evenings, it’s an urban community clinic. There, he noted, his trans patients are disproportionately trans women, many homeless, many surviving on survival economies, most without university education, and some without completion of secondary school. In that space, he sees very few trans men.

As for the above comment to which I’m responding, I won’t claim to dispute the numbers, because I haven’t reviewed that data. But owing to how my university isn’t exactly the easiest to get into, and given that my clinician, a cis gay man, was making his observation built on 25 years of practice, I am likely to heed his experiences with a bit more gravity that CAFAB men/genderqueer people are — and probably have been — the dominant trans demographic in higher learning institutions.

Lest we forget, American women’s colleges still disallow CAMAB women, but allow CAFAB men (which is utterly, incredibly demented and wrong wrong wrong, but that’s a topic for another time, another discussion).

SC  February 7, 2012 at 3:05 am

In statistical arguments, data beats anecdotes, and I explained why I believe this survey is more than glorified anecdotes. The survey itself discusses its methodology in more detail. But as long as we’re matching personal stories, I’ve known plenty of transpeople of all kinds who are frighteningly smart, many of whom are pursuing or have completed a PhD or other graduate degrees. I know of one case at a good engineering school where transwomen made up more than 10% of a class in a particular technical major, outnumbering ciswomen as a result. No doubt there are more such cases. There are quite a number of famous transwomen in technical fields: Lynn Conway and Sophie Wilson come quickly to mind.

And as you say below, transpeople often pursue education later in life (and the study agrees with this) with the intent of being so valuable as to override discrimination. So I have little doubt that the study is correct that transpeople are disproportionately represented among graduate degree holders.
Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 9:43 am

All this is, yes yes! I’m feeling a little bold though so I will offer this one nit-pick-- Genderqueer =/= CAFAB. My GF is a trans woman and also pretty genderqueer. Many CAMAB people are. Ok carry on being awesome.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 10:08 am

Genderqueer is how one articulates their gender. They can be assigned coercively at birth as female or male, often reported on their birth record.

By my writing “CAFAB men/genderqueer people”, I was affirming that not all CAFAB trans people embrace the di-gender social order. Same goes for CAMAB people.

I hope that clears any confusion.

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 12:01 pm

It does, thanks!

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 12:10 am

By the way, you never disclosed: are you a CAFAB man/genderqueer person or a CAMAB woman/genderqueer person? Since we’re having this discussion — and you made mention of your being trans — how are you placed relative to that research data?
I decline to answer because it’s irrelevant. The value of what I say here would be the same if I were a talking dog, a sentient AI, or a purple-haired unicorn.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 4:07 am

Thaaaaaat’s about the answer I expected from you. In good reporting of research, the reporter does best by disclosing how they might be affected by (or might affect) it.

I think we’re done here. Have a nice day.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 4:23 am

The value of what I say here would be the same if I were a talking dog, a sentient AI, or a purple-haired unicorn.

Not really, because their vested interest and bias for/against that interest, would not be present. But you already knew this.

SC February 7, 2012 at 11:33 am

And that’s the answer I expected from you.

I also didn’t answer because I don’t personally like “genderqueer” and think CAFAB or CAMAB is a mouthful of PC marbles.

The actual nature of my bias could be determined were I a talking dog, a sentient AI, or a purple-haired unicorn. All you need to do is examine what I actually say and determine how it corresponds with the facts of reality.

But if you must know, I’m a non-binary transfeminine person.
BlaydenWaydonLeydon  February 7, 2012 at 12:27 pm

Well, that’s nice.

All you need to do is examine what I actually say and determine how it corresponds with the facts of reality.

Statistics are statistics. In of themselves, they do not reconstitute a reality. This may explain why the old yarn, “lies, damned lies, and statistics,” persists with the trading currency it does: while numbers may be dispassionate, how the parameters are defined seldom are created without human bias to confirm or affirm a hypothesis.

Once a study, such as the one you cite and claim as gospel reality, is supported by similar research elsewhere using a similar methodology, then a body of corroborating, quantitative evidence can point toward a correlating trend.

Even so, a trend is not synonymous with “reality”. You should know that. You sound like a smart cookie. It shouldn’t have to take my having to tell you this. But there you are.

You’re entirely allowed to poo-pooh on anecdotal, unpublished findings, but a good scholar considers and allows for both in their research, respectively.

But if you must know, I’m a non-binary transfeminine person.

Thank you for your disclosure.

Tim C.  February 7, 2012 at 12:59 am

Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence. The idea that one of the most oppressed minorities in existence happens to be one of the most educationally privileged minorities as well is certainly not impossible, but it takes more than one study to make it seem remotely plausible.

Emilia  February 8, 2012 at 1:28 pm

It’s a convenience sample, but a large convenience sample not that it makes it better in a methodological sense. The majority of the data was collected from an internet based survey, and
that has its own issues in regards to bias. But they did utilize a pen and paper version to get at “hard to reach populations”. 6% of their sample was collected via pen and paper. Comparing education, 19% of the internet sample reported having a graduate degree, less than 1% of the pen and paper group reported having a graduate degree.

