



Episode 1,301: Transgender Ideologues Try to Silence Feminist

Guest: Meghan Murphy

WOODS: I'd like to start off not talking about this episode, which we'll get to in a minute, but instead I'd like to just talk about your background and who you are and what you believe. Because I certainly am speaking for a lot of people when I say that, when we use the word libertarian, a lot of people have all kinds of ideas that are not quite right, or they think, *Oh, well, then you must really be mourning George H.W. Bush*, and I think, *I don't even know what you people are talking about*. Or they don't know – and I don't blame them, but they don't know anything about the inner divisions within the movement, and it turns out half of us can't stand the other half. The casual observer knows none of this. Whereas I'd kind of like to get into the weeds of that, so I can better understand your positioning within feminism.

MURPHY: Yeah, that's really interesting, actually, because, I mean, I think – [laughing] probably I've spent much of my life thinking that libertarian was one particular thing and not realizing that there were all these divisions within it.

WOODS: Yeah.

MURPHY: And sort of passing judgment on that basis, to be honest. I mean, I wrote about that a bit in an article that I wrote at my website, Feminist Current, but in terms of the right, and saying you know, like, I regret having dismissed everyone on the right even as being on the right, because a lot of people who are dismissed as being on the right are actually not right-wing or don't consider themselves right-wing. And within the right, there's all these broad political and ideological and religious differences, right?

And that's also true in many ways of feminism. I think that today, most people who aren't deep into the movement or deep into the debates probably assume that feminism is attached to, I don't know, what I call popular feminism or third wave feminism, but I think is actually completely ridiculous and embarrassing. So third wave feminism is that kind of "slut walk" version, like that idea of feminism that's rooted in personal empowerment and choice and says that if a woman chooses to self-objectify, or if a woman chooses to participate in pornography, or if a woman chooses to wear stilettos and makeup, that is a feminist choice, because she says so. Whereas the kind of feminism that I'm connected to, which is rooted in second wave feminism and radical feminism, sees things on more of a class-based level. So we understand women's oppression as something that happens to all women and is systemic, and we don't believe it can be undone through personal choice or through reframing things that we view as oppressive as empowering. So I don't know, that probably comes into conflict with libertarianism, I guess [laughing].

WOODS: Well, it can, and you know, we'd have to flush it out a little bit further. But I wanted to get a little bit of background, simply because I think a lot of times people, especially, let's say, your worst ideological opponents, might just lump you all in together and think it's just one big blob, but then that would make it difficult to account for how there could be so much internal dissension. Like for example, can you describe this term — it just goes to show how out of it I am — this term TERF, what that means?

MURPHY: Right. So the term TERF is an acronym for trans-exclusionary radical feminists. It is a completely misleading and I think useless term. It's always used in the pejorative, so I consider it to be a smear more than anything else, because it's sort of used to — well, it's used to smear people, and it's used to vilify people, and it's applied to anyone who challenges the idea of gender identity or challenges gender identity legislation or questions the idea of transgenderism. So feminists who are critical of these ideas and this legislation aren't really excluding anyone; we're just — you know, I don't believe that gender identity is a real thing. I don't believe that you can be born in the wrong body. I don't believe that there's such a thing as having a male body but really being a woman on the inside.

And moreover, radical feminists see gender as something that's imposed through socialization, so they see it as a social role that's connected to males and females, but not as something that's internal. So we don't believe that baby girls are born feminine. We don't believe that baby boys are born masculine. We don't believe that women are inherently passive or emotional, whereas males are said to be inherently aggressive and inherently unemotional and inherently rational. So we challenge these stereotypes. And it's not to say that men and women don't necessarily have these personality traits; it's just not so black-and-white. You know, people have personalities. Some women are nurturing; some women aren't nurturing. Some men are more emotional than other men. Some men are more aggressive than other men. There's women who are aggressive. Do you know what I mean? So we don't think that gender is some kind of like vague internal soul, which is what the gender identity ideology and the trans movement is saying. And that's why we're branded TERFs, for making these kinds of arguments.

