

Britain Comes Close to Defeating Trans Overreach

By Debbie Hayton

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Like an out-of-control juggernaut, transgender ideology has steamrolled through legislatures and institutions, leaving irrational and unscientific policy in its wake. But there's been some promising pushback in London this summer where the British government might be about to say no to the transgender lobby.

In the U.K., like everywhere else in the world, trans people are being told that biology no longer defines us — that we can be the sex we want to be. This new and controversial dogma is policed by carrot and stick. When appeals to be “kind” fail to persuade — though how can it be kind to propagate untruths? — dissenters are condemned as reactionary bigots. Women suffer most — the [furious response to J. K. Rowling](#) was notable only because she was already a public figure.

I may be transgender, but I am also a high-school science teacher, cognizant of biological reality, and proud to stand with J. K. Rowling. Science and society cannot be fooled, and neither should trans people. Our biological sex is real: It cannot be changed, and men cannot become women. To deny sex is also to deny sexism. Women's sex-based rights become meaningless if their boundaries can be so easily breached.

Spurred on with their quasi-religious zeal, the transgender lobby has not been easy to placate. In the U.K., the onslaught began in 2015 with demands to reform the Gender Recognition Act (GRA). Passed a decade earlier, the GRA allowed transgender people (such as myself) to change our legal gender as indicated on our birth certificate. Crucially, there were two pieces of evidence required: two medical reports and a clinical diagnosis of gender dysphoria. The public was kept in the dark as Stonewall U.K. and other LGBT lobby groups worked furiously behind the scenes to remove the need for this supporting evidence. Preliminary work was conducted in Parliament by the Women and Equalities Committee, a cross-party group of MPs. In January 2016, the [committee recommended](#) what the transgender lobby wanted them to and called on the government to change the law to a system of “self-identification,” effectively allowing anyone to change his or her legal gender by filling out a form. Women's rights were sacrificed on the altar of liberation, which was perhaps not so surprising given that the committee had not chosen to meet with any women's groups.

In the four years since that report, however, the wheels have moved slowly. British politics has been overwhelmed by Brexit, yet the pressure from the transgender lobby continues as a relentless and surreptitious force. When the government [consulted the British public](#) — somewhat belatedly in July 2018 — the then-prime minister Theresa May suggested that the government had [already made up its mind](#): “I want to see a process that is more streamlined and de-medicalized.”

While the elimination of needless bureaucracy is worth applauding, the medical reports and diagnosis of gender dysphoria distinguish between need and want. They also provide the checks and balances that offer some reassurance to women.

Nevertheless, while the transgender lobby maintained the pressure, women in the U.K. stepped up their own organization, mobilizing themselves into an effective grassroots campaign. Notably, a group with

roots in the Labour Party and the trade-union movement — i.e. the political Left — set up [Woman's Place U.K.](#) They found widespread support from across the political spectrum, from liberals and conservatives alike. Their [demands](#) cut across traditional politics — they called for respectful discussion, for sex-based rights to be upheld, and for women to be consulted on issues that affected them. What reasonable person could refuse them that?

The risks to women's rights if any man can self-declare into womanhood without question are surely obvious. Rachel McKinnon stole a [world cycling championship](#) — leaving women to compete for second place. Jessica Yaniv set out on a mission to [persecute female beauticians](#) in Canada who quite rightly refused to perform intimate waxing on Yaniv's male genitalia. Meanwhile, in the United States, female political representation is being appropriated by [males who have chosen](#) not to identify as men.

Self-identification has become iconic for the transgender lobby, and they are not used to being ignored. Yet the British government's [consultation on GRA reform](#) closed on October 22, 2018, and we still await the official response. While doing nothing would preserve the status quo, it would not satisfy women concerned about their sex-based rights, given that institutional policy has thus far been largely captured by transgender activists. Women's trust and confidence have been pushed to the breaking point. To me as a male transsexual, that matters far more than law or policy in my day-to-day life.

Transgender rights in the U.K. are secure. We are protected from harassment and discrimination, but not because of some metaphysical “gender identity” that can be neither proved nor falsified. The protected characteristic is gender reassignment. That is based on actions — we can live in a way analogous to the opposite sex without being treated less favorably. Unlike identity, actions are objective — and they can be observed — so our rights are based firmly in reality.

The British government might have been tempted to use the COVID-19 pandemic to further extend the impasse, but on April 22, at the height of the lockdown restrictions, Liz Truss, the minister responsible for this policy, [announced](#) that a response would be forthcoming “by the summer” and would uphold anti-discrimination standards for trans people while also securing the “protection of [women's] single-sex spaces.” Again, last Wednesday, she reiterated these remarks that a decision would be made this summer. This was certainly not the response that the transgender lobby was looking for. Indeed, it was quite unlike anything that had gone before. Self-identification appears to be off the table.

We might be about to witness something remarkable. Despite the intense lobbying, emotional blackmail, and hounding of opponents by the transgender lobby, the British government seems set to declare the commonsense compromise that while transgender people can and should be able to live our lives in peace, as a minority in need of accommodation, we need to fit in with society and not have society revolve around us.

I would take that as a win. The (LGB)T activist agenda has long stopped being a campaign for trans rights — which are well established — but rather a manifesto of trans demands. This belligerence has been disastrous for us as well as for women. We have a lot of work ahead of us if we wish to restore the trust and confidence we used to take for granted, but, as the juggernaut pauses, we have an opportunity to start to repair the damage.