The data has its flaws, but its another stepping stone in regards to trans research.

Tim C. February 6, 2012 at 6:59 pm

And it’s not that we are harder-working, it’s just that the system filters out the people who are unable to deal with discrimination. There’s a reason for that 41% suicide rate (and presumably many people in that 41% didn’t make it long enough to get a postgraduate degree).

SC February 7, 2012 at 3:13 am

Even if 41% of transpeople committed suicide and were therefore out of the survey (and that’s a 41% suicide attempt rate, not success) and none of them got PhDs first, that would leave (3.6% * .59) = 2.1% of the whole trans population holding PhDs by the survey data. That’s still well above the population average. 3.6% is a very big number here.

Kelsey February 6, 2012 at 9:16 pm

Conclusion: graduate school leads to gender dysphoria. Hehehehehe.

Delete the word “gender”, substitute “is” for “leads to”, and you’ll be right.
Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 9:46 am

I think maybe we just like the hard road. I mean, who would go to graduate school on purpose?

Reply

Tim C. February 7, 2012 at 10:07 am

Clearly, grad students are born that way. Who would choose to live such a horrible life?

Reply

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 12:05 am

In the United States, a higher percentage of transpeople have graduate or professional degrees than in the general population (http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/ntds is my source) — 20% for transpeople, 9% for the general population

This is not shocking in the slightest. If you’re known as trans — or have known the experience of being outed as trans — going into a career without a university education is impossibly prohibitive against trans people.

The press for education — and certainly so for me, when I entered undergrad uni as a mature student — was to pursue a strategy of what I call “ironclad-credentialed”. In effect, higher education becomes the improved insurance policy against being blacklisted in your field of experience. Without it, my Lebenschancen were futile.

So yes, it is not remotely surprising to learn that proportionately more trans people over cis people pursue and complete higher education. This is a consequence of social-institutional cisnormativity. We have to survive, and for those trans people who are able to (many are denied long before this), higher learning is perhaps not a salvation but it is a remedial platform to manage a closer to even footing with a less educated, less qualified cis counterpart in the same professional field.

Reply

Tim C. February 7, 2012 at 12:08 am

Right. This is confusing “trans people” per se with “trans people who have been able to achieve the
level of success necessary to attain the privilege necessary to be publicly known as trans”. By “public” I just mean that somebody, besides the trans person themself, knows that the trans person is a gender that they weren’t coercively assigned at birth. I’m not sure how the survey managed to include any *other* trans people in their sample. So, successful people are successful — yes.

SC  February 7, 2012 at 3:07 am

I suppose you still haven’t read the study’s section on their methodology, or even my comment quoting that section.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon  February 7, 2012 at 4:25 am

No, I have not. I am reading other research for my thesis right now. Time is precious. Ask again in about a year.

SC  February 7, 2012 at 11:28 am

I suspect it’s just lack of interest, since the relevant section would take all of a few minutes. That’s fine, but few people’s time is that precious.

Tim C.  February 7, 2012 at 12:09 am

Also, if this were merely survivorship bias or “successful people are successful”, why are they also disproportionately poor?
Also, it seems entirely likely that people who have attended college are more likely to know that there’s a name for what they are than people who haven’t. This is probably getting less and less true with widespread Internet access, but personally, I realized I was trans because of a college class that I took, and if I hadn’t gone to college, I might not have known until I was at a life stage where others would have been likely to tell me “it’s too late”.

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 9:54 am

Sometimes my GF will be like “MtF more like… NtB… Nerd to Betch… heh heh…. So let me tell you about Max Horkheimer.” And I’m like “Gurl you’re still a nerd. Now you’re just a nerd-betch.”

My question is what kind of graduate programs are all these learned trans folks in? From the people I know it’s like 99.9999999999% humanities which may be a meaningless observation but who knows.

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 9:55 am

Also: genuine curiosity not interrogation. Because can there be a club please.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 10:10 am

Not humanities, not hard science. As for other options, I’ll leave that for you to imagine.

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 12:02 pm

If it’s law school all I can do it tip my hat to ya.
BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 12:06 pm

It isn’t, but like law, it is a professional school.

0 0

Reply

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 12:10 pm

Business? Ok now I’m having fun guessing.

0 0

BlaydenWaydonLeydon February 7, 2012 at 12:31 pm

It’s not business, and I’m not saying what it is, because then that would be telling. Let’s just say that there aren’t any known trans people in my field and we’ll just leave it at that.

0 0

Reply

iagainsti February 7, 2012 at 2:02 pm

I would avoid encouraging anyone to go to law school, especially given that there’s about jack and shit for trans women in tho field and a lot of the trans guys are the sort who really don’t like trans women. One is thus stuck going it alone, and it’s no fucking fun.

0 0

Reply

Tim C. February 7, 2012 at 10:13 am

Computer science, in my case, but I got kicked out of my program for standing up for another trans student, who was being sexually harassed by a cis male student.

