



# **Beyond Inclusion: Supporting and Serving Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Community Members**

a training for The Evergreen State College

**August, 2012.**

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# Why this Training?

- Gender identity is complex. Transphobia is inherent in our society.
- There is a need for basic information about gender identity and the challenges that transgender individuals face.
- This need for basic information exists throughout the institution: for students, staff, faculty, and administrators equally.
- Many faculty, staff and students wish to make this campus more inclusive.
- There is a lot of misinformation about trans\* identities out there.

# Today

- Getting grounded in gender identity.
- Barriers and issues faced by transgender/gender non-conforming individuals, with emphasis on those experienced within higher education.
- Skill development.
- Gender identity laws and protections /Evidence-based practices and policies.
- Articles, training tools and educational pieces for further enrichment.

# Terms

## Terms are CRUCIAL

Finding out what terms a person uses and then using their language is a primary way of conveying respect and openness.

## Terms are MEANINGLESS

Terms tell you none of what you need to know to provide appropriate services.

# **and so.....**

## **a note about terms and language**

In this Training, I will use the terms:

- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Gender non-conforming

to describe individuals who do not fit into the binary gender identities of male or female or perhaps they identify as both+, and/or those who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

THAT SAID, remember:

Not all people perceived to be transgender see themselves as transgender, and they may not see themselves as gender non-conforming either.



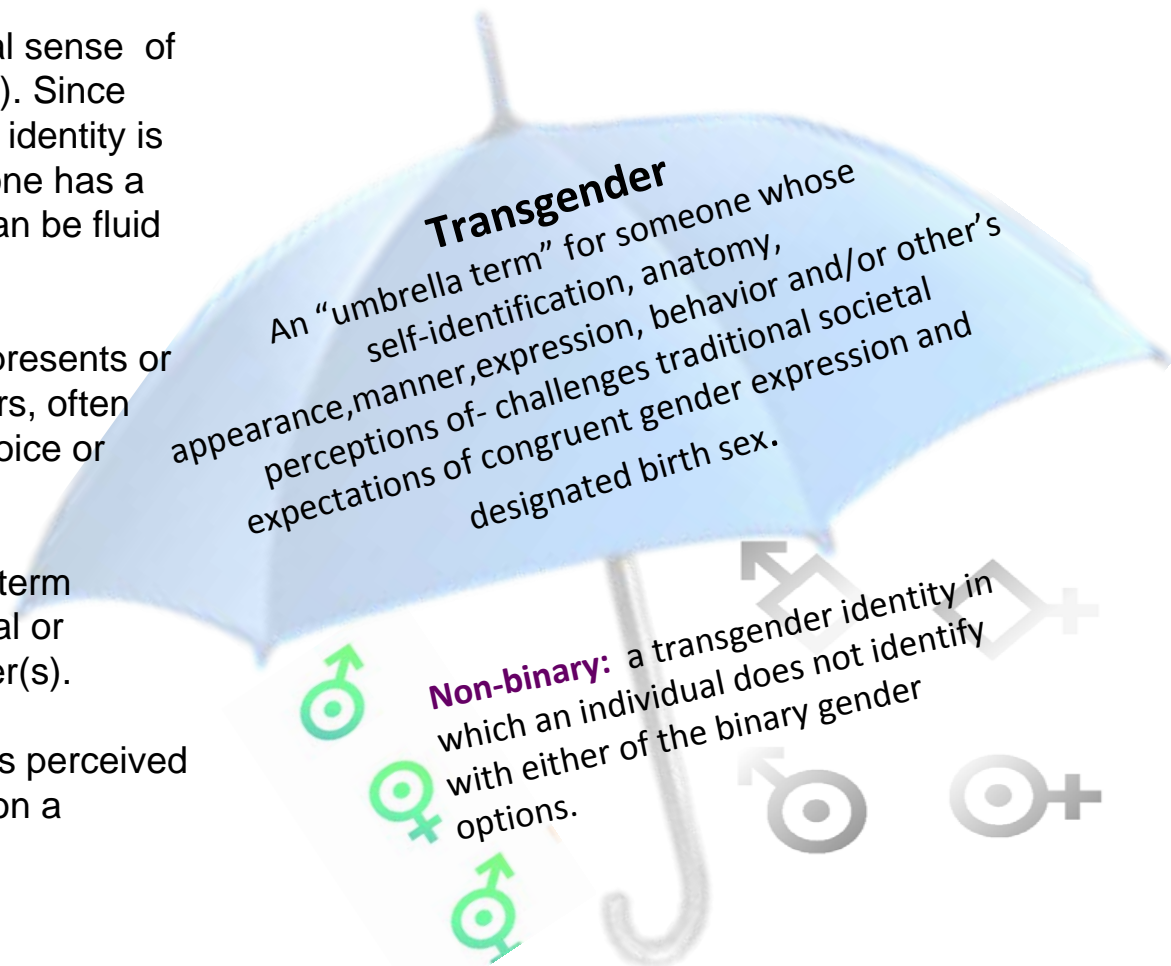
## In review:

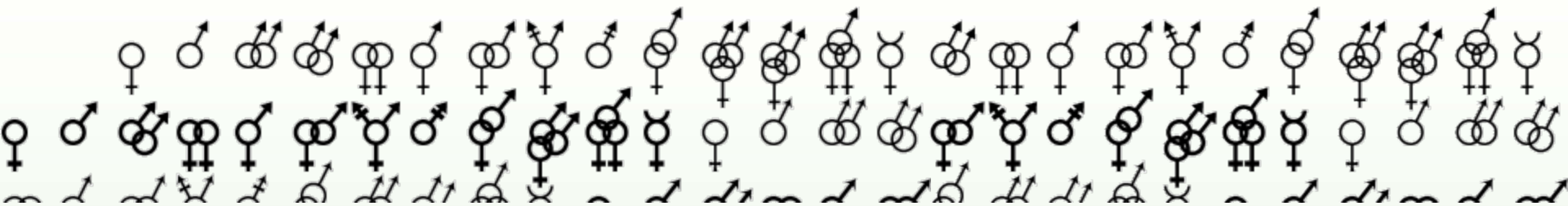
**Gender identity:** An individual's internal sense of being male, female or another gender(s). Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. Everyone has a gender identity or gender identities. It can be fluid for some, static for others.

**Gender Expression:** How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

**Sexual orientation/sexual identity:** A term describing a person's attraction (physical or emotional) to people of a specific gender(s).

**Transphobia:** Fear based on a person's perceived and/or known gender variation; occurs on a localized and a global scale.





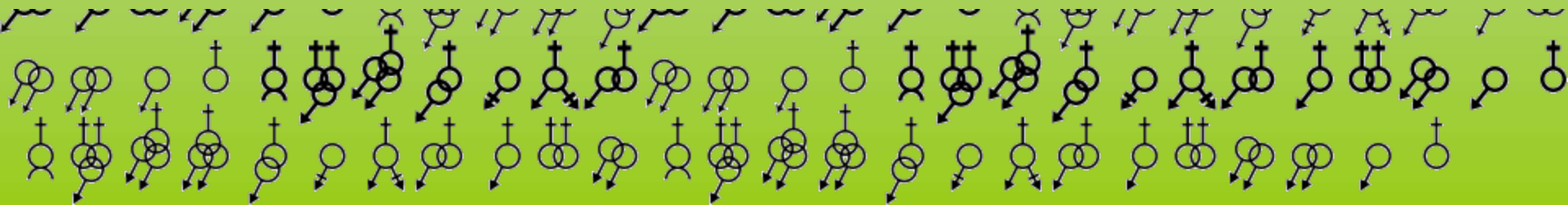
**EVERYONE has a sexual orientation.**

- Heterosexual, gay, bisexual, lesbian, asexual, pansexual, queer.....

**EVERYONE has a gender identity.**

- Trans, female, genderqueer, male....

**Sexual orientation and Gender Identity are distinct.  
They are not the same thing.**





# Our Gender Awareness



# The Bigger Picture

When speaking about trans\* identities I focus on issues of identity and socialization while avoiding discussion about sexuality- **be aware that trans\* people are almost always sexualized in media and systematically and institutionally pathologized.**

I encourage you to prepare to respond to overtly transphobic statements of this nature (as well as well-meaning but misinformed comments).

