Resisting TERF’s and Transforming Their Organizations

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Tactics to Make Women Only Spaces Include All Women

TERF’s — Trans Exclusive Regressive Fascists — are tools of the far right/alt-right establishment of America and the UK. They are bigots who promote transphobia as a political stance. They exist as agent provocateurs tasked with preventing the LGBTQ community from gelling into a cohesive political force that can oppose fascism. They claim to be “lesbians” and “feminists” while functioning as proxies for the white male oligarchs that seek to bury any and all queerness and to trap women in servitude.

Despite being expelled from the mainstream feminist movement in the 1970’s for their hate, TERF’s have formed numerous fringe organizations worldwide to push their misogynistic agenda. They represent an ongoing danger to the safety of any community they’re in. What can we learn from successful anti-
fascist tactics used elsewhere to help combat and disrupt this existential threat to women and queers?

Posie Parker’s transphobic billboards were funded by America’s Christian right.

Some argue it’s better to ignore TERF’s and focus on building positive groups. The creation of inclusive spaces is always a good idea. However, TERF’s receive funding from evangelicals and other anti-LGBT organizations, with the specific orders to sow division and promote misogyny under the label of “radical feminism.” The entire “adult human female” campaign of Posie Parker came from the patriarchs of the Heritage Foundation, who used her as a meat puppet to disguise the white straight cis male privilege underlying the move.

Like the Proud Boys, Atomwaffen Division, and National Policy Institute, TERF organizations seek to brainwash young people and promote hate in communities wherever they are present. Simply ignoring them is not an option, anymore than ignoring the violence of Charlottesville or Pittsburgh.
Since we cannot remain still, we must act. So what form should those actions take? Fortunately, we have many good options.

**Parallel Institutions**

A solid first step is to create organizations that are inclusive to all that are redundant with whatever function the TERF’s run. Sometimes it’s enough to simply beat the TERF’s at their own game. People like less discrimination, not more. Our trend as a society is toward greater understanding of one another. For this to happen, you have to provide a viable alternative to whatever function the TERF’s are currently offering so people can choose to avoid them.

For example, in Vancouver, you have several great rape crisis centers, such as the WAVAW, that serve all women. That stands in contrast to centers who abuse the notion of “women only spaces” to ban women from aid. All of these centers are universally superior in safety, size, and quality to centers that are not inclusive.

In Austin, we have Central Texas Femdoms (CTFD), a kink group for dominant females that is trans inclusive. They formed due to the transphobic comments of the founder of another pro-Domme organization. As a result, the TERF run group is nowhere to be found, as CTFD is the one with access to local play spaces and clubs.
Camp Trans began as a parallel group in protest of the discrimination of MichFest.

A famous historical example is Camp Trans. This was the alternate music festival setup across from MichFest, a music festival that was sick with TERF influence. While it sadly ended in 2012, its legacy lives on. It served thousands of women of all kinds and provided a safe harbor for community to thrive. (More about MichFest later.)

Leadership Reform

You make a group that does everything the TERF group does, but without the unnecessary hate. Yet the TERF group finds a way to persist. Now what?
A gradual strategy that can succeed is infiltration and replacement. Entryism is a century old non-violent tactic that works in any group that uses voting to determine leadership. Gather a group of like-minded allies, join the group, and then vote one another into key positions. Attract more via outreach and over time the group will be geared toward promoting social justice and human rights.

N.K. Jemisin is the trailblazing SF Fantasy author who win 3 Hugo’s in a row, the first to ever accomplish that.

We have seen this approach yield splendid results in pop culture. “Good ol’ boy” clubs in science fiction, video games, comics have all but ceased to exist. Today, the first three-time
Hugo Award winner is N.K. Jemisin. That’s a hard break with science fiction’s history of rewarding stale old white men. That was achieved thanks to the infiltration and replacement of the conservative fans by more and more progressive elements.

Noelle Stevenson was able to give us her amazing She-Ra series thanks to her work on comics.