0 0

Reply
Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 12:06 pm

>: That’s such a gfyhdsghjd. Interestingly, there are a TON of important comp sci/programmer people who happen(ed) to be trans. My GF is in a philosophy dept, but her secret moonlight job is working on this computational linguistics semantic web… thing that I don’t understand. We go to the MIT museum and look at LISP machines and I’m like “lol robots” so I’m not the best one to explain it, but she’s been looking for other cool LGBTQ programmers to talk shop with. I just want every cross over identity to have it’s own internet forum is that so haaaard.

Reply

Tim C. February 7, 2012 at 12:14 pm

There is http://www.reddit.com/r/TransHack but it’s not very active!

Reply

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 12:23 pm

Ohhh! I am afraid of reddit but I will poke around in this. Thanks!

Reply

Savannah Garmon February 7, 2012 at 8:12 pm

That sucks… so sorry to hear this. At least you can be proud you did the right thing by standing up for them.

Reply

Savannah Garmon February 7, 2012 at 8:01 pm

I’ve met lots of trans women who are in computer science. In my mind, that’s one of those typical trans women ‘cliché’ jobs.
Margaret Robinson February 7, 2012 at 5:29 am

Trans PULSE found that 51% of trans men and 41% of trans women had graduated with a postsecondary degree. However, this may not equate to social privilege, as 44% of trans men and 45% of trans women reported income under $15K CAD per year. Given these stats, they may actually be living under crippling educational debt and unable to get a job in their field despite their advanced schooling. 51% of trans men and 41% of trans women reported employers had refused to supply them with a reference because they were trans.

Trans PULSE used a sampling and analysis method that produces statistically representative data.

Kelsey February 7, 2012 at 9:59 am

The data here in Massachusetts where we have all these colleges and also clinics where you can get trans related resources, so thus there is a noticeable cross over between students and trans ppl, is that pretty much most grad students are unemployed, but the trans people who are also graduate students are extra unemployed.

Savannah Garmon February 7, 2012 at 8:21 pm

Thanks Margaret for this perspective. I think this point is important and adds a lot to the conversation that might have been oversimplified before.

Regarding the recommendation issue, I once had an advisor who refused to provide a recommendation using my present name. It’s a really critical issue that is often overlooked.
Savannah Garmon January 29, 2012 at 4:54 pm

If you have some genuine analysis to offer of my article that speaks to the issues that you brought up (including class, race, sex work issues, etc.) then I am more than willing to listen to your critique openly and honestly and respond accordingly. However I’m having trouble seeing much of that in your comment here.

I will say that trans women all across the world (including those who are doing survival sex work, whether that be in the non-Western or in the Western world, or privileged white middle-class trans women with Ph.D.’s like myself) are dehumanized by a trans-misogynistic view of our bodies as being “other” at best or more outright as “freaky” and “weird” or having only sexual value. Certainly I will acknowledge that in most cases I do not have the same vulnerabilities as many other trans women, in particular sex workers; nevertheless, if you view challenging trans-misogyny in Western queer women’s communities as an unimportant project then I think you are more than a little confused.

Also from what you’ve written here I get the feeling you haven’t read much of my other political writings… where do you get calling me a “pomo”? I don’t give two shits about post-modernism.

And anyways, you’ve gone on about my privileges, so what are *your* privileges? Let’s hear your background so we can better understand how that informs what your perspective.

Anyways, what you’ve written here seems to be much more so a critique of my biography than a critique of article.

Haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 7:58 pm

I apologize if you thought I was attacking you on a personal level, I don’t know you and probably ever won’t- and that’s not the point.

It’s not my intention to be critical of individual (individual emphasized here) identities or people, but rather put forward a call for a much needed critique of the ideas behind queer and trans “inclusivity” and “desirability”. The fact that your identity forms your argument is perfectly fine and it constitutes great work to end trans-misogyny typical of Western Queer localities. However if you won’t allow me to problematize the one-sided and queer-elitist nature of Western queer culture– which we are ALL indicated in- then you are further disenfranchising the people I’ve mentioned.

And more dangerously, this line of thinking perpetuates and normalizes the imperialist Queer/Trans discourse.

Tim C. January 29, 2012 at 8:00 pm

haytothevay, you haven’t answered a question you’ve been asked several times: with what privileges do you enter this discussion?
Poison Girl January 30, 2012 at 11:48 pm

*sits on the porch and watches the tumbleweeds roll by*

Sure is quiet around here after that question.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 31, 2012 at 1:13 am

That there tumbleweed looked like wonna dem sagebrushes. You know last week we got ourselves a big one roll by just ahead that dust storm. Think it was mesquite that time. With that next dust storm fixin’ to start soon, we might get a whole oak tree rollin’ by here, a’reckon.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 8:35 pm

And more dangerously, this line of thinking perpetuates and normalizes the imperialist Queer/Trans discourse.

The minute that trans and queer people — no strangers to disempowerment, disenfranchisement, and debarment — somehow emerge as some kind of empire builder, and we find that trans and queer people subjugating old heteronormativities, homonormativities, and cisnormativities, then we’ll talk. And if trans and queer people running the world (hahahaha) is dangerous, then mercy oh mercy I think several readers here would love to know just how that is.

