

## **Ms J Wright—written evidence (FEO0084)**

### **House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee inquiry into Freedom of Expression Online**

#### **1. Is freedom of expression under threat online? If so, how does this impact individuals differently, and why? Are there differences between exercising the freedom of expression online versus offline?**

I'd like to answer question 1.

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democracy. But it is under threat both online and in the real world.

Both censorship and abuse affect different groups of people differently. Supporters of a currently fashionable ideology get free rein to threaten and incite violence against their critics, while those critics may lose their jobs or have 'hate incidents' recorded against them by police if they speak freely.

The subject that most concerns me personally, as a feminist and supporter of child safeguarding, is the transgender or 'gender identity' movement. Not in itself -- I consider people have the right to dress and behave as they wish, as long as they don't harm anyone else -- but in its present dominance over women's and children's rights.

Online comments may offend people, but free speech means that people have the right to offend each other. What they don't have is the right to harm each other.

I hope to show that transgenderism's dominance online, especially on social media platforms, has spread into the real world, where it is causing real harm. And that real-world activity in turn stokes up the level of violence expressed online.

Transgender social-media users often claim that they are being harmed, injured, having their existence denied or even being killed by critics who 'misgender' them (eg who refuse to call a trans-identifying man 'she'). Meanwhile, feminists and their supporters are routinely showered with obscene and violent abuse by people telling them to 'die in a grease fire' and hoping that their children will die of cancer.

This new ideology is currently so fashionable that even the mildest critics are silenced. From the government down, employees and members of the public are required to believe that human beings can change sex or be born in the wrong body -- and they could have a 'hate incident' recorded against them by police if they refuse.

Feminists trying to stop men winning women's sports medals or assaulting other inmates in women's prisons have to launch crowdfunder appeals to pay for legal

action. Meanwhile, well-funded lobby groups such as Mermaids and Stonewall are invited into workplaces and schools to spread the transgenderist message. They are backed by social and other media, which allow feminist and gender-critical groups (eg Fair Play for Women, Woman's Place UK, the Lesbian and Gay Alliance) to be defamed as 'hate groups'.

This online abuse spreads into the real world. Most of the contenders for the Labour Party leadership last year, for example, signed a 12-point pledge by the Labour Campaign for Trans Rights, which included the mantra "transwomen are women, transmen are men" and vowed to expel members with "transphobic" views.

In the UK, gender-critical people-- those who don't believe that human beings can change sex -- have been harassed by police (eg Harry Miller), held at police stations and convicted of hate crime (eg Kate Scottow), forced out of work (eg Maya Forstater) and lost academic funding (eg James Caspian). These real-world harms flow from the routine abuse of such people on Twitter and other social media platforms.

This has a chilling effect on free speech. And it weakens society's ability, or willingness, to resist obvious harms.

Some links:

Kate Scottow: "Mum who called trans woman 'he' on Twitter is CLEARED of wrongdoing" (conviction overturned on appeal)  
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9041725/Mum-called-trans-woman-Twitter-CLEARED-wrongdoing.html>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6687123/Mother-arrested-children-calling-transgender-woman-man.html>

Harry Miller: "Police probe into 'transphobic' tweets unlawful"  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-51501202>

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