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## Bitch at the Boston Dyke March--Transphobia Continues!

The Boston Dyke March claims that "everyone is welcome" at this year's march. That's wonderful, but how can everyone be welcome when an actively transphobic performer has been scheduled?

The musician Bitch plays this year's Dyke March, and proudly plays the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. She is scheduled to play the MWMF (also known as Michfest) again this year. The MWMF has a "womyn-born-womyn" only policy, which means that a woman who was assigned male at birth is not allowed to attend, unless she is seen as a non-trans female 100% of the time and keeps her past a secret. This means that male-to-female transsexual women are not only not allowed, but, by virtue of being kept out of a space that's designated for women, considered not women at all. This is offensive, insulting, and degrading to women who didn't have the privilege of being born into a body that aligned with their mind. This policy is a very well-known one among fest performers and attendees, and those who participate in the fest without voicing opposition are complicit, and performers who profit off of a fest that excludes even worse.

Bitch is part of that second club, and doesn't try to hide it. The August 20th, 2005 entry of her web diary (<http://bitchmusic.com/bdiary.htm>) she says that:

*what an act of rebelliousness for us to gather like that. claim our space. and you know what? it's fucking beautiful. out of this distinct oppression that people who all suffered girl-hoods share, comes such a vision of peace in the world, such a commitment to safety for everyone who comes there and all the creatures who stay there.*

While women's space can be considered an act of rebelliousness--and I am absolutely pro women's space--there is no rebellion in transphobia. The commitment to safety she speaks of doesn't apply to the transwoman who have been forcibly ejected from the land, and is incongruent with accounts of transwomen who, while on Michfest property, were tailed by Fest attendees shouting "Man on the land!" Transwomen have as much peace in their hearts as any other women, and a women's community that excludes certain women hardly sends a peaceful message. While Bitch may consider herself to be trans-positive because her partner, Daniela Sea, plays Max, a female-to-male transgendered person on the L Word, supporting trans people includes supporting trans-woman, which does NOT include performing for and profiting off of those who do not include all women in women's community.

As a concerned person who was planning on marching with the Ask.Tell.Act Coalition at the March, and as a supporter of the March's grassroots efforts and positions, I will still be attending, and I encourage others who have been planning to go to do so. **Instead of watching Bitch's show, turn your backs on her and start a conversation on this issue. Carry signs that show support for transwomen in dyke communities.** I am not against the Dyke March, (nor am I against Michfest, for that matter), I am just opposed to policies or people who exclude transwomen from women's groups and events. The Dyke March is a positive event, and although I am critiquing one element of this year's event, I have no desire to protest the March itself. I applaud the Dyke March for attempting to create a trans-positive atmosphere by saying that everyone is welcome, however, their choice of performers is contradictory to their intent.

Posted by Kasey H. on 6/04/2007 


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Labels: [bitch](#), [dyke march](#), [transphobia](#)

Reactions:  funny ()  interesting ()  cool ()

## 18 comments:

[elizabeth](#) said...

 i love the dyke march and i am really sad that bitch is performing this year. not only has she consistently performed in a historically actively non-trans-women-only space, she has spoken out in defense of the policy. as a non-trans (or cisgendered but ugh i hate that word! too science-y for me!) woman, i value and appreciate the women's spaces i have been a part of. i also wonder how much more supportive and positive and empowering and radical they would have been for me were trans women an active part of all of them. i want to work to allow all women who wish to access those spaces that possibility. i think that denying a specific group of women access to a space that is designed for women is oppressive, plain and simple. moreover, however, i think it is deeply misogynistic—what is being said is, "you are not "enough" of a woman," no matter what language is used to couch it. i want to create oppositional, anti-patriarchal spaces that support me as a woman and also support my friends that are women. that means doing some hardcore work around my own and the communi ies' racism, classism, ablist, and, yes, also transphobia.

a friend sent me some of her quotes, that i will share here in case people are interested in why this is not just someone who has made a choice to perform, it is someone who has promoted active transphobia and misogyny when given the opportunity. [http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbianmusicians/a/BitchInterview\\_2.htm](http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbianmusicians/a/BitchInterview_2.htm) (the issue comes up in the last two chunks, starting with the question "Do you get shit from the trans community for playing at Michigan?")

