

Screening Adult Human Female at the University of Edinburgh: A response

University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network Committee

This response also has the support of UCU Edinburgh branch and University of Edinburgh Unison branch.

Free speech, academic freedom, freedom of expression. These are all phrases applied tactically to justify questioning the validity or the rights of people with marginalised identities. Most will be familiar with the history of scaremongering fostered by right-wing, often religious groups, designed to fuel moral panic directed at the gay community during the AIDS epidemic in the 80s and 90s which extended into legislation (including Section 28 in the UK) which limited the rights of gay people to live freely. The arguments often centred around the need to 'protect children', typically due to the conflation of queer identities with predatory behaviour towards minors. Today, we see the same tactics being levied at the trans community and it is happening here at the University of Edinburgh under the guise of academic freedom.

On the 26th of April 2023, the group Edinburgh Academics for Academic Freedom plans to screen the film 'Adult Human Female'. Their event description begins with two provocative questions:

1. Is it really harmless when men identify into the female sex?
2. Is it progressive for doctors to modify the bodies of

young people in the name of changing their 'gender'?

These questions on the surface may appear like a reasonable inquiry, when in fact they are a thinly veiled attempt to undermine the lived reality of trans people's lives. Permit me to unpack this for you, and feel free to skip this section if you've already figured it out.

The first question, by inference, is implying that it might be harmful for "men to identify into the female sex". This sets up the premise that the organisers believe that trans women, who it appears they are referring to here when they say 'men', are just men choosing to identify as women. It questions the validity of their identities and implies it might be a choice taken for potentially harmful reasons.

The second question is written in a manner that implies doctors are modifying the bodies of young people to change their gender. It centres the medical profession as the ones potentially doing harm to a vulnerable group. "Think of the children" – remember? Now, this could be the set-up for a discussion about surgeries performed to enforce binary gender on intersex children, children with diversities of sexual development, when they are too young to consent to the surgery or haven't had time to establish their own gender identity before undergoing surgery. Unfortunately, if you are familiar with the content of the film, this is not the case. What do they mean by modifying? Are they referring to puberty blockers which are reversible? Do they refer to well-established hormone therapies based on those used by cis people at many stages of their lives? Do they mean trans affirming surgeries for which the referral period is currently at least 5 years in the UK? This "think of the children" style dog-whistle does not instill much hope that the content of this event will

feature real stories from trans people who experience navigating trans affirming healthcare.

Then there's the decision to put the word gender in quotes. This implies they do not really believe gender is a real thing (and if you read their blogs on the subject you'll know this to be true). It's a consistent belief of those ascribing to the "gender-critical" movement that biological sex is immutable, binary and factual (erasing chromosomal and hormonal variation, intersex lives, and multiple non-European cultural worldviews) and that only gender is a construct. There is an abject failure to appreciate that the way we understand sex is also a human construct, something people have created language around in order to understand and label it. Furthermore, our understanding of both sex and gender, like all scientific understanding, is subject to change when given new evidence and information.

Then let's look at who is being represented on their panel. First, we have their film-makers whose expertise lies in journalism and film-making, so one might assume they will be there to discuss production of the film itself? Then we have a panel member who is staff at the University of Edinburgh that has organised a number of anti-trans events and contributed to AFAF blogs questioning trans rights, and another who is a member of a policy analysis collective who regularly writes about trans rights from a gender-critical position. Finally, we have the co-director of an organisation whose primary campaign function has been to prevent the reform of the Gender Recognition Act. So, how exactly will these two questions be treated by this panel? Every panelist appears to have the same agenda.

- There is no evidence of trans people forming part of the panel, so there will be no one to represent how trans people might experience the questions posed.

- There is also no one from the medical community, or anyone with academic expertise in human biology, available to contribute to these questions.

