

DEFEND FEMINISTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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On March 20, an international defense campaign was launched to stop the threats and blacklisting of Thistle Pettersen, a long-time Madison, Wisconsin resident who has been targeted for her feminist views. See the Defense Committee's website at <https://defendfeminists.net>.

Ms. Pettersen is a singer/songwriter, environmental activist and founder, reporter and producer of Women's Liberation Radio News (WLRN). She is being subjected to a concerted campaign of defamation and harassment that has included threats of physical assault, attempts to get her fired from her job, and exclusion from community centers and performance spaces around Madison. Her "crime" was to interview well-known lesbian and feminist scholars, authors and journalists on community radio (WORT 89.9 FM in Madison) and to express her ideas about gender identity politics. Like many other feminists, Thistle believes that gender is a patriarchal construct and that women, as the oppressed sex, have a right to organize themselves.

Already, several hundred people including fellow Madison residents, and feminist and Left and progressive activists from throughout the U.S., and from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K. have signed on in defense of Ms. Pettersen's freedom of thought and opinion and her right to participate in her community. Some of her prominent supporters include filmmaker Nina Paley, writer Julie Bindel, feminist historian Max Dashu, and author and social critic Chris Hedges.

The latest attack against Thistle comes from the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center where she has been banned from their performance stage based on

accusations of “hateful bigotry and discrimination.” She has never been provided with evidence of those charges nor an opportunity to defend herself.

The Defense Committee and other supporters of the Campaign have sent letters to the Wil-Mar Board President Bob Hemauer to demand that the ban be immediately lifted.

“Thistle has the right to express her ideas and participate in her community without fearing for her safety or livelihood,” said Ann Menasche, a member of the Defense Committee. “There is nothing feminist or progressive about using McCarthy-like tactics to suppress speech and debate.”