That call to respond is rhetorical. Your responding to that at this point in your offensive isn’t intended — magically or not — to improve the quality of this discussion much further. Your participation here is in bad faith, and that bad faith was in your own doing. We already know you are ill-disposed to advance your credentials after using those credentials to derail and discredit trans and queer people from an imaginary leverage they really lack. If anything, you sound well schooled in imperialism, given the way you cavalierly brought in the global South like a Skoda impossibly lodged on the TGV rails.

Seriously, you’ve effectively wasted everyone’s time here today, save your own. Stop wasting any more time and pony up your stake in this discussion with something substantive. Or go somewhere else.
haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 8:39 pm

How Eurocentric can you be? This is so mind-boggling and SCARY.

0 0

Reply

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 8:41 pm

You can’t do any better.

0 0

Reply

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 8:44 pm

My alternate was “like a Daihatsu impossibly lodged on the Shinkansen rails”, but I worried that I’d be called an Western/Northern imperialist if I used that metaphor.

I don’t play games where the objective is to squash me (and people like me) like a roach.

0 0

Reply

Lucian from Schmekel January 30, 2012 at 10:53 pm

This comment is quite possibly my favorite thing I’ve ever seen on PrettyQueer.

0 0

Reply

AnyaJay February 6, 2012 at 1:30 am

The word Eurocentric gets thrown around allot, and I am wondering what people think it means.

I am a European, in that I emigrated to the U.S.A. from a European culture when I was twenty.

This term has been used to shut down conversations based around concepts that could be said to have had origins in Europe (even if the Europe of today is vastly different from the geographic Europe in which said ideas were formed.)

Yet are those concepts not valid? Their perspectives? I can only think in the concepts of
languages I understand, and the languages I understand have their origins in ‘Europe,’ so is my thinking not Eurocentric, and by extension my thoughts? I refuse to die, thoughtless, in the name of not being eurocentric. Not that Europeans are all one hegemonic entity, in fact people are slaughtered in rebellions, crushed by capitalist imperialism, and oppressed en masse in Europe today, and this concept of a hegemonic Europe erases the very real humans, suffering under very real brutality, in Europe today, from which I escaped in a shipping container.

Eurocentrism is a term for those espousing that europe is a superior ‘entity’ than other geographic conceptions, and believing we should be like Europe (not that you necessarily have a real concept of what that is.) Not using a european based language to discuss your community and locality and the ideas you desire. Not only that but doing these things is not ‘colonizing’ or oppressive in itself, it is sometimes our only option.

Also, many people know coming into the room (or onto the website) that they are privileged in some amalgamation of intersections, in a way that has allowed us here. Honoring that, and understanding your responsibility means trying to make change for ourselves and others, not just shutting the fuck up unless we are specifically critiquing the state or capitalist institutions (who are actually actively doing this damage of marginalizing and oppressing, as compared to a group of trans and queer people who want to learn how to better get along in Toronto) for their GLOBAL destruction (acknowledging that said destruction is not distributed evenly but according to social racism, sexism, classism, imperialism and whatever other hatreds these institutions act upon.) Some times your community needs to change for the people in it, in order for a healthy community to continue working to whatever ends it desires.

Kelsey February 6, 2012 at 8:43 am

Calling out Euro-centrism is not the same as ‘shut up, Euro person’, it’s a way of calling attention to the fact that primarily European ways of thinking and interests (economic and cultural) are considered “real” history, “real” politics, “real” people in other worlds. No, you don’t have to stop existing, but you do have to start listening!

Kelsey February 6, 2012 at 8:45 am

*in other WORDS. Relevant typo tho.
AnyaJay  February 6, 2012 at 11:12 am

I acknowledge that, but here i have said that it is used also to end action. I listen and I listen but i can only really know those in my community and that is where I must act.
In these posts i have not seen any eurocentrism saying that other historys are not real, or denying them.

0 0

Reply

AnyaJay  February 6, 2012 at 11:17 am

I do not want to sound hostile.
I know I must listen, but it is over-corrective to say that I must listen at the cost of, again, thinking and acting.
We can be in dialogue, but I am real too, we all are, acknowledging difference, and discussing it does not mean people with some form of privilidge just shutting up and doing nothing. We need all people to make change, in every place.

0 0

Reply

Margaret Robinson  January 30, 2012 at 8:27 am

I’m suspicious of critiques of Western identity and theory that only target marginalized queer women. If one really favoured the dismantling of white eurocentrism then supporting voices that undermine its claims to universality would be a better tactic. The use of trans women from other countries, especially trans women of colour, as a foil for silencing trans voices in Canada is disingenuous.

