

STAND UP FOR DEMOCRACY!

STOP the BLACKLISTING and HARASSMENT

of feminist *Thistle Pettersen*

Thistle Pettersen is a long-time progressive political activist, environmentalist, feminist, folk musician and radio show producer in Madison, WI. Since 2012 she has been subjected to a concerted campaign of blacklisting and harassment, including threats of violence, exclusion from community spaces, and attempts to get her fired from her job. Her offense? Expressing her opinions on sex and gender, and interviewing well-known lesbian and feminist authors and activists on the radio. The campaign against her has falsely accused her of "hate speech", "transmisogyny", and "fascism" in an attempt to silence and intimidate her and stifle needed discussion and debate. The dehumanization is so severe, she is treated like a second-class citizen in her own town. **Thistle defends gender-**

nonconforming people, including trans-identifying people, while being critical of gender-identity politics. Like many other feminists, Thistle believes that gender is a patriarchal construct. She advocates for the right of females, as members of the oppressed sex, to have protected and respected safe spaces.



Thistle playing at the Crystal Corner

Timeline of Harassment

September 2012 – Thistle proposes a workshop focused on "female-bodied and female socialized" people at the Twin Cities Anarchist Book Fair. The organizing committee removes Thistle's anarchy-feminist workshop from their program following their accusations of "transphobia." In a discussion thread on the exclusion, posts include a threat to hit her with a baseball bat, land her in the hospital, and break her guitar. In response, she publishes the zine "Musings on Manarchy in the Midwest", documenting her harassment.

October – November 2014 – In preparing for her Access Hour program on local community radio station WORT's airwaves, Thistle receives many emails, phone calls and complaints that she was using "hate speech" and promoting "transmisogyny" because she was going to interview lesbian feminist scholar Sheila Jeffreys.

January 2016 – In response to the radio interview over a year earlier, Thistle is physically banned from community radio station WORT 89.9 FM, except for public events. She is called a "hateful bigoted piece of shit" in the lobby of the station by a member of the feminist news team. The ban lasts 2 months but she is not notified of the duration.

Late January and Early February 2017 – Thistle holds up signs challenging gender-identity politics at the January 21st Women's March in Madison and posts pictures of them to social media. Afterward, members of a local chapter of the "Degenderettes" (see below) and others demand that her place of employment, a local childcare center, fire her, and demand that Crystal Corner Bar and other music venues cancel her performances or be faced with dealing with boycotts and protests by local trans activists. The Crystal Corner Bar terminates her regular music show with her band. Thistle's tech support guy quits and dumps Thistle's website, falsely claiming it would be up until the end of March. A local activist writes a comment on Thistle's Facebook page that reads, "I want to punch you in the fucking face, cunt bitch." Thistle also receives a package of human feces in the mail.

February 3, 2017 – Wisconsin Network for Peace & Justice posts a [statement](#) claiming Thistle "targets trans people" and promotes "hatred towards trans people" with no evidence for these false claims. Following this WNPJ statement, dozens of hateful messages flood the WNPJ Facebook comment section, claiming Thistle is a "hateful bigot" who should be expelled from the community.

March 17 – July 19, 2018 – "Degenderettes" places an "exhibit" of weapons and malicious messages against feminists, using the slur "TERF" (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist), at San Francisco public library. According to 'Mask' magazine interview with leader Scout Tran, the Degenderettes is a nationwide group claiming to speak for transgender people and feminists. Yet they target feminists, lesbians, and noncompliant women for harassment, censorship, and firing from employment (an FBI tactic used during the anti-communist witch hunt of the 1950s). They specialize in distributing baseball bats, axes, and sledgehammers painted various trans, femme, and gay pride colors. According to Tran, initiations sometimes involve "aggressive things that I'm nervous to talk about." One Degenderettes group in Toronto calls themselves a "bike gang with no bike requirements".