We also see this at Marvel Comics, which publishes such groundbreaking work as Gabby Rivera’s America Chavez, which puts queer women front and center. That would’ve been unheard of without the editorial shift achieved through concerted entryism into that business by Heather Antos and other leaders. Noelle Stevenson’s gorgeous queer-centric She-Ra and the Princesses of Power series would not have been possible without the dissolution of the old barriers. Stevenson got the role of show runner thanks to her work in comics.
With TERF groups, many will likely try to ban trans women from membership. This can be worked around. Cis women allies can easily enter a given organization. If they work as a collective, it’s a matter of figuring out the number needed to achieve a simple majority (or whatever number is needed to overrule attempts to stop the bloc). For example, if a collective has about 25 members, then a group as small as 30 could wrest control from the bigots.

Then, when it comes time to select leaders, remove the old bigoted guard and install rational leadership. Done correctly, this is a wonderful bloodless democratic coup. It’s enabled since TERF’s are a tiny — if loud — minority of all women. Finding women willing to help replace their hate with love and inclusiveness is therefore not an impossible task.

This tactic is especially sound when trying to take over a group that has resources and performs functions that are important to the broader community, but happen to be biased against women. For example, discriminatory rape crisis centers on one hand perform an important function for the segment of women they do serve, even as they impose misogynist exclusionary definitions of who they’ll treat. Maintaining continuity for the delivery of this kind of service is important — no one wins if they’re shut down or disappear. A gradual internal take over simply allows the organization to stop being a hate group while still caring for women in need.
Purse Strings

Let’s say the group has taken steps to make entryism difficult or maybe their size makes that approach too difficult. Now external pressure becomes the main method, as this can yield positive results. The easiest target: the group’s money. Financial pressure is a proven way to cause a group to reform or shut them down so one of the before mentioned parallel groups can take their place.

There are several ways to hurt a hate group’s purse strings: political lobbying, boycotts, picketing, and lawsuits.
In Canada, the Coalition Against Trans Antagonism (CATA) has done incredible work in lobbying city and province officials to defund TERF groups. Their effort has cost bigots tens of thousands in taxpayer money. Politicians will listen to and support the position that has the most political viability. TERF’s are a small part of their voter base, while those who support inclusion will tend to be the majority — at least in the saner parts of a nation. That means the political will of a left-wing
leader will be to stop giving money to a TERF group if you push them to do so.

Still, this is assuming you’re not in a red state, as Trump voters are major backers of TERF policies. Always remember that where you see a TERF, behind them is someone in a MAGA hat cheering them on.

Boycotts have worked great on a broad scale. Boycotts work to deny a group sponsors and access to donors. One well-known success is the previously mentioned MichFest. Activists successfully made it so even performing at MichFest became a black mark on an artist’s record. They’d be denied spots at Pride events nationwide.

This pressure became so great that MichFest finally shut down and the land it used was sold to new owners, who have pledged to promote inclusive musical festivals. As we speak, a reborn MichFest, free of the bigoted old leadership, is in the works. It was a huge win for women internationally.

Picketing is as old as first wave feminism and the suffragettes. Standing outside a physical meeting place with signs is a proven effective tactic for raising awareness about hate. ANTIFA has used it to shut down people like Ben Shapiro and Milo Yiannopoulos with amazing efficiency. It was also effective for bringing attention to hate speech at the Vancouver Public Library, who sadly gave a platform to Nazi adjacent Meagan Murphy.
For closing locations that are a front for hate groups, picketing works well. Static locations are easy to patrol, stake out, and monitor. Everyone who goes in and out can be handed a pamphlet making them aware of why a given group should be avoided. This was done against the Vancouver Women’s Library, which was led by a known transphobe. It took time, but the patient and persistent activists won the day and the library was shut down, ending its distribution of hate speech pretending to be “feminism.”

Lawsuits are a classically American way to attack an organization’s funding. Essentially, you catch the TERF group violating someone’s civil rights (which they always are, since they discriminate) and then you sue them for damages. If enough people sue the organization, it can overwhelm their ability to fight back and they shut down, unable to continue functioning. Make sure your state or locality enshrines discrimination based on gender identity into law — that helps immensely.

The lawsuit method is a lot messier than the entryism method, and has several downsides. It siphons funds that could be spent on helping women into the hands of lawyers. Protracted legal battles could help them rally even more support from alt-right backers. It will take longer than taking it over from the inside, as it can take courts years to render critical rulings.
Morgane Oger is one of many activists leading the charge against hate groups in Canada.

However, this method is not without results. In Canada, Morgane Oger successfully sued Christian radical Bill Whatcott in 2019. The court specifically ruled that Whatcott mocking her for being a trans woman and stating that she was not a woman violated her human rights. That meant she was allowed to sue him and won a judgment against him for $55,000.