We are left to assume that responsibility will lie with the audience. In the face of a panel so clearly opposed to trans rights and trans people existing on their own terms, it will take a very brave person to challenge this ideology. It also begs the question of whether it is even ethical to expect a trans person to put themselves in the position of defending their existence against people so clearly opposed to it. Then there's the question of the role of allies in this situation. If you are not trans and you understand how hateful and problematic the content of this film is, what is to be achieved by arguing with the panel about it? Do you expect to change their minds? Is this the right environment to attempt to educate the rest of the audience about how problematic it is, given you will likely only have a few minutes to ask one question against the upwards of 90 minutes the film lasts plus the time the panel will have to speak? It is our contention that this is a fruitless task at best and deeply risky to someone's well-being to be forced into the position of trying to challenge this event as part of the audience. This event represents an echo-chamber of 1 specific viewpoint that is very clearly a vilification of trans people, questioning their right to exist, under the guise of academic freedom. That the event is hosted at the University of Edinburgh only adds to this veneer of credibility as it appears our esteemed institution endorses these hateful views.

We are putting efforts into supporting a peaceful protest outside the venue that will be an opportunity to take a stand against transphobia on our campus. This peaceful demonstration will take place opposite the Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre from 5.30pm, allies welcome. Also on the 26th April, at 6.30pm HCA are hosting a talk entitled Saving Lives and the Colonial

Project of Gender at the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures by Professor Sandy O'Sullivan, a transgender/non-binary Wiradjuri (Aboriginal) person leading the Intimacies node of the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures at Macquarie University. This talk in HCA was arranged prior to the announcement of the rescheduled screening.

International Asexuality Day 2023

Today is International Asexuality Day. To our asexual members we wish you a Happy International Asexuality Day and to the rest of our members today is a day to learn, to share knowledge, and to be the best allies you can be to our asexual friends. Feel free to raise awareness with our asexual flag Staff Pride Network logo design (credit to Gill Kidd, SPN graphic design volunteer).

<https://internationalasexualityday.org/en/>

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/six-ways-be-ally-asexual-people>

Allyship in Informatics

by Jonathan MacBride (he/him) IGS Administrative Assistant

Today (Monday the 27th March 2023) the School of Informatics emphasised their allyship of trans and non-binary people at the University of Edinburgh. It's not often as a cis gay man that I see inclusion at a high level. Today I felt that little bit more valued, motivated, inspired, more proud to work in Informatics. Allyship is usually seen where individuals want to make a difference in ways they can achieve. Today the School of Informatics quarterly School General Meeting featured the Director of People & Culture Chris Heunen presenting the School Values, announcing a new family fund grant and then giving time for a former Staff Pride Network Trans & Non-Binary Rep to share insights about being a good ally to LGBT+ people. Dr Gina Gwenffrewi shared some of her personal story, comparing her life as an undergrad at Cardiff University 20 years ago, unable to be her true self, unable to achieve her full potential, to now at the University of Edinburgh where she has achieved her PhD, currently teaching Introduction to Trans Studies to UoE undergrads. It's quite a turnaround which she puts down to being able to live and study as Gina, focussing only on what she's here for. Gina highlighted that if we can all show respect and care to trans and non-binary colleagues and students that they will be more successful in their research and work, happier, healthier, more creative, instinctive.

How do we do that? Baby steps are a start. A Rainbow Lanyard shows others that you are a safe person to approach. Hang one from your pocket or on your office wall if you don't tend to wear it round your neck. Ask someone which pronouns they use and respect their answer. Add your own pronouns to your e-signature. Many people aren't familiar with gendered names of

cultures around the world so not only does it highlight your understanding of inclusion, it helps others know who they're replying to. After all, here in Edinburgh a 'Chris' could use he/him, she/her or they/them.

A non-binary Informatics PhD student explains how the world around them impacts their day-to-day life:

"In most scenarios, I am the first non-binary person my colleagues will have encountered. Maybe English is not their first language, and they have never learned that it is grammatically acceptable and correct to use "They/Them" for a single person. Maybe English is their first language and they have just never had to think in this way before. There is nothing wrong with learning, and making mistakes. However, there is a huge mental load on being everyone's first learning experience, that could be reduced by faculty members and staff simply by showing support in their actions and using the right etiquette.