0 0

Reply

mahulani29  January 30, 2012 at 4:09 am

While lots of people have contributed to this article with fire in their bellies, I will only briefly state my .02. This article does offer some interesting points, however such points are not compelling because the author does a poor job of contextualizing who they are (yet uses an “identity politic” positionally), who Savvy is and why Savvy’s argument is somehow disempowering to others. In particular, the author misuses identity politics. Specifically, they insist that Savvy is somehow un-entitled to articulate feelings of isolation because she is white and has a PhD in Physics, dismissing how their own tone and attitude in this regard, violently reifies colonial discourses that says that somehow because you are x,y,z that your feelings don’t matter. Really? As if what Savvy is saying is somehow disengaged from other repositories of activism and politics such as those supportive of historically marginalized global trans-sex workers, et. al. In fact, I
wonder if this person even knows Savvy. To me their critique flattens out my sister Savvy’s main points only to reify the racist and classist undertones that they appear to subscribe to. They write: “Many trans sex workers in a global scale do not have the opportunity to experience their queerness because they are too busy making ends meet serving their cis-straight-capitalist clientele.” I have to say that sure, I agree with this on some level but then again I’m not sure who “many trans sex workers on a global scale” are and what “they” are going through. For example, does the author mean to say that trans women sex workers in a global scale don’t also face similar feelings and similar experiences such as those expressed by Savannah (author of Requiem for a Dialogue)? For one, as an indigenous transwoman sex worker, I cannot speak for all indigenous transwomen sex workers, but I can say that I have experienced things similar to those mentioned in Savvy’s article, for example, feeling “tolerated” but not “accepted” in spaces that proclaim to be accepting. While I read Savvy’s article as classed in particular ways, the platform on which they stand are not inherently “classist” to me. In particular, I find the “no more apologies” platform helpful because it speaks to, with and from an anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-colonial epistemological register and in my mind helps us to draw from and think about the limits of acceptance in the context of queer spaces. Though I hate to belabor the point, I would also like to say that rather than imposing restrictions on sovereign erotics (one’s ability to choose one’s partner), Savvy’s article contributes to the opening up of spaces considered “tabu” by Puritanical colonial mappings of thought, desire, sexuality, gender and erotics. To say “I am feeling isolated” and “I will not apologize for who I am” is not the same as saying “You have to love me because I am transgender” or “you can’t love who you love.” Rather, it is opening up spaces for critical thinking and dialogue around issues of trans subjectivity, inclusion and desire.

iridyne January 30, 2012 at 2:05 pm

I agree with you, privileged trans women should suck it up and go stealth if they want to get laid like the other girls, rather than spewing their privilege everywhere.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 30, 2012 at 2:14 pm

Poe’s law.

Tess Y. January 29, 2012 at 2:56 pm

In an effort not to get totally derailed from the article by trolling, would like to echo the need for more events like “No More Apologies”. Does anyone know if there’s good coverage of it anywhere, for those of us who couldn’t make it?

And also wanted to echo Kelsey’s comment to Morgan’s “Translady Self-Annihilation” article that there should be a Cis/Trans Dyke Caucus-esque magazine (or just straight up ‘zine) or message board. Plus a Pt. 2 at Trans-Health Conference. Plus more!
Thanks Tess for bringing the conversation back on track.

There wasn’t much media coverage of the event, owing in large part to some recent disputes some of us in the Toronto trans community have been having with local queer media (maybe you’ve heard, but that’s another story).

However, we recorded Morgan and Drew’s opening comments (which were both really amazing) and those will be forthcoming at some point (I believe there was mention of creating a website for this purpose so keep an eye out for that!)

Also, I love the idea of a cis/trans dyke publication… something that showed loving cis/trans woman couples for one thing would really wonderful. Maybe that’s something we could all discuss further in Philly… and I think we should have some kind of “no more apologies” style discussion/event there for sure!

OMG you are fucking delusional! I am writing a research proposal today and I only have limited time to jump on and off the comment threads… hence I chose to respond to the other thread first since it was quickly evolving and I came back later to respond to this.

Seriously, at this point it’s just like you came to the party and no one was paying enough attention to you so you decided to take a shit in the punch bowl.
Really? That is what you are going to say after I’ve diligently articulated my standpoint? Conversations are blocked when people get defensive.

Reply

cait January 29, 2012 at 10:24 pm

again, to paraphrase haytothevay:
“pay attention to MEEEE!!!! wah wahhhhh! I can mock people when I want to, but I DEMAND you give me the respect I know I deserve! wah wahhhhh!”

Reply

alientofu January 29, 2012 at 10:28 pm

I don’t know if it’s really fair to label someone as delusional for having a perspective that’s critical of this ideology and the dialogue that’s happening here.

I think that this person who has been called a “troll| and simply dismissed may be trying to create a dialogue about how western notions of queer can problematize things further for trans people in other parts of the world and I think that is a discussion worth having and at least considering- maybe not in this forum exactly but it needs to happen.

Toronto is a small part of the global world and a lot of activist practices and statements can be problematized when looked at from a global perspective. Something that explicitly comes to mind in regards to this particular situation and event is the repeated statement seen on the facebook page of this event, “trans women are fuckable too.” I get that the context suggests that trans women want to be loved and desired- totally legitimate. But there needs to be some recognition and acknowledgement that that statement is anti-woman. Trans women/ travestii GLOBALLY, often don’t have a choice, and because of their “queerness” can only survive through sex work and they are getting fucked- and not in a way that I would consider a choice.