# The Bigger Picture

Transgender and non-binary individuals face discrimination. Overt and institutionalized.

On the occasions when ignorance and hatred lead to violence, Transgender and gender non-conforming individuals frequently find that resources and educated authority figures are harder to find.

# Prominent Concerns I Hear from Trans\* Students

1. Lack of access to gender-neutral bathrooms and gender policing of restrooms that are binary-gendered.
2. Faculty/Staff/Co-student refusal to honor preferred name/pronoun(s) OR consistently mis-pronoun AND confusion concerning rights to pronoun and name preference in class and school records.
3. Lack of visible Trans\* history or experience in College courses.
4. Lack of basic education related to gender identity, for community.
5. Legal name change info not reflected across systems.

## CONCERN:

- 1) Lack of access to gender-neutral bathrooms and gender policing of restrooms that are binary-gendered.

Among the most frequent of concerns aired by Trans\* and Gender Non-Conforming students, who I see is that of restroom access.

Curious about why it's 'such a big deal?' “

**For transgender and gender non-conforming people, the lack of safe bathroom access is “the most frequent form of discrimination faced but the least acknowledged by policy makers”<sup>1</sup>**

So let's talk about restrooms shall we?

Toilet Training

## Solutions:

- Support and promote through policy and education, that ALL students, staff and faculty have a right to safe and appropriate restroom facilities. This includes the right to use a restroom that corresponds to one's gender identity, regardless of an individual's sex assigned at birth.
- Provide more neutral restrooms: more options for everybody!
- Requiring an individual to 'prove' their gender (by requiring a doctor's letter, identity documents, etc.) is not acceptable. An individual's self-identification is the sole measure of the student's gender.
- Educate all campus community members on restroom access issues to reduce confusion, fear and misinformation.
- Develop realistic signage that is reflective of all.

## **CONCERN:**

2) Faculty/Staff/Co-student refusal to honor preferred name/pronoun(s) OR consistently mis-pronoun AND confusion concerning rights to pronoun and name preference in class and school records.

- **Frequently trans\* students are not addressed by their preferred pronouns or names.**
- **Having one's gender acknowledged and validated through language is important for our emotional health.**
- **Calling someone by a name that they do not identify with is invalidating and damaging to one's self-concept.**

## Solutions to name/pronoun use:

- People have the right to determine their own identity, and the name they wish to be called regardless of whether they have obtained a court ordered name or gender marker change.
- Students have the right to pursue an education in an environment free from harassment.
- Persistent and intentional refusal to call someone by their preferred name/pronouns is discriminatory.
- Inadvertent slips and honest mistakes happen: correct yourself and move on.
- Discriminatory behaviors directed toward transgender and gender variant students are illegal in the State of Washington.



## Solutions to official records:

- To support a student's right to self-actualization and autonomy, the best practice is to inform each student of the ways in which their grade reports and records are used, recorded, shared etc...
- Sharing information about legal name change options while also acknowledging that this may be beyond the reach of many (financially, due to lack of family support etc).
- Validate the student's experience by listening actively. Acknowledge the struggle and demonstrate your commitment to honoring preferred name and pronouns in all ways possible.

## **CONCERN:**

3) Lack of visible Trans\* history or experience in College courses.

I believe that this happens for a number of reasons. The one's I will focus on are the following:

- 1) Lack of clear understanding as to why its relevant,
- 2) Lack of knowledge of trans\* history.

## Solutions: and more on Topic Relevancy

- It is relevant. Figure out how.
- Educate yourself. There are many great resources in your own library.
- Bring in guest lecturers/presenters who are Transgender History knowledgeable.
- Seek out many transgender voices .
- Partner with local and national agencies that are knowledgeable!
- Create your own resources!

