

Cancel the "A Woman's Place" event in Bristol

We, the undersigned academics and students, call for the cancellation of the "A Woman's Place" event in Bristol, and a statement from the Centre for Gender Violence Research, one of whom plans to chair the event.

We are calling for the cancellation of this event because of the impact it would have on the trans community, both in Bristol and more broadly. The conversation is cast as addressing a 'concern' about how legislation to improve the process of legal gender recognition for trans people might impact provision of safe spaces for women (where 'women' are defined as cisgender women as well as those who don't identify as women but were assigned female at birth).

The rise in trans visibility does make apparent a long-standing need to discuss and clarify our concepts and practices around safe spaces - and this necessarily involves addressing real and understandable fears of some cisgender women, navigating histories of trauma, and recognising the power of (but re-examining) deeply entrenched political strategies. There is, clearly, a need for difficult conversations to take place among feminists, and this includes expressing and processing powerful but contentious attitudes, thoughts and feelings.

However, the proposed event, despite casting itself as a space for 'respectful and balanced debate', premises itself not only upon the violent denial of trans experience and identity, but on the deliberate propagation of fear- and hate-based narratives constructed specifically in order to lever public opinion against recognition of trans realities. This is not in any way an attempt to create a 'safe space' for these difficult conversations.

The organisers are framing the debate over trans recognition as a battle between 'feminists' on the one hand and 'trans activists' on the other, and attempt to frame trans people as 'men' threatening women's spaces - disregarding a) the existence of transmasculine and nonbinary people, b) the fact that trans women are women, and c) the fact that trans people are and always have been a part of feminist struggles.

The Gender and Violence Research Centre plays a vital role in feminist thinking, working at the forefront of research tackling gender-based violence in the UK. It is therefore of particular concern that the event is to be chaired by Raquel Rosario Sanchez, a member of the Gender and Violence Research Centre at Bristol University. Attaching the centre's name to this event implies that it endorses providing a platform for hate speech, and calls into question the integrity of the Centre and of the University as a whole.

Trans people are an inextricable part of the University community. The needs of trans people, and in particular trans women and trans feminine people, are integral to feminist campaigns and spaces. There is no difference between "feminists" spreading transphobic and transmisogynistic ideas or spreading racism or homophobia. We want no part in this. We ask that the University of Bristol, and all its departments, stand up and resist the perpetration of harm against trans people.

Name *

Short answer text
.....

Position (e.g. undergrad, post grad, lecturer)