WOODS: Okay, all right. So I think I'm starting to understand this a little bit better. So now let's talk about what happened to you on Twitter, because at first, what happened was you had a couple of offending tweets, and then — this has never happened to me, because I guess I must just be such a pleasant fellow, they never give me any trouble. But I understand that you log into Twitter, and this tweet or the offending tweets are kind of like floating there, waiting for you to delete them. And my friend and I argue about whether there's something weirdly Orwellian about this. You know, *You must fix your wrong doing, citizen, before you can proceed*. But now, before we were going on, you were telling me that, actually at this point, it's a permanent — they call it suspension. But what a weird misuse of the word "suspension"? You're permanently more or less banned from Twitter. What led to that?

MURPHY: Right, so, I mean, I totally think that it's Orwellian, first of all. But yeah, so you get an email saying that your account has been locked. This started happening to me — it happened to me twice in August, and that was the first time I'd ever had any issue with Twitter ever. I've been on Twitter since 2011. And then again numerous times in November. And what they were first wanting me to delete — so they would lock my account and say you can't unlock your account until you delete these tweets. And these particular tweets were to do with this local man named Lisa Kreut, who's involved in a couple of labor unions here in Vancouver, pretty involved in the labor movement, spoke at the Vancouver Women's March,

identifies, I guess — I guess he works part time as a dominatrix. But he had been essentially one of the ringleaders in going after women and women's organizations here in Vancouver who didn't agree with transgender ideology.

So at the BC Federation of Labor Convention in 2016, he led efforts to have Vancouver Rape Relief, which is a local transition house and rape crisis center here in Vancouver — Canada's longest-standing rape crisis center actually. And he led efforts to have them blacklisted and defunded at the BC Federation of Labor in 2016, due to this accusation of being transphobic. And of course, they're not transphobic. They just have a woman-only policy. It's a transition house, so they're taking care of women who are escaping really serious male violence. So to me, it makes sense that those kinds of spaces wouldn't allow men in or allow men to counsel the women who are there recovering from this violence. So he blacklisted them, had them defunded at this — so you know, they directed their locals not to fund Vancouver Rape Relief anymore.

He also went after the advertising on my website, Feminist Current. So he went to the ad network SheKnows and told them I was promoting hate and publishing hate speech, which I most certainly was not. And they were like, *Okay, okay*, and pulled their ads. Luckily, we depend mostly on reader donations, and now wholly on reader donations, and we were able to make up the donations when that happened, because I publicized that it happened, so people stepped up and donated, which I really appreciate.

He also started a smear campaign against a local anti-poverty activist here in Vancouver, named Yuly Chan, and had her no-platformed from a conference where she was supposed to talk about her work, which was supporting seniors living in China Town here who were losing their housing due to gentrification. And this was just because she was, you know, friendly with Vancouver Rape Relief and had like retweeted a couple articles from Feminist Current, and he started this massive smear campaign against her and vilified her and had her no-platformed at this conference. And so I tweeted about that. I tweeted what happened. I was just stating facts, and Twitter made me delete all those tweets. And it was really weird, and I was like, what is going on here? I guess this guy has contacts at Twitter or something.

And then after that, in November, Twitter made me delete a tweet saying men aren't women and another tweet asking what the difference is between a trans woman and a man. And then when I got back on, I complained about being locked out, because I was kind of appalled that I wasn't no longer apparently allowed to say that men aren't women on Twitter, and you know, like where in their rules does it say you're not allowed to differentiate between males and females? Like, it's so crazy to me. That tweet went viral at like, 20,000 likes, and then they made me delete that tweet. So they locked down my account again, made me delete that tweet, because obviously they didn't like the bad publicity that they were getting over it.

WOODS: Yeah.