## A note about resources/media/readings etc...

### **Trans\* people are not monolithic.**

- The conversations by and about trans\* people have changed and developed rapidly in the time since such conversations have been published and available.
- Older texts, while potentially revolutionary for their time might contain terms that are no longer considered acceptable. Some newer texts might use these terms in a manner that represents a reclamation, or they might just be used by people who disagree on the usefulness of new terms or the offensiveness of old terms.
- In the same way it's not a good idea to treat any work by authors of other target groups as definitive representations of a whole group/population, *please* don't treat any single work or agency as the definitive resource on trans\* issues.

# Bringing Gender Identity into the Classroom/boardroom/workshop/residence hall etc...: Challenges + Skills

## Challenge:

Topic Relevancy:

- “Why is this topic relevant?”
- “Why does this topic matter? “
- “Why are we talking about this?”
- “Why are we spending time in this class/boardroom/workshop/housing: addressing this?”

## Skills:

Establishing the relevance of this topic and its relationship to the discipline early on is helpful.

This information may be new to some students. Sometimes people feel defensive or threatened. It's important to distinguish between people's belief systems and why we're in the classroom.

Draw connections and discuss the relevance of transphobia and gender identity with the class early on. Ask class to participate in identifying relevance.

# Bringing Gender Identity into the Classroom/boardroom/workshop/residence hall etc...:

## Challenge:

Trans\*folks may feel re-victimized by the topic of transphobia.

## Skills:

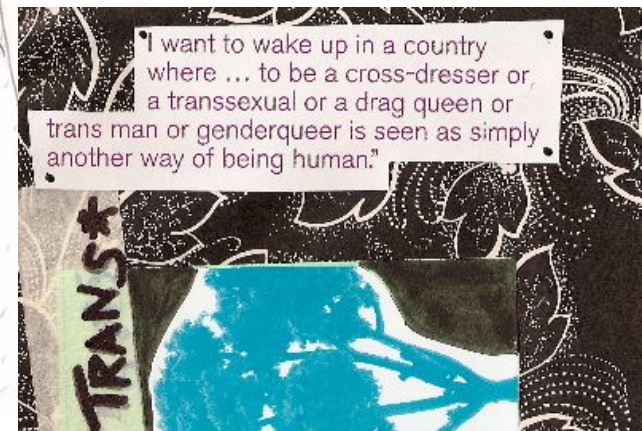
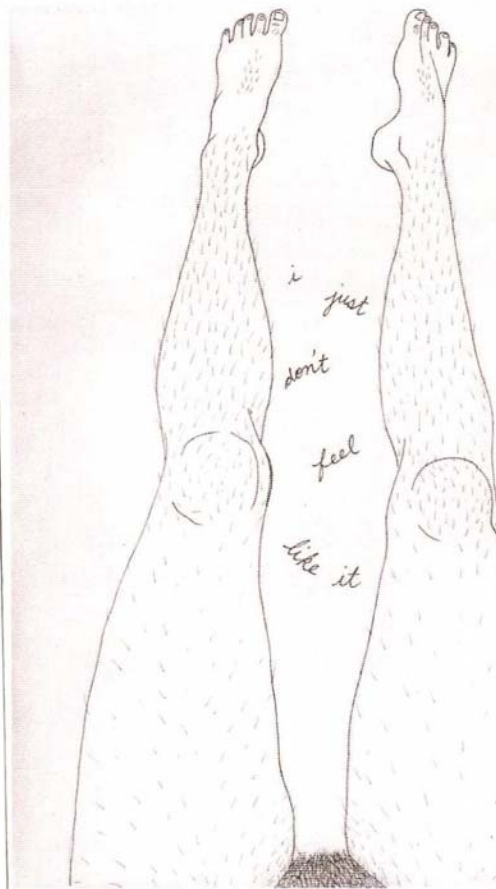
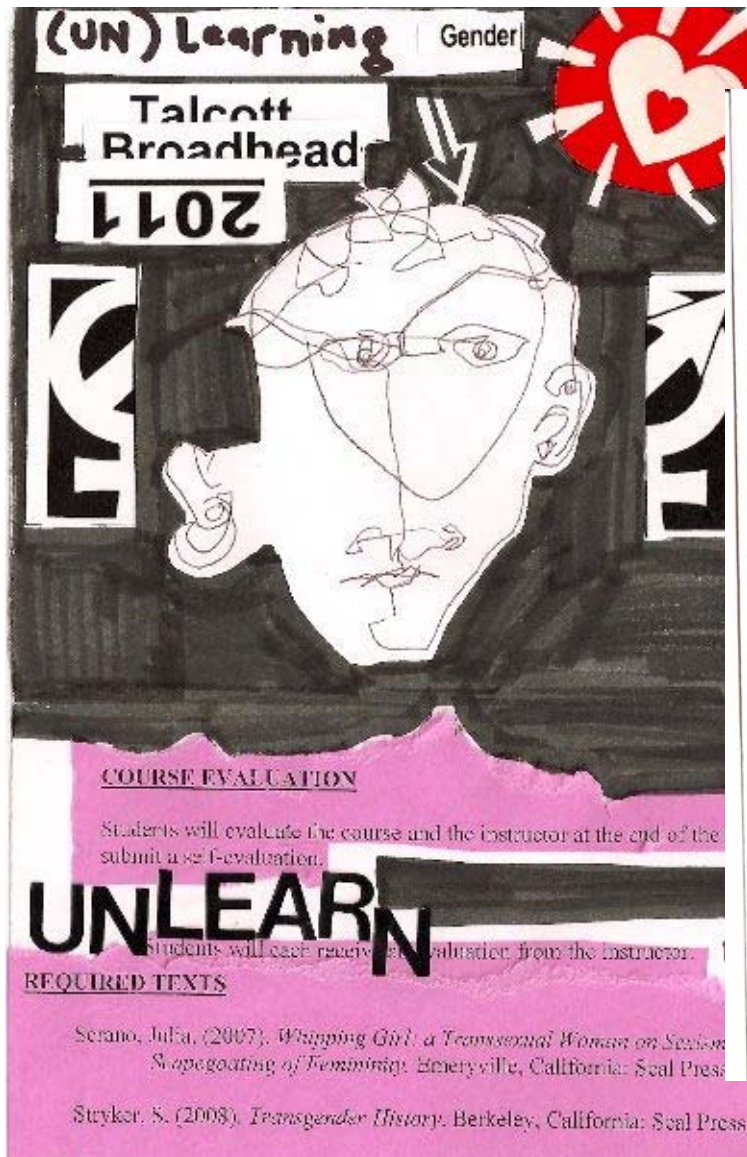
Assume there are trans\* students or SOFFAs in your class/work area, workshop, residence hall etc... Avoid framing transphobia as a problem that happens to “others.”