Here in the states, lawsuits have been effectively wielded against bakeries and cake shops that refuse to service LGBTQ customers, such as Masterpiece Cakeshop in Colorado. Even when Jack Phillips “won” a suit, he lost time and money. Even better, it drained funds from the legal funds the Christian conservatives use, making them waste their money. Repeatedly hammering him will work eventually in driving him out of
business. A pizza shop and other businesses have been driven to bankruptcy and closure by similar methods.

Direct Action

“Deplatforming works.” — Jason Koebler

Unfortunately, there are TERF organizations that are highly resilient against threats to their financials. The Heritage Foundation is a major backer for many TERF groups, as mentioned before. Lobbying, boycotts, picketing, and lawsuits aren’t guaranteed to bring about the necessary changes. So what’s next after that? Direct action.

Direct action is where you go from targeting an institutional or organization to singling out the key leaders and propellants of hate. History shows that when singled out, many bigots will renege on their hateful ideas and begin to reform. And if they don’t, then their communities can expel them.

TERF’s, like all Nazis, have no right to a peaceful existence or steady employment. They have declared their support of fascism and have therefore declared their intent to directly harm the trans community wherever they’re found. They threaten the safety and dignity of others and therefore deserve none themselves until they choose to be human once more.
The usual caveats to the direct action approach apply. Be careful of misidentifying people. Attacking bystanders just makes TERF’s look sympathetic. Don’t do anything you can’t handle the consequences of.

Against Presence

The simplest form of direct action is to work on denying individual TERF’s their ability to communicate and spread hate speech. This includes platforms like social media, blogs, YouTube, and other outlets.

Social media has a mixed record of shutting down hate speech. Facebook sometimes treats “TERF” as a slur, even though it never has been. Twitter allows Neo-Nazis to retain accounts. Reddit has been very permissive of fake radfem subreddits that spread bigotry and target activists. Even Medium has bent the knee to TERF’s and censored articles calling out their hate directly. Still, taking screen shots, saving info, and reporting accounts is important to the fight.

Notify contacts if a TERF has snuck onto their friends list. I’ve personally caught a couple TERF’s trying to worm their way into feminist groups and gotten them banned. Report their blogs to Wordpress and others to try and get them taken down. You may not shut down every TERF account you see, but every one that is suspended is a victory. Likewise, the more you can promote the isolation and containment of TERF’s on social media by denying
them the ability to associate with moderate feminist elements, the weaker their influence on the community will be.

TERF’s thrive by trying to maintain a clean public image so they are attractive to young feminists who may not know better. They’re like abusive parents who beat and molest their children at home, but insist those children wear smiles when traveling outside. Deny them the cover of respectability where possible. If a group has a Wikipedia page, make sure it has documentation about them discriminating against women. Review bomb their Yelp and Facebook pages. Slam any online ads with comments.

Activists handing out fliers to make people aware that Vancouver Rape Relief is a TERF run hate group. Source.

For real world ads, deface posters they put up around town with your own notices about their status as a hate group. Wheat paste
is great for this. You can find an excellent recipe for wheat paste in the *Banner Drops, Stencils, & Wheatpaste* zine available from the Virtual Gonzo Zine Library. Seize any handouts or fliers they distribute and replace them with your own. Produce zines condemning the group and distribute them in the same places the TERF’s tried to advertise. Kit O’Connell has great resources (such as the Days of Unity Antifascist Zine Collection) for zine creation and is also an anti-fascist opponent of TERF’s.

Control access to safe spaces. Don’t be afraid to gatekeep those who advocate for hate, as TERF’s do. Ban them from Pride Parades. If they try and muscle their way in, surround them, drown them out, and deny them any visibility or impact. CATA and others succeeded in this with the Vancouver Dyke March, when the VDM organizers meekly bent the knee to cis supremacist groups.

Doxxing is another effective tool against fascists, just as it can be against TERF’s. TERF’s are very similar to incels: they are keyboard warriors. They hide behind online personas to spew evil and feel safe in their own bubble. Doxxing takes that safety away from them in a way that causes many to quit on the spot. Since the goal of combating hate is to make the person stop spreading it, there is no question doxxing is an important and useful tool to that end.