MURPHY: And then finally, on November 23rd, I was out at the bar, so this was at like 10:30 at night, and I get this email saying my account had been suspended. And it was because of this tweet saying, "Yeah, it's him," referring to this man here in the Vancouver area who had been going around asking aestheticians to give him a Brazilian bikini wax, and when they declined and said, "We only offer this service to women," he brought a bunch of them to Human Rights Court, and he essentially tried to extort money out of them. He said that they

discriminated against him, because actually, he was a woman. You know, he has a male name, he goes by a male name, he looks like a man, he hasn't had surgeries, he's not on hormones. Like, he is by all accounts male, but I think that he started trying to use this transgender trend to extort money out of women. And he ended up dropping that case because the defense lawyers discovered some comments from him online which were pedophilic in nature, so he didn't want that information to get out to the media, so he dropped the case.

But the media had been protecting his identity, so he was only being referred to by his initials, which are J.Y. Somebody discovered his real identity and wrote a blog post about it. I tweeted the blog post, asking, is it true that J.Y. is actually so and so, and I think I linked to his Twitter account, where again, he has his male name up there. And then it was confirmed through a screenshot that this was his identity. Somebody had posted a screenshot that was one of his Yelp reviews of a waxing salon, saying, so-and-so did a great job on my wax. It had his face, his name attached, so I tweeted, "Yeah, it's him," with the screenshot. And that's what Twitter suspended me for, I guess, because I mean, I didn't know this at the time because Twitter hadn't informed their users that they had added this new misgendering and dead-naming rule to their terms of service, but I guess they had, and so they suspended me for supposedly misgendering this guy, who again, still goes by his male name online.

WOODS: All right, so the situation —

MURPHY: Sorry, long story.

WOODS: No, no, it's just that this is like a situation that, even five years ago, people couldn't have even understood what you were saying much, much less formed a judgment about it. So now you're — all right, I'm going to try and sort this out. First of all, let's try and be as precise as we can. You used the phrase "transgender ideology," so what I'd like to do is have you explain to me what you understand that to be and what you, by contrast, believe instead.

MURPHY: Right, so when I talk about gender identity ideology or transgender ideology, I'm talking about this idea that I mentioned before, that gender is internal, that it's possible to have a male body but really be a woman on the inside, that maybe feeling — I mean, it's hard to explain, because I find the idea of transgenderism really vague. Like there's no really coherent definition of what transgender means, because according to the transgender movement, it doesn't really have anything to do necessarily with getting a sex change surgery, being on hormones, "living as a woman," in quotations — I don't know what living as a woman means. I think that would be a silly way to define it anyway. But I mean, at least if there were some kind of concrete definition, then we could have a conversation about that definition. But instead, there's no definition, and it's all based on self-identification. So it's like the second that a man says, "I'm a woman," then he's literally female. Like, it's so insane. He could just on Wednesday be a man, and on Thursday say, "I'm a woman," and then we're supposed to all pretend that he's female. So that's what gender identity ideology is. And you know, this belief that if, for example, a man doesn't relate to masculine stereotypes and relates more to feminine stereotypes, he must actually be a woman. So if he likes wearing — you know, like if a boy prefers to wear dresses and play with dolls instead of playing with trucks and playing sports and getting dirty, then he must really be a girl, which I think is a really sexist idea, because I think that boys should be allowed to wear dresses and play with dolls if they want to and that girls should be allowed to like rough house and play with trucks

if they want to. And I don't think that means that they're actually the opposite sex; it just means that that's what they like to do. So yeah, I think that's the crux of it.

WOODS: What would you say, then, are some specific practical ways in which this way of thinking can harm the interests of women?

MURPHY: So I think that if we're saying that a man who declares himself female is literally female, then he's allowed to enter into women and girls' change rooms. He's allowed to access women's transition houses. He's allowed to compete against women in sports. He's allowed to play on women's sports teams. He can be transferred to a female prison. I think these are all pretty dangerous ideas, because I don't think that men should be allowed into women and girls' change rooms. I think that makes women and girls feel unsafe. And these are places where they're in vulnerable positions, and stuff like this has already been happening. There was a case of a man being allowed into a women's homeless shelter, and he was sexually harassing and gawking at the women in showers. And they're suing that homeless shelter, these women.