Blaming oppression, in this case transphobia, on the people that experience it is a common response for those who feel confused, uncomfortable, and even hostile: Encourage students to express their confusion honestly without judging or blaming others.

Have resources for students to get support outside of the classroom: be sure they are trans\*competent resources. Do some research on this.

Encourage folks to take care of themselves.

DIY Resources are a great way to include student voices:



## **CONCERN:**

**4) Lack of basic education related to gender identity, for community.**

**Don't just add the “T” without doing work.**

**Don't assume that gender identity is not relevant to you.**

**Don't assume that because we are in Olympia, everyone already “gets it,” or that transphobia is not alive and well.**



## **SOLUTIONS:**

to the lack of basic education related to gender identity, for community.

To be an ally to trans people learn about how gender identity and sexual identity are distinct. Everyone, including LGB folks, need to examine their own gender stereotypes, their own prejudices and fears about trans people, and be willing to defend and celebrate trans lives.

Everyone has a gender identity, not just trans folks.

Create alliances between groups. Partner to educate others. Learn how to be an effective ally and commit yourself to doing the work. Don't wait for others to educate the community.

## CONCERN:

**5)** Legal name change information not being reflected across all information systems.

- Finding that your name and/or gender designation have been misrepresented in your records can be frustrating at best but devastating to most.
- Submitting name or gender designation change information to insensitive or unaware staff can be a traumatic experience for trans\* folks.