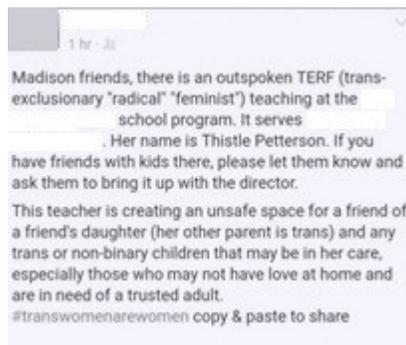
March 19, 2018 – Thistle hosts another Access Hour program, interviewing feminists Meghan Murphy of Feminist Current and Julie Bindel of The Guardian. At the WORT monthly board meeting, anti-feminists show up to complain about the March 19th radio show, calling Bindel and Murphy "Internationally known TERFs" and condemning the program and its host for "hate speech against trans people" without any evidence. Defaming statements against Thistle are made by prominent local journalists present at the meeting. The full recording can be found at <https://www.wortfm.org/about/board-of-directors/board-of-directors-meeting-archives/>.

March 25, 2018 – Common Ground Middleton cancels Thistle's new music show, citing "transactivist" complaints.

May/June 2018 – Emily Mills publishes "TERF Wars" in Our Lives magazine, defaming Pettersen and her March 19th WORT radio program.

September – November 2018 – After weeks of rehearsal for a November 10th show as a member of ESAE (East Side Acoustic Ensemble), Thistle is prohibited from performing at the Wil-Mar center, due to a "policy" against her performing on their stage. Reasoning for the Wil-Mar ban includes that Thistle does not believe that "trans women are women." Local trans activists, including members of the Degenderettes, publicly call Thistle a FART (Feminism Appropriating Reactionary Transphobe) among other defamatory statements. Two weeks later, ESAE bans Thistle from taking part in this community-based musical group.

Examples of Harassment, Defamation, and Threats Against Thistle Pettersen



1 hr · 33

Madison friends, there is an outspoken TERF (trans-exclusionary "radical" "feminist") teaching at the school program. It serves

Her name is Thistle Pettersen. If you have friends with kids there, please let them know and ask them to bring it up with the director.

This teacher is creating an unsafe space for a friend of a friend's daughter (her other parent is trans) and any trans or non-binary children that may be in her care, especially those who may not have love at home and are in need of a trusted adult.

#transwomenarewomen copy & paste to share

Every time she comes to my register at the coop...she's unfriendly as fuck. Guess I need to start leaning on the scale when I weigh and ring her fuckin basmati rice

Yesterday at 10:17 PM · Like · 7 · Reply

Shoosh don't say that out loud

Yesterday at 10:25 PM · Like · Reply

Write a reply...

She has personally attacked me many times. She is a dangerous and violent transmisogynist.

surely did not say anything violent towards you because I haven't seen anything related to it...but my God, you win the award for ignorant bitch of the year. People do not wake up randomly one day and want to be a woman suddenly; basic science says gender identity is in the brain and more people experience it every single day. How dare you down talk this issue as if it's some joke ...seriously I want to punch you in the fucking face. Cunt bitch.

1 hour ago · Like



🕒 27 February at 19:45–22:00
Next Week

Stand with the Madison Degenderettes and Madison's queer and trans community to protest the Crystal Corner Bar's decision to continue to offer a platform to folk musician and trans-exclusionary "radical" "feminist" Thistle Pettersen. Thistle promotes fear and hatred of transgender people, especially trans women, and has personally targeted trans people in our local community for campaigns of online bullying, harassment, and intimidation.

Degenderettes intimidation of feminists, lesbians, and women on display



at marches and San Francisco Public Library (2018)

PLEASE JOIN A GROWING NUMBER OF PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS IN DEFENDING FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND OPINION WITHIN THE LEFT AND REJECTING THE VIOLENT AND McCARTHY-LIKE TACTICS BEING USED AGAINST THISTLE AND OTHER FEMINISTS. STOP THE HARASSMENT AND BLACKLISTING NOW!

To sign on to the call to end the harassment and defamation of Thistle Pettersen, send your signature to the Thistle Defense Committee, defendfeminists@gmail.com