It takes a significant amount of energy (and quite honestly courage) to persevere through conversations where someone is knowingly and consistently using the wrong pronouns for me. All anyone needs to do is ask if they forget, and correct themselves and others when they make a mistake."


▪ Persie Rolley-Parnell, RAS PhD

What do I hope was achieved today? Perhaps a few people hearing a trans woman speak in person for the first time, personalising a message which they have only heard in the media. Maybe a message they haven't heard before, particular to their role in the School, relating it to how they teach, how they interact. A fellow trans and/or non-binary staff member or student could have been sitting there feeling hope, that things in life will get better. Or simply that one person tells another that a trans woman spoke at their School General Meeting. Visibility makes a difference. Personalisation of an

issue.

The Informatics Forum reception has a small stock of the latest design of UoE Rainbow Lanyards, featuring a more inclusive Progress Pride flag. Anyone with a staff card can also get them free from Card Services at the Main Library. They are available to everyone from the Visitor Shop who sell them with a card holder for £2.

Staff Pride Network Members' Newsletter February 2023


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Go to this Sway

World AIDS Day 2022: Why We're Wearing Red and

Fundraising for Waverley Care

The University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network have had a long-standing relationship with Waverley Care, Scotland's HIV and Hepatitis C charity. Cathy and Katie (members of the SPN committee) attended an event for supporters in October to learn more about the work of the charity to support those living with HIV in Scotland. We heard from a great speaker who had benefited from the support that Waverley Care offers, and had since gone on to work for the charity so that he could share what he has learned and gained from his experience with others in need.

Waverley Care inspired us to support their Wear Red for World AIDS Day initiative, to create awareness of how the work of Waverley Care has provided support for decades, and continues to support, people living with HIV and AIDS.

World AIDS Day is marked every year on the 1st of December, and aims to bring people together to unite in the fight against HIV, raise awareness and challenge the stigma that surrounds living with the condition.

We would like to invite all staff and students at the University of Edinburgh to join us in marking World AIDS Day this year! Please take part by wearing red on World AIDS Day (Thursday 1 December), and by donating at least £1 to our fundraiser for Waverley Care.

Donate now via our dedicated JustGiving page.

If every member of staff at the University of Edinburgh were able to donate just £1 each, that

could generate over £15,000 in donations for Waverley Care, a great charity doing incredible work in our city.

We are also delighted to be collaborating with Edinburgh College of Art in hosting an event on the Thursday 1 December at 6pm in West Court (Edinburgh College of Art): **The Farewell Symphony, a talk by Sam Moore**, is a musing on the AIDS crisis, disappearance, and queer histories. We hope you can join us for the event in your red regalia.

Register to attend The Farewell Symphony via EventBrite.

The event is free to attend, but if you have the means, we suggest that each attendee make a donation of £2 to our fundraiser for Waverley Care.

Donate now via our JustGiving page.

Learn more about Waverley Care.

Update on Availability of Pride Lanyards

Due to a huge demand over the past few weeks for the new Pride Progress lanyard, we are already very low on supply. Another order has been placed and we hope to have more stock available from mid-October. Our merchandise request form is closed for

the time being.

If you have submitted a request for a lanyard via the Microsoft form, you can expect to receive an email in the coming days with an indication of when we expect to be able to fulfill your request. Apologies for the delay and thanks for bearing with us – we're delighted to see so much interest in supporting the Pride Progress message!

In the meantime, you can try contacting the User Services desk at your nearest campus library, as these teams may have a limited stock of lanyards available.

We will also have a small number of lanyards available at this week's upcoming evening social on Friday 7 October. Join us to hang out and you just might get your hands on a highly sought-after Pride Progress lanyard!

Celebrate Drag Queen Story Time with Edinburgh International Book Festival

A staff member was asking Jonathan yesterday about the controversy with 'Drag Queen Story Time' and telling him about their family's positive experience, taking his daughter to Celebrate Pride With Mama G! at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Jonathan asked him if he would put it in an

email for us to share with members and he has, below!