## SOLUTIONS

- Include “preferred name” option on paperwork. Train staff to use this rather than the legal name if this is the individual’s preference.
- Staff should take care to coordinate legal changes in name and/or gender designation throughout all systems.
- Tighten up the process: it should be clear and easy to find information about all of the steps that an individual must take to have their legal information changed in your system.
- All staff who interact with the process should be trained in trans-sensitivity and understand the process thoroughly. Staff should refrain from asking irrelevant questions or making assumptions about the gender identity of the individual who is submitting the information.

# Gender Identity Policies/Laws/Protections

# KNOW YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

- **What does Washington's Law Against Discrimination say about discrimination based on sexual orientation?**

ESHB 2661 was signed by Governor Chris Gregoire on January 31, 2006. ESHB 2661 adds sexual orientation as a protected class in Washington State.

- Sexual orientation nondiscrimination became effective and part of the Washington State Law Against Discrimination (RCW 49.60) on June 8, 2006.
- The new law (RCW 49.60.040) says sexual orientation “means heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender expression or identity. **As used in this definition, gender expression or identity means having or being perceived to have a gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression, whether or not that gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned to that person at birth.**”

# KNOW YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

## What does this mean in practice?

**Employment:**

**You may not discriminate in this realm.**

**This statute covers harassment by co-workers that the employer knows or should have known about, and that creates a hostile working environment for the victimized employee.**

# KNOW YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

## What does this mean in practice?

**Employment:**

**Can an employer ask about an applicant's sexual orientation/gender identity?**

**NO. An employer may not make any inquiry in connection with prospective employment that expresses any limitation, specification, or discrimination as to sexual orientation, or any intent to make such limitation, specification, or discrimination.**

# KNOW YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

## What does this mean in practice?

**Employment:**

**What is the employer's obligation regarding restrooms?**

**If an employer maintains gender-specific restrooms, transgender employees should be permitted to use the restroom that is consistent with the individual's gender identity.**



# KNOW YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

## What does this mean in practice?

**What is the responsibility of insurers with respect to sexual orientation?**

**Sexual orientation, which includes gender identity and expression, is not a permissible consideration in insurance. Insurers may not refuse to issue or cancel or decline to renew insurance coverage on the basis of sexual orientation, nor may insurers offer different amounts of benefits payable, terms, rates, conditions, or types of coverage on the basis of sexual orientation.**

# TITLE IX

## Department of Education: Title IX prohibits gender-based harassment

Schools and universities that receive federal funding are responsible for ending gender-based harassment and bullying whenever and wherever they occur.

Gender-based harassment, including that which targets transgender students, is forbidden under Title IX of the Education Code and this applies when LGBT students are targeted based on their gender expression.

According to a Dear Colleague letter from the Obama Administration , October 2010:

“... it can be sex discrimination if students are harassed either for exhibiting what is perceived as a stereotypical characteristic for their sex, or for failing to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment and gender-based harassment of all students, regardless of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of the harasser or target.

“Although Title IX does not prohibit discrimination based solely on sexual orientation, Title IX does protect all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, from sex discrimination.”

# VOICES



# Voices

**“when you’re wearing drag every day of your life, it can get exhausting. “**

[trans survivor, olympia, washington]

**On being turned away from a SV shelter:**

**“How does one who is so in-tune with fighting bigotry and oppression—so ready to force bigotry and oppression upon others? And it’s always cloaked in this language of victimization, as though me living my life hurts somebody else. “**

[anon. trans survivor]

**“Oppression doesn’t require intent to thrive. In fact, the way oppression thrives best is by allowing people to marginalize people without intent, as that shows that the ideologies of gender essentialism and cissexism are so ingrained in you that you don’t even notice it.” — [autumn-and-eve](#), on why “I didn’t INTEND to be [insert -ism here]” is bullshit**

**“...there must be issues that unite feminists as a whole that aren't dependent on someone's assigned gender. One of these issues should be fighting against the devaluing of femaleness and femininity because that effects so many people of different genders and sexualities.”**

[ olympia,washington, trans youth/survivor ]

**I’ve seen it, not in everyone but I’ve seen it a bitterness -----It makes sense—don’t we all resent being told/made to feel/displayed as the lesser?**

[olympia, washington, Iraq War veteran]



**Thank you so much for having me.**

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