There was a case in Toronto of this woman named Kristi Hanna, who was in a recovery has for women, so she was recovering from addiction. And they let a man in and forced her to share a room with him, and she felt so uncomfortable. This is – you know, Kristi Hanna, I talked to her in the summer. She's been sexually assaulted a number of times, and she felt really unsafe and triggered by having to share the room with this big, hairy man who looked – I mean, there's nothing wrong with being a big, hairy man; I'm just saying that, you know, he looked like a man. He was obviously a man. And she had to leave and go stay at her sister's house because she couldn't sleep, and she felt so scared and uncomfortable and unsafe.

And there is a case in the UK of a man named Karen White, who had been charged with rape a number of times, and he decided that he was a woman, so they transferred him to a female prison, and almost immediately upon arrival, he assaulted four women. You know, this is having real repercussions for women. And I don't understand why we're putting the delusions and desires and preferences of these few men – you know, there's not that many trans-identified people in the world. This is a very small minority of people, yet we're putting these men's interests and preferences and so-called identity before women's feelings and women's safety and women's – you know, we're letting them into women's spaces, spaces that women built for themselves. You know, transition houses were built and funded by feminists in the '70s. We fought for these spaces, and now all of a sudden, men are allowed in, and women don't feel safe anymore.

WOODS: Do you think this is a case where there are more feminists who agree with you, like way more than are willing to say so because of all the pressure against it?

MURPHY: I think that this is a case where the vast majority of the public agrees with me, for sure. I can tell, well, because I know that most people in the world don't believe that you can literally change sex, because that's ridiculous. But also because I've just received an outpouring of support. I've just received emails, a stream of emails all day, every day since all this kind of blew up in the media from people who are supporting me, and I've not received one negative email. Not even one.

But as far as feminists go, like in terms of the feminists that I'm connected with, yes, for sure. All around the world, we all agree. We're fighting this; there's lots of us. But there's also

people who call themselves feminists — I mean, I would question whether they actually are feminists, because they're defending male predators over women, but I guess you could call them third wave feminists who are really supporting this idea and are really putting these men's interests and desires first and not standing up for women's rights and safety.

WOODS: Your article about the background of the situation mentions that you lost a book contract over this. How did that happen?

MURPHY: Right, so I had been working on a manuscript for almost three years with a local publisher here in Vancouver. It's a critique of third wave feminism, and there are two chapters in it about transgenderism and gender identity legislation. It was not a book specifically about this issue, but yeah, there are two chapters on it. The editors were supportive of my analysis of this. As far as I knew, the publishing house was on board. Nobody had complained to me about my analysis. They'd asked me to make some edits in places around pronouns. They wanted me to avoid using pronouns, because they knew that I wasn't going to call men "she," so they asked me instead to avoid pronouns entirely and to tweak certain areas to kind of be nicer. And you know, I wasn't being mean in the chapters at all. They're pretty tepid, I thought, as far as my writing goes. But I did that. And we got through the last round of edits, and then the publisher, out of the blue — so the owner of the company, who I found out later had had screaming matches with my editor over this, because she was defending me and fought for me, but he sort of went over her head and sent me an email saying that he was dropping my book, because he didn't want to hurt people's feelings.

WOODS: Oh, gosh.