I am not trying to negate the value of celebrating queer trans women and sexual desirability- and exploring those things and the barriers within Toronto’s community but I hope that this is also the start of a dialogue that’s open to how it may impact/ be perceived in places outside of this small locality.

Sometimes it’s important to consider and think about what the global impact may be or could be, just to you know…be fair to already oppressed and marginalized people …who definitely don’t have access to identity politics or a forum that invites them to feel as thought they are worthy humans…
haytothevay January 29, 2012 at 10:36 pm

Thank you!

Reply

nope January 30, 2012 at 9:01 pm

haytothevay, please write an article for this blog! you’re awesome, totally solid points. yesss. so sick of people passing of white local politics for a global discussion of queer/transness. pretty queer needs to step it the fuck up. damn.

Reply

Red February 7, 2012 at 11:24 am

Anyone that wants to write a piece for PrettyQueer need only click the big red “Write for PQ” button at the top of the page and fill out the form. Be the change you want to see in the world.

Reply

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 10:37 pm

“Think globally. Act locally.”

This novel event, tried nowhere before, acted locally. And it is now spreading. So, uhm, there you go.

Reply

Savannah Garmon January 29, 2012 at 10:42 pm

“Something that explicitly comes to mind in regards to this particular situation and event is the repeated statement seen on the facebook page of this event, “trans women are fuckable too.” I get that the context suggests that trans women want to be loved and desired- totally legitimate. But there needs to be some recognition and
acknowledgement that that statement is anti-woman. Trans women' travestii 
GLOBALLY, often don’t have a choice, and because of their “queerness” can only 
survive through sex work and they are getting fucked- and not in a way that I would 
consider a choice.”

Okay! I totally see your point, and I think that is perfectly valid conversation that we 
should probably have.

But then again, that is the first specific criticism that has been brought into the 
conversation other than the fact that I’m white and have a physics degree etc… or in 
this last instance, haytothevay is criticizing me on the basis of the time stamps of my 
comments!! I hope you can understand that approaching the conversation in this 
manner (and refusing to articulate any real specific points of criticism) is not 
productive.

Savannah Garmon January 29, 2012 at 10:48 pm

Just to clarify: the “trans woman are fuckable too” thing was completely _my_ idea 
and it had little to do with the other organizers or the event as a whole. So if that 
phrase is problematic (and perhaps it is) then that can be ascribed solely to me and I 
take responsibility for that.

BlaydenWaydonLeydon January 29, 2012 at 11:28 pm

In short, trans women should be fuckable on their own terms without having to 
apologize for it.

iagainsti February 1, 2012 at 4:05 pm

…or having our sexuality deconstructed into theory by cis people who 
hate us.
JaneDoe1983  February 6, 2012 at 5:37 pm

I think the claim that discussing feelings of undesirability by trans people is in anyway related to furthering oppression of trans women in the global south is non-sensical.

Also it’s bizarre to link the concept of – what I think you’re referring to – of sex work to people talking about finding a partner. The two are separate fields.

Trans women in the global south most likely would like a romantic partner too.

Reply

cait January 29, 2012 at 10:07 pm

to paraphrase haytothevay:
“pay attention to MEEEE!!!! wah wahhhhi”

Reply

shelly January 30, 2012 at 3:53 pm

I don’t now Savannah on a personal level, but I’m familiar with her work both at the Women and Trans Center and Queers Against Israeli Apartheid. Accusing her of “imperializing” a queer discourse would be pointless I think. I’m sure she actively combats the pinkwashing effect of Zionist, and Eurocentric mindsets on Middle Eastern queer and trans bodies- who are Non-Western. As a Middle Eastern queer, to me, she is a good ally.

Also we should congratulate, rather than attacking her for putting herself out there to try to find explanations and hopefully solutions to trans-misogyny that I am sure effects a lot of trans women in the world.

What I found a little discouraging was the exclusion of male-identified people from the event. As a queer person who is questioning their gender but mostly presents themselves as male due to various reasons, I was a little upset that I couldn’t attend the conference. Though I understand the initial aim of the conference was to work with female-identified people. I am not trying to assert my perceived cis and/or male privilage onto this event and the group of people who participated by any means, I am wondering if that would be possible? Maybe as a sub-division or a different project, or am I getting too excited too early?

I hope my question doesn’t offend anyone. I am still learning about queer culture and what it means to be queer and/or trans.

Thanks!

Reply
Hi! Thanks for your supportive comment, it means a lot to me <3

About the exclusion of male-identified individuals, I can understand why someone would feel awkward around that. However, please keep in mind the point that I made in the third-to-last paragraph, as well as the point made in Morgan Page's article here:


The point is that, as trans women, it's a common experience for us to enter queer women's space and feel ignored. Often trans men or female-bodied genderqueers are treated as awesome 'radicals' while us trans women are considered boring and 'normative.' This event was an attempt to challenge that for just one day here in Toronto and have something focused on us for once.

I realize that that might seem strange for someone who is still finding their way in the queer community, but I hope you will believe me when I say it's overdue.