<http://indigogirls.com/correspondence/2005/2005-06-13-a/interview02.html> (the issue is addressed throughout this longer 4-way interview)


A couple of "highlights" from these interviews:

"People who think there aren't trans people at Michigan are so fucked up. If someone tries to tell me [Michigan] is transphobic, I tell them to stuff it. There's so many trannies there. And **it's not trans people being marginalized. It's people who were born as men.**" (emphasis added)

"I'm not convinced that if there were problems with people born women being excluded from this space...I'm not so convinced that so many people would rally around them, trying to help them. I think there's a lot of entitlement at work. When I see protesters at my shows, generally the majority is not trans people. The majority of the protesters are fem girls, usually white students, and there's usually one M to F - it's all about them."

6/04/2007 02:28:00 PM

[elizabeth](#) said...

 sorry—here are some hyperlinks for people, like me, who are too lazy to cut and paste some imes.

[here](#)

(the issue comes up in the last two chunks, starting with the question "Do you get shit from the trans community for playing at Michigan?")

and

[here](#)

(the issue is addressed throughout this longer 4-way interview)

6/04/2007 02:48:00 PM

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**mary said...**

I am very disappointed that a performer who not only plays at a discriminatory venue, but makes very clear anti-transwomen remarks has been invited to perform at the Boston Dyke March. It gives the impression that transphobia against transwomen is OK in our community, and I don't want this to be the case.

thanks for bringing this up Kasey. I will join you in turning my back on this performer. I think you have the right idea - to support the march but censure this choice of performer.

6/04/2007 11:42:00 PM

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**homefries said...**

I love the idea of starting a dialogue. Thanks for suggesting it! I think that's totally what will make this event meaningful and transformative, not just entertainment or a spectacle.

I want to caution that, from my experience, dialogue is not an easy or automatic mode of interaction, and I think it works best if all parties are intentionally committed to some groundrules that pre-empt monologues. I can't say I'm clear on what all of those groundrules should be, but maybe one core one would be:

everybody acknowledges that there are many voices with many different insights speaking on these issues, and that wrapping our hearts around such an emotionally kaleidoscopic issue involves listening deeply and honestly, as well as speaking courageously and openly. (Or, perhaps another way to put it is: everyone acknowledges/honors that what they have to say and what the other person has to say is, at least in some way, worthwhile.)

On another note, I wanted to add, for what it's worth, that the Boston Dyke March organizers literally considered and invited Bitch in the past week, and many (again, for what it's worth) were not aware of her Michfest history and statements about trans women...in any case, I personally welcome the opportunity to dialogue about inclusivity at gatherings, about forms of oppression that are still taken for granted, about patriarchy, and about what "women" and "femininity" mean to each of us in the first place.

6/05/2007 10:01:00 PM

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**mary said...**

hi homefries,

Bitch's comments have been very public for years now. The Dyke March committee has responsibility for who it chooses to represent the Dyke March.

but let's go with the "we didn't know" aspect.

so, has there been an outcry amongst committee members after reading Bitch's comments? Has there been a reaction of "wow I didn't know that, this is not someone who represents my views"? or has it been more of a reaction of "I still think Bitch is cool and it's really awesome to have her at the Dyke March"?

6/05/2007 11:25:00 PM

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**Anonymous said...**

Elizabeth H-

Only choosing certain parts of the interview with Bitch to support your side of the debate is dangerous. Taking words out of context changes the meaning of someone's entire statement. Everyone- please read the last portion of the same interview that Elizabeth has chosen to quote:

Interviewer: Do you get shit from the trans community for playing at Michigan?

Bitch: Yes, from parts of the trans community. People who think there aren't trans people at Michigan are so fucked up. If someone tries to tell me [Michigan] is transphobic, I tell them to stuff it. There's so many trans people there. And it's not trans people being marginalized. It's people who were born as men. The festival is for people who suffered a girlhood. That's all it is. They're not trying to redefine what women are. I think it's really ironic, I don't see nearly as much activism around all-male gatherings. I'm sure everybody over at Camp Trans are not protesting all the all-male gatherings that happen all over the country all the time. It is so the patriarchy. I'm so over it. I think it's totally the patriarchy and it's complete ageism.

