

There's trouble in Library Land?, says reader

(Re: 'Welcome to Library Land?', November 21, 2019) This librarian correctly mentions that Canadian libraries are built on the fundamental right to free speech and that a reasonable limit to free speech and expression is hate speech.

As she notes, hate speech does not include 'unpopular?', 'unconventional?', or 'unacceptable speech.'

In a free and democratic society, it is essential that free speech is protected and that people be allowed to hear a plethora of ideas.

Unfortunately, labelling Meghan Murphy as a 'radical' feminist and not explaining what Murphy said which was so offensive in her presentation at the Toronto Library, leaves readers uninformed.

The scientific fact that biological women have XX chromosomes and biological men have XY chromosomes should not be considered offensive speech.

The Y chromosome on average creates significant differences between men and women with respect to bone mass/density, muscle mass, lung capacity, size of heart and other organs.

Raising problems with competitive sports where biological women are at a disadvantage when competing against trans women for scholarships and trophies should not be shocking.

This is about fairness in competition.

Everyone should be tolerant of trans people and try to empathize on how difficult it can be for them in society. However, this position should not prevent discussion on issues arising when trans activists are pushing for changes in certain areas of our society.

There needs to be balance and fairness for everyone's rights in society.

Preventing this discussion is what fascists do.

There definitely is 'trouble in Library Land' when our librarians think that biological facts are the same as 'apartheid, segregation and anti-Semitism.'

Biological facts between the sexes are not populist and right-wing leanings as Reccia Manelcorn maintains, but are actually mainstream science.

Shelley WisterAurora(Editor's Note: In the interests of fairness, following the receipt of this letter, The Auroran invited a member of

the Trans community to respond to the points raised above. Accepting the invitation was Max Denley, Director of The Get Real Movement, an organization founded in Toronto in 2011 to combat 2SLGBTQ+ discrimination and promote acceptance in schools, summer camps and workplaces. Their response is featured below)

Misinformation fuels stigma, says advocate

Let me start by saying I am appreciative of the opportunity to respond to the piece printed alongside this one.

Discussion is how we learn, and while I do not claim to represent the entirety of the trans community, I believe my perspective is one that could be informative to readers.

For context, I am a white, 20-something year old trans man, who has participated in sports, activism, and academia.

What is the difference between 'free speech' and 'hate speech'? Where do we draw the line between what is okay to say in an open, publicly funded forum (such as the Toronto Public Library), and what should be shut down and not supported by those in positions of power and authority?

Obviously, this is a question that would likely take more than a short letter to discuss, to get into the intricacies of language and law, but I don't think it needs to be that complicated.

Statements that are untrue should not be supported and backed by knowledge-keeping organizations.

Statements that fuel false representation of any group of people should not be shared in a public setting.

Statements that support the further ostracizing, harm, and othering of a marginalized group should not be amplified by organizations claiming to support diversity and inclusion.

Is it that far off to compare transphobic rhetoric to the beginnings of other examples of mass discrimination?

No genocide begins with killing; these horrid events start more subtly, with the 'othering' of a group of people.

When we allow ourselves to begin to believe that a group of people are different from ourselves, it is easier to see them as less than us.

When we see them as less than us, it is easier to justify harming them.

By the time we reach full-blown genocide, we no longer see these people as equal human beings, and it all begins with how we talk

about one another.

We must not underestimate the power of words and ideas, and the audiences we give them.

Recent studies in Ontario have found that LGBTQ2S Youth are at 14 times the risk of suicide than straight, cisgender youth (www.the519.org/education-training/lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness-in-canada/lgbtq2s-youth-suicide).

Every time we allow a space for someone to misinform others on trans issues, we fuel the stigma, discrimination, rejection, violence, trauma, and prejudice that contributes to those statistics.

I also feel the need to respond to the 'science' mentioned in the other letter.

There is actually no real 'science' behind their remarks.

Biases without a basis in fact are just that, transphobia. If you are actually interested in the contributions biological sex make to someone's athletic ability, you can read the research that many large organizations (including the Olympics), base their policies on.

This research confirms that chromosomes actually do not make measurable differences to an athlete's performance, what can is hormones. So, there are scientifically supported policies put in place, structured around those facts, that keep competition fair for everyone. Just one more example of claiming false facts as an excuse to discriminate.

I would argue that we need to be more than 'tolerant' of trans people. I 'tolerate' the mint in my toothpaste because it is a flavour I despise, but I need to clean my teeth. I need to care more about my fellow human beings than my toothpaste.

Giving trans people the rights and respect you have always benefited from does not take rights and respect from you. If you have the ability to say we 'shouldn't change society,' it is probably because you are not currently at risk.

Right now, we need to make critical changes, so that transgender human beings stop dying at alarming rates.

It is time to care more about human life than one person's platform to spew harmful words.

Max Denley