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How Conservatives Are Using 'Feminism' to Fight Against LGBTQ Equality

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A calculated alliance based on transphobia is fueling the fight against the Equality Act.

BY REV. ELENA ROSE VERA AND HERON GREENESMITH, ESQ. (/AUTHORS/REV-ELENA-ROSE-VERA-AND-HERON-GREENESMITH-ESQ)

APRIL 02 2019 11:29 AM EDT



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Yesterday, House Republicans called so-called “feminist” Julia Beck to testify as a witness against the Equality Act, which is historic legislation that would finally prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Opposition to this historic bill—which would bring much-needed civil liberties to
 (Beck, who was voted off the Ballot by 60% of LGBTQ Americans) (https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2019/02/lesbian-appeared-fox-news-praised-brave-attacking-trans-people/) has united at-seem-like-unlikely-bedfellows in a
 joint effort to destroy protections for transgender individuals.
 (https://instagram.com/theadvocatemag) (https://theadvocatemag.tumblr.com)
 (https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2019/02/lesbian-appeared-fox-news-praised-brave-attacking-trans-people/) for her anti-transgender activism last fall, was also called in
 early March of this year as the Committee Republicans' sole witness
 (https://rewire.news/article/2019/03/08/house-republicans-hide-behind-lesbian-radical-feminist-to-push-anti-trans-agenda/) opposing the reauthorization of the Violence
 Against Women Act.

At the witness table yesterday, Beck shared a shocking vision of the future.

"If the [Equality] Act passes in its current form . . . then every right that women have fought for will cease to exist. H.R. 5 is a human rights violation," she shared, and went on to fill her opening statement and her subsequent answers to Committee Republican's questions with the most base, vile stereotypes and conspiracy theories about transgender people.

Juxtaposed against LGBTQ witnesses telling their personal stories and experienced, qualified experts in law, policy, and ministry, Beck was continually offered more time by committee Republicans to share her transphobic layperson's views on law, medicine, and policy. The "evidence" that the Republicans allowed into the record via Beck's testimony is mere unsubstantiated, pseudoscientific, fear-driven conspiracy theory.

And while Beck could not substantiate her outlandish claims, it is in fact transgender and gender non-conforming people who are in peril.

We cannot ignore the fact that conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation are strategically linking up with other anti-transgender ideologues to reinforce the Right's attacks on existing civil and human rights protections and to bolster blocks on updates to outdated discriminatory laws, taking advantage of a political atmosphere emboldened by Trump's anti-transgender Cabinet picks and federal judicial appointments.

But the question remains: why would an organization like The Heritage Foundation, which has a long history (https://www.heritage.org/civil-society/report/why-feminism-no-longer-sells) of attacking the feminist movement

(https://www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/time-millennial-women-reject-campus-
 (https://www.foxnews.com/culture/conservative-woman-join-forces-people-who-claim-be-feminists-
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(<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/10/23/christian-right-tips-fight-transgender-rights-separate-t-lgb>), where the Family Research Council recommended reframing opposition to LGBTQ civil rights (<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/values-voter-summit-panelist-divide-conquer-to-defeat-totalitarian-trans-inclusion-policies/>) by first targeting transgender people with faux-feminist language.

By choosing to unite with these self-styled “feminists,” who represent a transphobic fringe largely rejected by modern mainstream feminist and LGBTQ movements, the Heritage Foundation is attempting to falsely equate their transphobic ideology with Left movements, drive a wedge between trans people and the rest of the LGBTQ community, and frame the movement for transgender liberation as an issue that even those on the Left can’t get behind.

In teaming up with “feminists” like Julia Beck to attack protections for transgender people, the Heritage Foundation is undoubtedly hoping to sink the entire Equality Act and destroy a chance at federally-enshrined legal protections for LGBTQ people and women more broadly. In turn, Beck and those like her are willing to ally with organizations explicitly opposed to both feminism and LGBTQ rights — and to advocate against establishing those legal protections — just to attack transgender people.

Already in 2019, the Heritage Foundation has sponsored two panels (<https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2019/01/31/Anti-trans-activists-from-the-Left-joined-right-wing-Heritage-Foundation-to-rail-against-t/222715>) of anti-transgender “feminist” advocates, and right-wing media continue to platform these activists to give the false impression that protections for transgender people endanger women and girls.

Contrary to the Heritage Foundation's claims, these narratives only serve to demean and shame transgender people out of public life, normalize violence against them, and perpetuate the many social and material conditions that make transgender people's suicide

rate is higher than that of the general population

Trans Lifeline, a grassroots organization providing direct support services to the transgender community, saw calls to its crisis Hotline increase by more than 70 percent. To keep up with the increase in call volume, Trans Lifeline has accordingly brought on more volunteers and hired more staff operators, as well as expanding its Microgrants program for trans people in need.

Transgender and gender non-conforming people are resilient in the face of extraordinary challenges, and with supportive community resources like Trans Lifeline, many of us will weather the storms over our heads. Even as anti-transgender ideologues band together to attack our lives and livelihoods, we remain committed to caring for our community.

While conservative advocacy organizations and anti-trans so-called “feminist” activists may join forces to give the appearance that opposing transgender rights is a bipartisan effort, we know the truth: transgender people are facing deep disparities with sparkling resilience.

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Rev. Elena Rose Vera is the executive director of Trans Lifeline

(<https://www.translifeline.org/>), a grassroots 501(c)(3) non-profit organization offering direct emotional and financial support to trans people in need via a crisis Hotline and Microgrants program - for the trans community, by the trans community. Elena is a longtime organizer, educator, and care worker.

Heron Greenesmith, Esq., is a senior research analyst for LGBTQI justice at Political Research Associates (<https://www.politicalresearch.org/>), (<https://www.politicalresearch.org/>) a social justice think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive

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