Doxxing a white supremacist has proven effective in making them afraid. Once their info is found, their friends, family, and places of work are contacted. Nazis are usually fired and
ostracized and thus given suitable social punishment for advocating harm against others. TERF’s should be subject to the exact same outcomes. If you can cause a TERF to lose their job, do so! They can, after all, simply stop being a TERF if they want to find employment again.

In 2019, the Center for Global Development stood up for trans rights when they bravely confronted TERF Maya Forstater about her online hate mongering. They fired her for violating their employee code of conduct. When she tried to sue them, they argued in court that her transphobia meant she had no right to employment. In a stunning victory for social justice and equality, the employment tribunal agreed!

“I consider that [Maya Forstater’s] view, in its absolutist nature, is incompatible with human dignity and fundamental rights of others,” wrote the tribunal judge in a splendid ruling. “I conclude from this...that [Maya Forstater] is absolutist in her view of sex and...she will refer to a person by the sex she considered appropriate even if it violates their dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The approach is not worthy of respect in a democratic society.” Well said!

This ruling establishes as legal precedent that being a bigot — whether it be a white supremacist, homophobe, or TERF — is always legitimate grounds to terminate an employee. You are always within your rights to make a company aware of the viper in their midst so they can push the TERF out the door, just like
what happened to Maya Forstater. At least that’s how it is in the United Kingdom. Hopefully the US will have legal mandates for denying employment to fascists and bigots at some point.

It is possible for TERF’s to try and fight their termination in courts. Fortstaer, for example, is currently appealing the tribunal’s ruling. What helps, though, is that by bringing such legal challenges they shine a light on themselves. They put their own information and name out there and associate it with hate. They demand to be seen — and we see them. That makes them dramatically unemployable, as even capitalist bootlickers will hesitate to hire an employee with such toxic baggage. So don’t just get a TERF fired — make sure they get publicity for being fired. Then no legal wrangling will ever stop them from being canceled.
Sam Lavigne, the NYU professor who helped make 1600 ICE agents taste the fear they caused to millions of women and children.

Plans are currently underway by several anti-fascist action groups to build a database of known alt-right members, containing all available information. This would be based on the work of Sam Lavigne, who bravely revealed the LinkedIn information of thousands of ICE agents in 2018, allowing them to be targeted for direct action nationally. The database would be accessible globally and protected via redundancy from ever
being deleted. You can bet that any and all TERF’s will also be in that database.

What can you do to help when it comes online? If you find a TERF, do the following:

- Write down their online handle and a link to whatever account you found them on.
- If they have their real name posted, grab it.
- Save a photo of their face if available.
- Screen shot some of their offending posts as proof in case they try and delete evidence. Save it with Archive.
- Record any personal info they have on Twitter or Facebook, such as place of employment, birthday, etc.

TERF’s have a history of being brazen in their confrontations and hide very little about their identities, so gathering most of this info is not hard. When the fascist database comes online, submit everything you have. That will give the global coalition against hate as complete a picture as possible of who needs re-education.

**Against Property**

Property damage is another escalation up the chain of direct action. While deplatforming and doxxing are legal (in the US),
property damage can cross into criminal territory. This is not a path to choose lightly and extreme care must be exercised if you want to go this route.

Still, despite the risks, vandalism has been effective against fascists. In Austin, for example, the apartment of a Texas Nomad who participated in Charlottesville was tagged by local ANTIFA. Activists also posted fliers around the neighborhood outlining where he worked and the routes he commonly traveled. This notified his neighbors that they had a bigot in their midst. It also made him aware that he could not hide behind a veil of online anonymity. It presented him with consequences for his actions.
Environmentalists have long used the destruction of car dealerships to fight for eco-friendly standards for their communities. In Germany, there’s the AfD — a group of literal Nazis — who are being actively resisted. One of their current tactics? Setting fire to the cars owned by AfD leadership. Imagine being a Nazi and waking up to find out your car had been torched like Dresden. It’s an appropriate signal for them!

Unions targeted bootlicking scab labor by throwing rocks and bricks through their windows. Some even fired shots into their homes, but aimed to avoid the people inside. These were frequently effective at keeping the picket lines firm. While illegal, those intimidation tactics saved the jobs of countless
thousands and ensured capitalistic scum couldn’t take advantage of workers.

