

Statement from Staff Pride Network regarding the protest against planned screening of Adult Human Female

TLDR:

We co-organised a protest with Cabaret Against The Hate Speech to take place when the screening of Adult Human Female was due to place. Our protest demonstrated support for trans rights at the University of Edinburgh in a peaceful and non-confrontational manner. We published a blog detailing all the reasons the film is anti-trans and why it does not represent a suitable opportunity for respectful debate or discussion: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/staffpridenetwork/2023/04/14/is-screening-adult-human-female-an-opportunity-for-respectful-debate-and-discussion/>

Another group chose to peacefully protest the screening by sitting in front of the doors to the venue. While they were not affiliated with our protest we support their right to protest peacefully as they see fit. It is our understanding that the screening was cancelled because there was no way to safely access the building. We are not privy to the specifics of that decision making process. We continued with our peaceful, non-confrontational demonstration which created a supportive environment to show that many staff and students at the University of Edinburgh are supportive of trans rights.

More detail if you're interested:

We are aware that our protest about the screening of a this

anti-trans film has attracted widespread media attention. This comes with an alarming amount of misinformation, which this blog will address. Some of our members are now receiving direct messages of hateful abuse which have undoubtedly been fuelled by the heavily-biased media coverage.

The headline of one major news outlet refers to the screening of a “gender film”. This headline is designed to attract the attention of the majority of the readership who are concerned about a so-called ‘attack on gender’ by LGBTQ communities, which is in fact being staged by the “gender critical” movement, who made this film. The film is not about gender. It disregards gender entirely in favour of making a baseless argument that only sex at birth is real. Such a doctrine is harmful for cis and trans people alike. Gender is real, that is why trans people exist.

Members of the University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network, and students, UCU and UNISON members, staged a peaceful protest across the pavement from the lecture theatre, which was led by Cabaret Against The Hate Speech. We did not obstruct entry to the venue. We sang songs, we created an atmosphere of positivity and love in the face of the oppression of the most vulnerable of our community. Our policy was clear throughout: do not directly engage with anyone there to watch the film or support the screening. Although unfortunately we were directly harassed by persons who were there for the film screening.

As the screening was open to the public those present included an MSP, members of the Scottish Family Party (who are publicly anti-women’s rights, anti-LGBT rights, anti-abortion to name but a few) as well as the woman who flashed the public gallery

in the Scottish Parliament during the final gender recognition reform bill debate. The same woman attempted to confront our protesters while our co-chair was giving a speech.

The University of Edinburgh staunchly upholds the values of "Freedom of expression". Nevertheless, there is currently an atmosphere in which staff at the university are intimidated for voicing opposition to the platforming of misleading propaganda, with false accusations of "obstructing academic freedom/freedom of expression" being directed at us. Note: Academic freedom and freedom of expression are not the same thing.

A direct-action group barricaded the entrance to the university building. And while the Staff Pride Network had no role in this, we respect their freedom to protest in any way they wish. We recognise these protesters were asserting their belief that de-platforming hate-speech is a necessary and effective counter to the spread of misinformation.

We are also within our own rights to appeal to the university about how freedom of expression policies should be applied in an equitable and inclusive way. That is why no university member of staff would stage a protest that would frustrate any process of academic freedom. That the mainstream news outlets accuse us of attempting to block academic freedom is paramount to obfuscation. The debate about academic freedom is a straw man argument designed to distract the casual observer from what is really happening.

We believe that film is not academic, because of its biased

and low-quality coverage of the subject matter. To call it such is an embarrassing slight on the academic standards that we uphold. The film fully disregards the dignity and respect of trans people and covertly advocates for the removal of their current legal rights and protections, as stipulated in both university policy and law.

We did not stop an 80 year old woman from seeing her film. The film is freely available online and has been for over a year. The screening of it on university campus is simply a power-flex by the creators. This is yet another example of the perpetrators playing the victim.

The lived experience of trans people is not a debate.