

Say Trans—Or Else!

A Norwegian lesbian risks jail for denying that a man can be a lesbian.



Tonje Gjevjon

by Bruce Bawer

Even by Scandinavian standards, Tonje Gjevjon, a 55-year-old Norwegian performance artist and activist who is one of the founders of the *Lesbisk Forbund* (Lesbian Association), qualifies as left-of-center. The three largest national newspapers are all solidly left-wing, and she writes regularly for *Dagbladet*, the one that's *most* left-wing. But like many progressive women these days, Gjevjon has found herself labeled a reactionary bigot because she refuses to accept that a man can be a woman.

I wasn't aware of Gjevjon until just the other day when suddenly she was making headlines—not in the major Norwegian media but in the *New York Post* and at the websites of such right-leaning international media as Fox News and Sky News Australia. So I did some online searching and caught up with her case (and found out, incidentally, that we have 16 mutual Facebook friends—that's how small Norway is.)

In a 2017 op-ed, Gjevjon [challenged](#) Norway's recently enacted law stating that whether an individual was legally considered male or female would no longer be based on chromosomes but on a person's "experience" of gender identity. Why, Gjevjon asked, hadn't this rather important issue been put before the public and openly debated before parliament chose to pass the law? In reply, a "trans researcher" named Janneke van der Ros [explained](#) patronizingly to Gjevjon that, over a period of almost two years, the proposed law had been formulated by an "expert committee," then taken under consideration by a "cross-departmental working group," and finally discussed at a public hearing before being voted on.

Obviously, Gjevjon hadn't heard about that public hearing. Neither had I. I don't even know how the process works. How are you supposed to know that there's going to be a public hearing about a proposed law that touches on an issue that's important to you? Are you supposed to check the parliament's website every day of your life?

Of course, the whole business was smoke and mirrors: these days, when the subject is transgenderism, the fix is in when it comes to selecting "experts" and the like. Nobody's interested in hearing from the man—or lesbian—on the street. The last thing trans advocates want is for their agenda to be taken up in newspaper op-eds and on TV debate programs. The only way they can win is by meeting behind closed doors with people in power—members of school boards, hospital administrators, and, yes, legislators—who sympathize with their cause.

In a subsequent op-ed, Gjevjon [pointed](#) out the explosion in trans identification among young people and expressed doubt about the wisdom of allowing biological men to use women's space and letting 6-year-olds change their legal sex. She announced that she was part of a new initiative aimed at encouraging kids to be happy in their own bodies. This time around, it was Gjevjon's fellow *Dagbladet* columnist Martine Aurdal who [responded](#), calling her a transphobe and a TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminist) and telling her to leave trans kids to the "experts." Aurdal served up the familiar lie that if you don't let kids change their legal sex, they'll kill themselves. And she claimed that while trans people are constantly subject to violence, it's a calumny to suggest that biological women in restrooms, women's shelters, and gym showers have anything to fear from trans women. "The woman with a penis in the shower," she scolded, "has it bad enough" without Gjevjon's hurtful commentary.

The op-eds kept coming, with a trans-identified sociology student, Karoline Skarstein, [accusing](#) Gjevjon of dealing in "alternative facts" and denying that the increase in the number of young people deciding that they're transgender amounts to a "trend." Gjevjon, for her part, complained that if you look these days at the websites of Norway's major gay-rights organizations, you hardly ever see the words "gay" and "lesbian"—that's how fully the trans advocates have taken over the territory. Gjevjon also mentioned that particularly creepy class of "trans women" who don't just claim to be women but claim to be lesbian women—and who, when rejected sexually by real lesbians, accuse them angrily of being transphobic.

"Doesn't this mean, then," wrote Gjevjon, "that the trans movement itself is homophobic? Homosexuality is obviously no longer what it was. If sex is no longer dependent on biology and physicality (the body), does homosexuality even exist? What kind of homosexuality is it that the gay organizations are working for? Cross-gender homosexuality? Heterosexual

homosexuality? Fluid homosexuality? Isn't the sex organ any longer a part of homosexuality?" Terrific. This is exactly the kind of thing that Jonathan Swift was thinking of when he coined the term *saeva indignatio*.