Interviewer: How so?

Bitch: Because going to Michigan is like going to another country. These visionaries set up

Michigan for six f\*\*king days out of the year. It's not like they're trying to make a city. They want to have a party with only these kinds of people. They're our elders. They had a vision. When I was younger, I had a stereotype of what an older lesbian was. I thought they were nerdy, wearing purple all the time and walking around with their hand drum that they can't play. And then when I went there I had my mind blown by what an intellectual, what a survivalist community it was. If my elders want to say for these six days only these kinds of women can come, then I need to respect that. It is so against our nature to respect women for having boundaries. I think that's exactly what's happening.

I had the same experiences as a white girl at Michigan. I felt blown away that I couldn't go to the women of color events. I felt very entitled about it and very pissed off. And then I had to be schooled about it. I met this Black woman at a meeting and I told her I wanted to go to that, I feel it would educate me to be less racist. And she said sometimes people need to section off and they need to be with people who've had similar experiences so they can come out into the bigger community and be stronger people. I really had to respect that.

When me and Animal were on the scene, the three bands that people were going after were Bitch & Animal, The Butchies and Le Tigre. Ironically enough, the three bands that all have trans people in them, calling us transphobic. When I think of all of the girl energy/the raised female energy going into protesting that event when they could be getting the education of a lifetime and coming out into the bigger world and being such amazing trans activists. I would never go to a Black Women only event and demand that I be let in. I support us respecting our elders' boundaries.

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I am completely supportive of ridding our community of transphobia. But I also think Bitch has a point. Is it always wrong to declare space exclusively for certain kinds of people? And by doing this, are we always being divisive? I think these are the questions that are most important to consider. Should every single event be all inclusive all the time? What purpose does making an event exclusive serve? Could there potentially be something positive and empowering gained from an exclusive event? What do we risk by making events exclusive to certain types of people?

6/06/2007 11:28:00 AM

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**Anonymous said...**

Your questions you bring up here at the end lead me to believe you do not actually see transwomen as women. I believe that having POC only spaces, or working-class only spaces, or women-only spaces at a place where there are men are REALLY important and necessary because we live in a world with oppression. For those familiar with oppression work you would know that the "target group" - which is the group experiencing oppression is the one that gets prioritized in having exclusive (I prefer to call it caucus space). for example at a gathering of women it makes sense to have a women of color only space because racism exists in the larger world and in that space. Women only spaces are necessary because of patriarchy and working class spaces are necessary because of classism. I don't understand the need to have spaces for women that exclude transwomen when transwomen do not oppress other women, AND are not responsible for creating, continuing or ending patriarchy. I do think it would be fine to create spaces within michfest or other such gatherings for non-transwomen if then wanted them to talk but I don't believe that excluding transwomen from michfest is a logical jump. Transwomen, like all women, are the target of mysogiany and patriarchy and transwomen, like other non-transwomen, also live in fear of/or with physical and emotional violence. being a transwomen in a world with patriarchy and homophobia is not a picnic and the least non-transwomen could do is to stop being divisive to women's community and allow all women to participate in women's spaces.

6/06/2007 01:49:00 PM

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**eliz said...**

 i actually only took the words out of context because i didnt want to quote a whole article. i dont agree with much in that block of writing. i think that the second anonymous poster did a really good job of breaking down a lot of what i found problematic about what she is saying (primarily, yes, i agree with \_\_\_-only space--including, for SURE, women-only space--but only when it is a space organized around shared oppression, rather than privilege. limiting women's spaces to non-trans women only necessitates a certain level of privilege for participants), but i would also say this: one thing that i find deeply troubling about that statement is that it is a direct analogy between race and gender. and, as usual when people make those analogies, it DOESNT WORK. for white women to call on legacies of resistance to racism to support transmisogyny is careless at best. to be honest, i find the marginalization of women happening in bitch's statement that "There's so many trannies [at Fest]." that is true, but that is primarily trans men. the trans women who do attend fest are not allowed to talk about their trans identities or their histories, even if they want to. which negates a whole part of their experience. they have to hide. you know? i am honestly more concerned with all women who want to attend a women's event being able to do so, than i am about whether or not men are able to attend. and i think that allowing trans men to stand in for all trans people is really misogynistic. i know i use that word all the time but it is what so much of this comes down to for me. so that is it. i didnt use the whole quote not to hide behind taking things out of context. i just

really didn't want to tear it all apart. but clearly, i get less and less positive in my approach as days go by.

but for serious, the love i have for women and queer women's communities keeps me writing at this. so, you know, i will keep at it, just slightly in a slightly less posi manner. xoxoxo

[6/06/2007 05:10:00 PM](#)

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**Anonymous said...**

why is it that if you support one thing you can not support another?