In many ways, feminists of today are involved in an ongoing picket line against the modern patriarchy. The Women’s March is an easy visual of this in action. They refuse to cooperate by the rules set by the cis white men who dominate society and seek to use solidarity as a bargaining tool. TERF’s are the scabs, working for right-wing organizations to try and break up that unity. It is very apt for us to take the position of union leaders and treat them like scabs.

You would not want to use vandalism against property you want to repurpose. For example, as mentioned previously, a rape crisis center operated by TERF’s should not be vandalized. That space can be reclaimed once the leadership is changed. Interruption of its current function would be detrimental to people receiving service from it.

**Against Persons**

What about bodily harm against bigots? Is that a valid tactic? Yes, but with important considerations. It’s the most serious form of corrective action you can use — and one very likely to get you in major trouble. Only use it as a tactic if you’re sure you can handle the consequence of being caught.
There are several great examples of bodily harm being used against fascists. One of the most famous examples is Neo-Nazi Richard Spencer being punched. This helped make America realize the widespread invasion of Nazis into the public sphere. Even better, the person who did it has never been caught. They are living as a free person with the knowledge that they decked a Nazi. Similarly, there was the heroic trans woman who almost delivered a blow for justice against TERF Julie Bindel.

Still, we cannot all be so bold. While there is little that equals the raw emotional boost of giving a Nazi what they deserve, it isn’t something we’re all capable of.

What if throwing a punch is beyond you? An effective alternative is milkshake throwing. This was popularized in the UK against pro-rape political figures like Carl Benjamin (Sargon of Akkad). ANTIFA in Portland has used this with laudable
success against bootlickers like Andy Ngo. Milkshakes deal minimal harm but incredible humiliation. If TERF’s couldn’t step into public venues without fear of being drenched in milkshakes, they might think twice about their allegiance to hate.
The late Willem von Spronsen, who gave his life fighting fascism.
It’s important to avoid killing. ANTIFA in America has never killed anyone and it’s good to stay that way. When Comrade Willem von Spronsen bravely targeted an ICE facility, he did so in a way that he knew would not result in a loss of life except for his own. He gave his life for a last stand to draw attention to Trump’s Holocaust along the US borders. Contrast that with the psychopath who ran down protesters at Charlottesville or the numerous alt-right terrorists responsible for nearly every mass shootings in America, such as in El Paso. We are activists, protesters, and defenders of justice — we are not cold-blooded killers.

If someone comes at you with the intent to take your life, then killing in self-defense is 100% justified. But a dead person cannot find redemption. They cannot change their ways. Worse, they may become a martyr and attract more people to the cause of white supremacists. Why give Trump an excuse to call TERF’s “good people?” (He already knows they’re on his side.) Generally speaking, killing is a step too far.

Conclusions
What should you do to counter the presence of TERF’s in your area? First, make a parallel organization that makes theirs redundant. Out-compete them. At the same time, infiltrate and take over their group from the inside to reform it into an actual feminist organization. If that’s not possible, go after their money however you can.

If they still refuse to cease spreading hate, begin direct action. Online, shut down their means of communication by deplatforming them from social media. Use doxxing to remove their anonymity so they have to own whatever vile things they
say. In the real world, deny them advertising. Shut them out of safe spaces. Make their employers aware who they are and what they’ve said so they’re terminated. If absolutely necessary, escalate further into tagging vehicles, destructive disruptions, and, finally, making them take responsibility for harming others by reflecting that harm at their personal selves.

TERF’s like to portray themselves as the victims when you discuss protecting the community from their hate. They like to pretend that any kind of action against them is “violence against women.” This is false equivalence, an attempt to hijack the language of revolution for their evil ends.

When Richard Spencer was punched on live television, that wasn’t “violence against men” — it was action against fascism. If you take signs from TERF’s trying to insert messages of hate at a Pride Parade, that’s not “violence against women” — it’s action against bigots. When someone chooses to be a fascist they surrender any consideration you need to have for their dignity, possessions, or health — because they have chosen to have no regard for yours. The imperative to punch Nazis is always in place, regardless of what sex the Nazi is.

A fascist can always choose to peacefully change their ways and rejoin the community as a decent human being, which ends any need to treat them with hostility. But when TERF’s go after trans women and others, they don’t stop their harassment until the target is dead. This is why you are justified using any of the strategies outlined above when opposing their kind.
• Feminism
• Lesbian
• Antifa
• Terfs
• LGBTQ

51 claps

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