MURPHY: Like, what a reason. And it's one thing if he had brought this up to me a year ago and said, "Hey, listen, I don't know if this is the right fit for us. We don't want to take on this issue." I mean, I think that's a bit cowardly, but that would be one thing. But he never brought it up before. This was totally out of the blue. Like, I was shocked. And that's not a reason to me. And I responded and said, "I'm pretty confused. Like I thought everyone was on board, and I don't understand what about these chapters is hurtful in any way at all." And he just kind of refused to respond. So I think this is like a common thing, where people are just either scared to take this issue on, or they don't really get it, and they sort of just interpret women who don't agree or comply or who challenge or question this ideology as somehow being mean and hateful. And I find it really ironic, actually, because I've received countless violent threats because I've spoken out about this issue, and somehow I'm the one who's called hateful.

WOODS: The last thing I want to go over with you, because I don't want to trespass too much on your time, but, is this phenomenon of right-wingers who took an interest in your story. And it's understandable, because a lot of people on the right have also been accused of being hateful and terrible people because of positions they've taken. And I'm just curious about your response to this, of how you would feel being approached that way, because are — you have to be asking yourself: are these people just trying to use me as a show piece on behalf of causes that I really don't like? Are they trying to harm feminism by showing these divisions? Are they just using me, in other words, or do they sincerely want to hear what I have to say? So what's been your — you know, you're willing to talk to me, which is nice.

MURPHY: I think it's both. I definitely think some of these right-wing media outlets are really excited to see so-called divisions on the left and the left eating itself and all that. They're

really excited that there's a feminist and a leftist who is being attacked by other leftists and some feminists. Obviously, a lot of feminists are supportive of me also. I mean, whether or not they're using me for their own means, I mean, sure, some of them probably are. I don't really care, because I feel like all media is biased and using me for their own means. You know, the mainstream media in Canada has refused to cover this issue or my perspective at all. And when recently they were kind of forced to cover the issue and my perspective because the Vancouver public library where I'm holding an event in January, on January 10th, to talk about this, to talk about the issue of gender identity and women's rights – the Vancouver Public Library issued this statement in response to efforts from trans activists to try to get the event shut down, saying that they weren't going to cancel the booking. I mean, they kind of trashed me and my website in the statement, saying we don't agree with her and sort of positioned me as this horrible person, but also said, no, we're not going to cancel the booking. Like, basically, she has the right to speak about this, even though we hate her [laughing].

WOODS: That's the usual disclaimer.

MURPHY: But so this was covered by the media, and also some trans activists sent this email to the media claiming that I'd cancelled, and a couple media outlets reported on this without double checking with me, which I was pretty surprised by, and so that made the media also. So these media outlets in Canada who'd been avoiding this issue and avoiding covering feminist critiques of gender identity finally covered it, but covered it in this horribly biased way. You know, they totally misrepresented my position. They continue to represent me as hateful and framed what I was saying as hate speech, despite the fact that it's not in any way hate speech; referred to me as a "self-described feminist," despite the fact that I am as feminist as a feminist can get. Like my work has really focused mostly on male violence against women and exploitation of women and girls over the years. But they're using me for their own means too, and the right covered me much more fairly and accurately than these liberal or mainstream outlets, whatever you want to call them did. So I think that all media has some kind of bias and some kind of aim, and the fact that we sort of assume that liberal media is less bias than right-wing media is naive

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, no question about that. Well, have you – I hate to make this like a neat little lesson, but is there anything that this episode has taught you? Have you learned something from it? I mean, obviously the world is somewhat more irrational than you thought it was.

MURPHY: Well, have learned that – and I wrote about this kind of just before I was banned from Twitter and just before all this stuff happened with the event and people trying to get it cancelled. But I learned that the right is not all bad. I learned that the left is definitely not all good. And I already knew that about the left. I mean, I've been in conflict with the left for many years over other issues, particularly the issue of prostitution and pornography. But I find the left to be really cowardly and really hypocritical and it's really failed to stand up for women, and I feel like a lot of people on the left are really just out for themselves, yet they claim otherwise. The left claims to be the side of political ideology that wants social justice and is doing what's right and is most ethical, and that the right is the group that is unethical and self-interested and kind of evil. And it's not true. I mean left-wing people have said horrible, disgusting things about me. I mean, our new mayor, who's supposedly a left-wing guy, publicly referred to me as despicable when he was asked about my event. And this was in light of me getting violent threats, and so he kind of publicly smeared me and contributed

to this vilification that was putting my life in danger just because he was too scared to go up against these trans activists and defend a woman who's just trying to have a conversation about how these ideas and this new legislation could impact women's rights.