[6/06/2007 10:14:00 PM](#)

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**Jen (formally known as anonymous) said...**

to anonymous responding to anonymous and anonymous: It is ignorant and pretentious for any person to assume that they understand what it's like to be someone else. We cannot ignore the fact that women born women have a completely different experience than transwomen. Growing up and being socialized with a female body is not the same as growing up in a male body and being socialized as a man and then transitioning to a female later in life. I completely support the unique experiences of transitioning, but to claim that "woman" means the same to a woman born woman as it does to a transwoman is a hugely ignorant and naive assumption. Much like the comparison between the civil rights movement and the gay rights movement, this too is wrong. I as a white lesbian could never claim to understand what it's like to be a woman of color, simply because gay people and people of color are both oppressed. We cannot dismiss the varying levels of oppression by finding our understanding of them in calling it all oppression and considering all oppression the same. I would never claim to understand the oppression transwomen face simply because I am oppressed as a lesbian. Similarly, I would hope that transwomen would not be so naive as to assume that they understand my unique experience as an oppressed woman born woman lesbian. I believe that anyone can define gender in any way they would like. But for the purposes of this discussion, which is about the exclusion of transwomen from Michigan Womyn's Festival because it is about the unique experience of being born with and growing up in a female body, no - a transwoman cannot relate to or understand that experience. I think that there are huge gaps in communication and understanding between both groups because assumptions are made and we are not able to truly listen to the stories each side has to tell. Instead we are claiming we understand perspectives that are not ours. The only way to bridge the gaps between any two groups of oppressed people are to recognize our differences rather than dismissing them. The real danger happens in ignoring our differences and pretending that they don't exist.

[6/06/2007 10:51:00 PM](#)

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**Anonymous said...**

women born women is a bullshit phrase made up with the sole purpose of excluding trans women. i am not trying to play oppression olympics, but non-trans is a privileged category in our culture. let's say what we mean--not a space for women-born-women, but a space created and defined with the goal of keeping out a certain group of oppressed women. it is not about erasing difference. it is about recognizing privilege. what i have never understood is, why does girlhood trump all other experience in terms of belonging at michfest? when does girlhood end? if someone transitions at 10--and that does happen--did they experience it? why is girlhood privileged over the womanhood i experience right now in this woman-hating culture? yes, it is different to have had a girlhood than to have a boyhood than to have grown up with any sort of other gender experience. but girlhoods don't all look the same, or even similar, and i think that many girlhoods look less alike than different. it is a straw argument. it simply doesn't make sense.

i am through with talking about learning to listen harder and respect each other's sides. the right of all women to be in women's spaces is not debatable. as someone with non-trans privilege it is not my right to use privilege that to exclude other people. there are feelings on every side of this issue, i agree, but, in the end, it's not an argument. it's support versus prejudice.

[6/06/2007 11:36:00 PM](#)

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**Jen said...**

To say that a person who is "less oppressed" than you doesn't deserve your understanding is "bullshit". The only way to combat racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and any other form of hate is to try and understand. Hate is bred from ignorance. It's unfortunate that you have closed this dialogue.