I hope it makes sense. And I certainly think that there could possibly be many variations on this discussion in the future!

*why someone _might_ feel awkward* I mean in the second paragraph.

In the end, I just want to draw attention to the fact that after going on about how the organizers of the NMA workshop were somehow claiming a universal narrative (we never did this, we always spoke in a local context and most of what I related in my article is nothing more than personal experience), and further claiming that our ‘universal’ narrative was somehow displacing the voices or the needs of trans woman sex workers in the non-Western world, that when my friend Mahulani, an Indigenous trans woman with a background in sex work, took time out of her busy day to comment on this article, “Haytothevay” didn’t even bother to respond.

Of course not, because Haytothevay was the one claiming a universal narrative all along (not to mention she mostly disagreed with Haytothevay). Haytothevay refused to comment on their own privileges because that would have cost them their ability to sit on the throne and point a finger at everyone else. Worse yet, Haytothevay attempted to co-opt the voices of non-Western trans women sex workers in order to shut everyone else up.

It’s disgusting. Troll is too kind of a word for such an individual.
jackrad January 31, 2012 at 8:02 pm

I only just read this and it’s really great Savannah! I really appreciate the way you’ve shared your experiences and I hope I get to read more from you soon!

Savannah Garmon February 6, 2012 at 5:46 am

Thank so much Jack! Glad you enjoyed it. xo - Savvy

LB February 1, 2012 at 9:47 am

I’m glad this event happened. I admit, one of the reasons I’ve been really reluctant to go into trans/queer spaces is because I don’t WANT to be some freaking symbol of radical awesome. It bugs me that I would be more welcome in a woman’s space (where I don’t freaking belong!) than women their own selves!

Claire February 7, 2012 at 12:26 pm

Thank you.

Argumentative February 3, 2012 at 6:59 pm

Lordy what an awful lot of fuss and bother over an inoffensive first person narrative. This obsession with privilege and the obsession with credentials, how they creep in everywhere and how invariably they turn every discussion into a battle is just wearisome.

There’s nothing wrong with the article itself but really folks is it WORTH yet another knockdown drag out fight?
Hi Savannah (and everyone else),

First off, thank you for this article. I’m so glad that No More Apologies exists, and I really appreciate your report back. I wish I’d been able to get myself to Toronto for the event.

I also wanted to let you know that myself (hi, I’m Gina de Vries), Elena Rose (aka Little Light), and Julia Serano are all co-curators of a spoken word & performance event called “Girl Talk: a trans & cis woman dialogue.” This event tackles a lot of the same issues as No More Apologies, and it will be happening in San Francisco on March 29th this year. We’re in our 4th year running. It seemed apropos to leave information about Girl Talk here for folks who are interested in more resources around cis and trans women building community together.

Some links with info about the March 29th show:
- http://www.facebook.com/events/217563091671401/

Again, thanks so much for the work you’re doing. Let us know how further NMA’s go, yeah? 😊

Hi Gina,

Thanks so much for saying hi and thanks for your comments on my article and NMA.

I had actually run across your event in San Fran at some point previously and was glad to see that we are not the only ones looking into this issue 😊 I certainly think it is an important conversation for us to have, for many reasons.

And of course we will be in touch about future NMA events and those of us in Toronto want to hear from you guys about Girl Talk (and related events) as well!

best regards,
Savvy

Great piece! I had wished that I could have been at “No More Apologies” and am pleased as punch that you reported back here for those of us who could not attend! Thank you so much!

Ofelia Del Corazon February 24, 2012 at 2:18 pm
Denise Cumor  March 20, 2012 at 10:52 pm

I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful written article, I will have to stay focused on what is happening in the trans community of Toronto, build the bridge. :o/

回复 0 0

Reply

Our BiNation  March 23, 2012 at 4:48 pm

Have you considered bi women? They might be more open to a sensitive, intelligent, sensual woman – never thinking if they’d still be a lesbian.

回复 0 0

Reply

Claire  March 23, 2012 at 4:53 pm

As a bisexual cis woman, I take offense to this comment.

1. There are plenty of bisexual trans women. Asking the author if she has “considered bi women” rather than bi cis women invisibilizes trans women.

2. The idea that bisexual women are a more appropriate sexual match for a trans women because they are attracted to men as well as women is transphobic. Trans women are not women with “male bodies”. They are women and when they date other women they are in a lesbian relationship.

I am all for bi visibility and bi pride but you missed the mark on this one, OB.

回复 0 0

Reply

Our BiNation  March 23, 2012 at 6:27 pm

OB,

With all due respect, we meant no harm here.

We think you miss understood us.

Our intention was not to “invisibilizes” anyone, but based on the essay broaden the scope of the writer’s interaction.

We have met and know (and dated a few) many bisexual women, and bi trans women, who feel isolated and would like to
share a dialog.

These woman view trans woman as women, whatever their physicality.

At “Bi Request” in NYC, and online we have heard several stories in common with the essay.

Our reach and interaction is global.

We also know trans women, who love to be hypersexualized.

