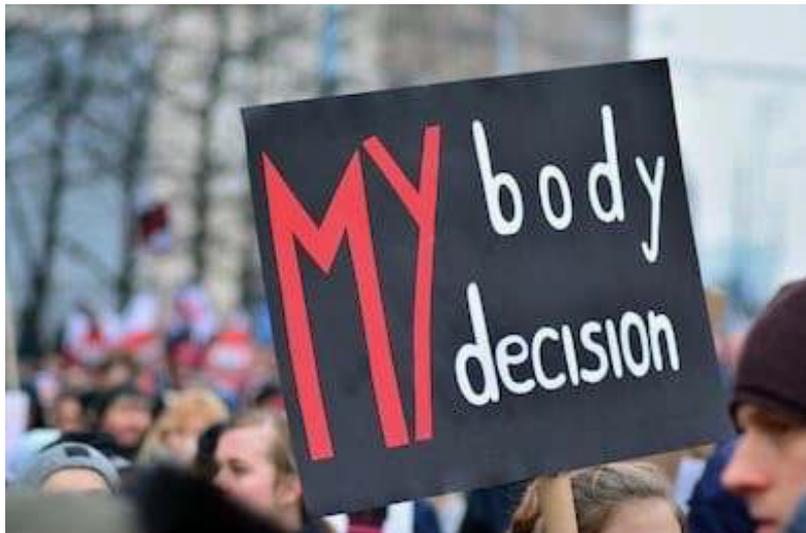


Reproductive rights are women's rights



Abortion rights march in Warsaw 2018.

[Posted to Medium 3rd December 2018].

A march for reproductive rights is happening in Wellington, New Zealand, on December 5th. A poster advertising the march features the slogan “your body, your choice!”, and pictures of a woman’s face, a coathanger, a pregnant belly, a woman’s fist raised in solidarity, and a contraceptive pill packet. It’s hardly controversial that reproductive rights are a women’s rights issue. Abortion has long been a battleground between feminists and men who think they have the right to control women’s bodies and choices. The poster might seem to acknowledge this. But it also bears the icon for transgender people, and this is where things start to get complicated.

The march for reproductive rights is being organized by two groups, Organize Aotearoa, and ALRANZ. The former is a socialist organization, the latter is a pro-choice organization. Organize Aotearoa have said (on their Twitter page) that the march is trans inclusive, and further, that they’ve “issued a prohibition against bigotry of any kind including transphobia”. Fair enough, you might think: trans men (female people) need reproductive rights, so a march for reproductive rights should include them.

But Organize Aotearoa have also said that “if any known transphobic people attend, especially if they’re carrying transphobic signs or banners, people can point them out to our ushers and they will be asked to leave”. Similarly, when ALRANZ was asked to clarify whether they supported Organize Aotearoa’s position on excluding ‘known transphobic people’, they replied “if you and your signs are not manifesting trans-exclusivity, there should be no problem”. So ‘known transphobic people’, people ‘carrying transphobic signs or banners’, and people who ‘manifest[...] trans-exclusivity’, are all not welcome at the march for reproductive rights.

Those who are familiar with the politics of the ongoing debate between trans rights activists and gender critical feminists over New Zealand’s introduction of self-identification for sex will know who ‘known transphobic people refers to’ (for those who are not familiar, it refers to specific prominent female activists). They will also know that the understanding of ‘transphobic’ extends well beyond what any person not familiar with the debate would understand as hateful or discriminatory conduct. Insisting on the reality of biological sex, raising questions about what it means to say that ‘trans women are women’, and having concerns about the impact of sex self-identification on women have all been characterized as ‘transphobic’ in online debates.



Organise Aotearoa: For Liberation and Socia...

@OrgAotearoa

Check out our posters around Wellington city. Next week, get ready to join us in marching for reproductive rights.



9:50 am · 29 Nov. 18

8 Retweets 38 Likes



Another tweet, including a photograph showing the organizers standing next to their posters (“check out our posters around Wellington city”) reveals the probable sex of the organizers: male. This means we have a situation in which male people (who do not need reproductive rights) are organizing a march for reproductive rights, and dictating that certain people who need those reproductive rights are not welcome at the march. Indeed, the appearance of one of the two likely-male organizers suggests that they are either nonbinary or a trans woman. Given the prominence of white men in trans activism, and the invisibility of trans men, one may strongly suspect that the ‘trans-inclusive’ stance of the organizers is more about including trans women than not excluding trans men.

So what about posters or placards that read ‘her body, her choice?’ or ‘abortion rights are women’s rights?’ Are these transphobic because they imply that women are the class of people who have a capacity, all going well, to get pregnant? What if they say ‘radical (or gender critical) feminists for abortion rights?’ Given the association between being a radical or gender critical feminist and being opposed to sex self-identification, will this count as ‘transphobia’? Should women, simply because they have opinions, be removed from a march for rights they might actually need, because their views are disliked by those who will never need those rights?

As one of my favourite gender critical tweeters, @janeclarejones, put it: ‘women who believe that women are the class of reproductive humans, are being banned from a march, about reproductive rights, in order to include the non-reproductive humans who identify as reproductive humans, and don’t need reproductive rights’.

Consider the irony of organizing a march against men thinking they have a right to control women’s bodies by preventing access to abortion, while at the same time controlling which women will be allowed to remain in attendance at the march. Consider the irony of organizing a march for reproductive rights in a country in which abortion is not yet decriminalized, and thinking that it’s more important to not hurt trans women’s feelings than to support the women who currently don’t have reproductive rights.