[6/07/2007 12:14:00 AM](#)

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**Kaitlin said...**

 is michfest only a space for women who have experienced "girlhood"? and what does girlhood mean? anonymous made a great point: there are some folks who transition very early in life. if a transwoman transitioned at the age of 8 would she be allowed? or at the age

of 10? or the age of 14? where is the cutoff? who gets to decide? who polices girlhood? as a white queer class privilege girl i definitely experienced girlhood, and girladulthood with all the patriarchy, sexism, sexual violence, and crap that comes with it. But i try and not assume that my girlhood looks exactly like yours, nor do i assume that coming out of that girlhood I share the same privileges and non-privileges as other women with different class and race backgrounds or different gender presentations. I believe that "girlhood" and womanhood is complex and different for everyone and that is dangerous to decide who gets to be in women's spaces based on if they had a girlhood or not. for me women's spaces have been healing and amazing and the women's spaces i have been in have included transwomen. this has not taken away from my experience. i believe that michfest could change their policy to include transwomen who just like other women experience violence, sexism, and patriarchy without losing anything. if spaces within michfest are needed for non-trans women folks to talk about their experience with girlhood i could support that but I cannot support the concept of "girlhood" as a policing tool to keep some women out of michfest and some in.

6/07/2007 01:10:00 PM

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**Anonymous said...**

am I wrong, or didn't Michigan change their policy in 2006? <http://www.ifge.org/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=273>

6/08/2007 11:59:00 AM

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**eliz said...**

 michfest had an ambiguous situation last year. after the camp trans success announcement, lisa vogel put out a [response](#). people are taking this whole series of events in a variety of ways. but that is the latest official word from mwmf.

6/08/2007 01:03:00 PM

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**Jadzia said...**

OK, so if transwomen should be included at michigan because they are women, then how is it also true that transmen should also be allowed, since they are men? Or, if transmen really are women and should then be allowed, then it follows that transwomen are actually men.

Or, if neither gender category applies to transpeople, then why go to a festival that is about celebrating female gender?

I can't find the logic.

And I really can't understand why a DYKE was blacklisted from a DYKE pride festival. How many Dykes who work at the pride march or who attend it have participated in a Michigan Fest? Dozens? Hundreds? Should they all stay away from Pride in respect for trans inclusion?

Florence Kennedy, a radical Black Feminist Lawyer/theorist used to call this horizontal hostility. How much energy is being sucked out of us by this kind of activity?

I'm beginning to think that in fact the trans movement is being infiltrated with government agitators, just as the Dyke movement was. They'd be there, stirring things up, causing internal dissent so we'd be sure to fail as a movement.

Think it doesn't happen? Think again.

6/09/2007 01:52:00 PM

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**eliz said...**

 neither i, nor ["http://camptrans.squarespace.com/trans-inclusion-and-michfest/"](http://camptrans.squarespace.com/trans-inclusion-and-michfest/)>camp trans (see question 4), think that trans men do belong at michigan/in women-only spaces. i can see situations where trans men might be in those spaces out of financial or physical necessity--a women's bathroom in an area where it would be unsafe to be in a men's bathroom, or not transferring out of a women's college because of financial aid reasons--but i do not think that men belong in women's spaces outside of such reasons.

also, i think that there is a difference between telling people not to participate in something and not choosing someone to speak or perform at--and therefore, in some ways, represent--an event. not everyone can be one of the people on stage. i think that it makes sense to choose people who best represent the stated values of the organization/group. in this case, the dyke march has had a commitment to supporting trans women for a really long time, and so having someone performing who goes against those values doesn't make sense.

i can speak for myself and say that the reason that i do organizing against oppression in my queer communities is because i feel like this is my home. queer spaces and women's spaces are my home, and i really think that we need to be able to make them as supportive and anti-oppressive as possible. if we let some people in our communities be disrespected or

disempowered consistently then it really hurts all of us in the end because i **do** believe that oppressions are interconnected and the people who want to see us fail will tear us apart if they can and the less we are standing up for each other--and i dont always mean each other's beliefs, cos i don't agree with every queer, but each other's identities and rights to exist--the easier it is to cause divisions. you know?  
so i guess i am saying, if fighting oppression even when i see it happening in my own communities is called horizontal hostility, i don't buy it. xoxoxo

6/09/2007 03:26:00 PM

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**J B said...**



Taking Bitch's interview statements out of context is a desperate swipe at someone you obviously don't know, because if you did, you'd see how laughable-if-it-weren't-so-painful this fiasco actually is. It sounds less about Bitch and more about MichFest and misplaced personal politics! Bitch is just the easy Dixie Chick scapegoat here. And calling Bitch "transphobic"? Puh-lease! You've got to be kidding.

6/11/2007 04:07:00 PM

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