What a community in New York City deems appropriate, a community in Germany make consider naive.

We make no judgements.

We are far less political and frankly feel the politics and theory in the queer community does more to keep us apart than bring us together.

Our only interest is to put people in the same room to facilitate a conversation, and possibly great sexual experiences.

We never said bi women were more appropriate, nor did we intend to infer it.

We have experienced and discussed (We like to hear your views.) the notion that lesbians think themselves no longer lesbians if they have a relationship with a trans woman.

We hope we can continue our conversation, as we very much value your opinion and want to be sensitized to it.

Please feel free to contact us anytime.

Sincerely,

Jon Thomas

Our Bi Nation
Creative Director

Tim C, March 23, 2012 at 6:30 pm

Jon: intent is not magic and it’s not our responsibility to divine yours. It’s your responsibility to communicate without oppressing people.

I’m a pansexual guy. Stop this — you’re making pan/bi people look bad.

Savannah Garmon March 23, 2012 at 7:08 pm

“We also know trans women, who love to be hypersexualized.”
Did you really just write that?? Every trans woman has a right to gauge her own sexuality and present that as she wishes. But making this statement in the abstract is just kind of weird and I don’t even get why you feel the need to discuss it (maybe you are just trying to prove something, I dunno).

Look, I realize your intentions are probably benign but you’re touching on delicate issues while making this long string of fragmented, discombobulated statements. You’re bound to say something that’s off just cause I don’t think you’ve really thought through what you’re saying.

Please do yourself and the rest of us a favor and just stop.

inchoaterica  March 24, 2012 at 1:32 am

“We have experienced and discussed (We like to hear your views.) the notion that lesbians think themselves no longer lesbians if they have a relationship with a trans woman.”

Huh…what? I’ve had, ahem, quite a few partners (oh, college); of those who defined as lesbian, they defined as lesbian before and after they slept with/were romantically involved with/enjoyed a torrid weekend of awkward cuddling with me. Suggesting this “notion” is a form of identity policing; I tend to let people identify how they identify and so long as they respect me, my body, and my identity, you can sleep with me and call yourself whatever the hell you want.

“We also know trans women, who love to be hypersexualized.”

…um, what? Sure, some trans women probably do (and that’s their right, goddammit!) but that isn’t true for every trans woman. I don’t enjoy those assumptions being made by anyone, because it rejects the reality that trans women, like cis women, come in all forms and kinds, and we might have different relationships to sexuality in different spaces. You don’t get to define our sexuality for us, though, and when you do, you erase a lot of us who aren’t like that and assume a correlation between transness and sexualization for women who do, which is kind of really not okay at all coming from someone who isn’t a trans woman.

“We are far less political and frankly feel the politics and theory in the queer community does more to keep us apart than bring us together.”

Theory is how we defend ourselves as trans people in a cisnormative world which targets trans people, especially trans women, with its agenda. In other words, just because we’re retorting with theory doesn’t mean we’re trying to keep us apart, we’re just saying that you have to respect us, full stop, if you want us to respect you. You’re not doing much of a job respecting us thus far, but here’s what our theory is defending, in fact something pretty simple:

Our bodies, our identities, and our lives are our property and deserve the same respect cis people expect over their bodies, identities, and lives. This means from other trans people, other genderqueer people, and other cis people: no matter what modifier defines your gender identity, you must respect ours…that’s all.

Red  March 24, 2012 at 11:48 am

Jon, you’re welcome to comment in a way that is relevant to the conversation, but this site is not an advertising space for
your organization. I’m leaving your comment up to give context to the responses to it, but please refrain from posts that read like a mission statement in the future.

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- Getting With Girls Like Us: A Radical Guide to Dating Trans Women for Cis Women — Everyday Feminism

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**Savannah Garmon**

Savannah Garmon is an all-American queer trans woman who works as an educator and researcher in physics. She presently lives and conducts research in Tokyo. Savannah engages in queer activism from a trans-feminist perspective; she blogs at [http://leftytgirl.wordpress.com](http://leftytgirl.wordpress.com)

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MOSAIC REPLACEMENT

**United in Anger Film Review**

Cyd Nova reviews the new documentary, United in Anger: A History of ACT UP by Jim Hubbard and Sarah Schulman.

**Rest in Peace, My Love**

After a week of grieving the love of his life, Tuck Mayo finally sat down to write a farewell he hoped would be good enough for her.

**Calling All Call-Outs**

Inspired by an incident here on PrettyQueer, Savanah Garamon explores the nature of Call-Out Culture and how it keeps us from asking the important questions.

**In and Outlaw**

What makes a good outlaw? Katie Liederman makes the case that it’s the size of your heart, not your rap sheet.

**Canon Fodder, or Screw You And The Top 10 List You Rode In On**

Autostraddle's Top 100 list of Hot Queer Women came out today, and maybe that is kind of sad. Is another world of queer culture possible?

**Love and Death**

Having your partner's mother die the day before your wedding is hard enough. But what if you couldn't talk about it at work because your coworkers think you're "just roommates?"

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