For a few months, Gjevjon and her sparring partners seemed to maintain a ceasefire. Then in January 2018 came a news [story](#) about "Vagina Anthem," a new performance piece by Gjevjon that had been commissioned by the Haugar Vestfold Art Museum. Like Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*, it addressed female identity and misogyny. It's obviously the kind of thing that, just a few years ago, would, like Ensler's work, have had all the progressive critics swooning. No longer! After reading the text, the curator who had invited Gjevjon to stage the thing insisted on removing certain lines for fear that they would offend trans people.

Six months later, two LGBT activists, Daisy Sælen Hafstad, a "trans woman," and Vegard Rødseth Tokheim, a gay man, [accused](#) Gjevjon and other feminists of making "undocumented claims about trans people that more than anything else resemble the type of comments and fear-based arguments made by extreme Republican politicians in the U.S. Bible Belt." They even compared her to the Nazis.

Why am I writing about Tonje Gjevjon now? Because her refusal to bow down to the transgender revolution has now reached a new level. On October 1, she posted a comment on Facebook about the Norwegian Supreme Court, which the previous day had found a man guilty of making "hateful statements" about a "trans woman."

"Men who permanently play-act [*permalaiver*] as women," she wrote, are "perverse fetishists who are discriminating against women." She singled out for criticism Christine Jentoft, born Christer Jentoft, a biological man who sleeps with women but who's employed by a lesbian organization called Fri (Free) because he calls himself a "trans lesbian." Refusing to hold

back her outrage over this insanity, Gjevjon let loose with a wonderful tirade, including the passionate run-on sentence that begins this passage:

“Heterosexual lesbian men like Christine Jentoft have, by parliamentary resolution, been authorized under the law to report lesbian women like me and all other women and men who express disgust at these people’s attempt to use the law against straight men/women and lesbian women who point out how fucking humiliating it is that we are expected to have to approve of this bullshit gender identity that entails, and that is disguised, as a minority’s vulnerability. Gay organizations like Fri and men who fetishize full-time about being lesbians are now using a law adopted by the parliament to report people who don’t want to submit to this crazy system of belief. It’s as impossible for men to be lesbians as it is for men to get pregnant. Men are men regardless of their sexual fetishes.”

That was October 1. On November 17, Gjevjon received a letter from the police department in Follo, a suburb of Oslo, summoning her to an interrogation because the National Competence Center for Hate Crimes had reported her Facebook post for violating paragraph 185 of the Criminal Code, which forbids hateful statements about vulnerable identity groups. The news of the summons was [reported](#) by *document.no* on December 13 in an article that quoted Gjevjon as saying that the Supreme Court’s verdict “takes away a necessary tool for women, namely the ability to point out harmful behavior on the part of men” just because the latter “claim to be a sexual minority.”

Gjevjon also singled out for criticism Anette Trettebergstuen, the Minister for Culture and Equality, who had asserted that giving rights to one group doesn’t remove rights from another group. *Au contraire*, said Gjevjon, and concluded her remarks to *document.no* with a sentence in English: “It is art at this stage,” she pronounced. “Take me to court!” Move over, Émile

Zola!

Gjevjon picked up on this theme in another Facebook [post](#). “My name is Tonje Gjevjon,” it read. “I am an artist, a woman, and a lesbian. Being reported to the police for violating §185 is my latest project. Put this lesbo in prison, Culture and Equality Minister Anette Trettebergstuen!” It also emerged, in a further *document.no* [article](#) that while Gjevjon was in trouble for offending Jentoft, the police report had come as a surprise to Jentoft, who’d recently filed similar charges against *another* woman, Christina Ellingsen, in a case that is still pending, but not against Gjevjon. In other words, the Norwegian police had acted against Gjevjon entirely on their own.

Both Gjevjon and Ellingsen, if convicted, could face three years in prison—in a country where a convicted rapist can get as little as a year. As Gjevjon puts it, let them try. This is obviously one woman who won’t shut up about this grotesque perversion of justice.

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