I just wanted to let you know that I thoroughly enjoyed a recent trip to the Edinburgh Book Festival with my daughter Tilly and some of her wee friends. On Saturday 27th Aug we went to 'Celebrate Pride with Mama G!' which was a 2 hour event on the main stage at the book festival with music and stories all centred around LGBTQ+. Tilly really enjoyed the hour or so we were there. Mama G was great with the kids (Tilly was very enamoured with her outfit) and gave a nice, interactive, history of Stonewall that Tilly enjoyed singing along with, "Love is love is love is love"! . The two stories we were able to listen to were great and it was nice to hear stories (read by Juno Dawson and Jodie Lancet-Grant) that were more inclusive than Tilly is usually exposed to, mainly as that is what is generally available in mainstream kids' books.

Join us at Edinburgh Pride 2022

SPN at Pride Edinburgh

We invite members, allies and students to join us for the Pride Edinburgh March on Saturday 25 June!

The SPN marching troupe will be meeting at 11:30 on the day at Levels Café on Holyrood Road. Speeches start at 12:30 and the march moves off at 13:00.

If you can't make it to Levels beforehand but still want to join in, just look for our marching banner – it will be 3 metres wide and looks like the image above!

For a quiet space after marching:

Members are invited to meet at the Informatics Forum from 14:00 – 17:00. Join us for refreshments and a marching troupe debrief! Please note that this private space is being facilitated for University of Edinburgh staff and students only. Entry will be via Robbie on the march, through the side entrance and building sign-in. Call/TXT/iMessage/WhatsApp (07905517428) or even teams message Robert (Robbie) Court to access later in the afternoon.

Note: We will keep this post up to date throughout the day and I'll try and share our location during the march.

Live updates:

Live location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/d8d45uCRVSKGdAi67>

14:00 we're meeting by the rino head / gift shop by informatics



12:40 were by the traffic lights



10:20 myself and the banner are now in levels cafe having breakfast so feel free if you want to be fashionably early.



8:44 Prepping for meeting at levels cafe. The refreshments are all ready at the informatics forum at the end of the Parade route. The banner has poles this year so wind permitting

should be above the crowd. [fingers crossed].

Iona Community: Student Week this September with Mx Ashwin Africanus Thyssen

10 – 16 September: Students' Week (*title tbc*) A week for students to experience life in the community, to share laughter and stories, to explore the island and to reflect on current concerns.

This week is jointly led by Iona Community staff with staff and students from Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities and the Student Christian Movement. We are delighted that we'll be joined by Mx Ashwin Africanus Thyssen from Stellenbosch University for this week.

<https://iona.org.uk/visit-and-stay/iona-abbey-centre/iona-abbey-programme-bookings/?fbclid=IwAR2DhbgZdvhzn5GnSr1G8EA3XQfYKLbhqAXd5v12EIw07sCGzQWozghMZDU>

The Pride material “Grace

Like Glitter” launch

Excerpt:

You can't get rid of glitter. It doesn't matter whether you sprinkle it like fairy dust or send it in a card; whether you glitter-bomb as a protest or decorate your face with it at a festival. It doesn't matter how the glitter got there in the first place – you can't get rid of glitter. (..)

As LGBTQ+ folk, we believe that God's grace is always there in and around and woven through our lived experiences. We exist, whether folk like it or not, and so we are sprinkled liberally with God's grace. We have noticed that resources for and by LGBTQ+ folk in a faith context often focus on suffering and sorrow. And don't get us wrong, we know there is plenty of suffering to go around, and we have experienced more than our fair share of it.

And yet, we also want to do justice to God's grace, and to the joy and euphoria that living our authentic lives as LGBTQ+ people brings. And so, whilst some of these resources contain raw glimpses of our pain, the overall tone that we are going for is one of hope, of joy, of love and, yes, of grace like glitter. We hope that these resources will help you to spread grace like glitter too, wherever and whoever you are. May it be so.

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0Ar8Cw8Fi2RpHtaZoftwB4SHbjAnwLGy8kxyFHtfjTnzphjAuav8SnMPoxC3b2L4cl&id=100005037420123&m_entstream_source=timeline