So this isn't completely new to me, but it's really reinforced that, and it's opened my mind to talking to people who don't share my politics exactly and who are on a different end of the political spectrum. I don't want to dismiss people just because the left has decided they're right-wing or bad or whatever, because clearly the left is not trustworthy in regard to how they depict people.

WOODS: Well, I'm very interested to hear you say that, and I'll just close with this: as I not quite enter, but let's say start passing through middle age, I still have plenty of energy for polemics, but there's this sentimental part of me that thinks, well, you know, we are all in this together after all, and when I had not quite as severe as what you had, but I've had episodes related to some of my publishing, where people have drawn horrible conclusions who obviously have not read anything written — they looked at the cover, or they heard what somebody else said or something. And in fact, one of my books they said, "I can't believe that there are still people who support wars for oil." Now, every aspect of the book is antiwar. I have no idea where they got this from, except it was a conservative publisher, so they thought that's all they needed to know. This publisher publishes terrible people, so this guy must be terrible. But it made me a little bit slower to attack other people. Like when I would hear somebody else had been accused of something, I would say: all right, now, hold on a minute. I'm going to have to actually see the evidence before I pile on, because I've had this happen to me, and I'm not going to do it to somebody else. Or I'm not going to criticize — which I used to do, I'll be honest with you — I'm not going to criticize books I haven't read, just because I've heard they're terrible. I'm not going to do that. An author is owed more than that, no matter what side of the spectrum the author is on. Writing a book is really hard. You owe the author at least that. So it made me — some of my sappy, sentimental self really started to develop in those years as a result of this.

So tell us about your website.

MURPHY: Right. Yeah, I just want to say, I mean, yeah, I totally I agree with you. And I think that in the past, I've dismissed people without really exploring their ideology and their politics and sort of just was like, "Oh, this person is blah," totally written them off and made some really vapid critique of them. And you know, people do that to me so much. I mean, my critics don't read what I write. These people who are attacking me aren't responding to anything I've actually said.

WOODS: It's like you're telling my story. That's exactly right.

MURPHY: And you can tell, because when you face them, and they try to say, "Oh, well, you think this," and then you say, "I don't think that. I've never said that in my life. What are you talking about?" And it's clear that their entire opinion of you is based on something that somebody else said, like something that they read on Twitter, and they've never even tried to understand what you're actually saying. They're never responding to my actual words. It blows my mind. But so yeah, so I really try not to do that now. I try not to dismiss people or write people off or go along with these — I definitely don't go along with these kinds of attacks that happen online, where some tweet or some quote is taken out of context, often taken out of context. Not always, but often taken out of context.

WOODS: And then everybody piles on.

MURPHY: Everyone is like, "This person is the devil." It's like, I refuse to do that. I don't care what supposedly horrible thing it is. It's like I want to know the whole story before I make a decision or judge that person.

But anyway, so yeah, so my website's Feminist Current, FeministCurrent.com. You can donate there. I'm setting up my Patreon today. I've been meaning to do it for two weeks, but for two weeks straight, I've been doing media interviews all day, every day, so I've had no time. It's brutal.

WOODS: Oh, gosh.

MURPHY: Because I'm hoping to start a YouTube channel, just because I've been meaning to do that for a really long time. It's a different medium. I'm interested in engaging with people in a different way and sort of interested in exploring topics that don't necessarily have to do with feminism. So it's sort of another medium for me to talk about other ideas that I want to talk about outside the context of Feminist Current. And also, you know, now that I'm not on Twitter, I want to be able to reach different audiences in a different way.

WOODS: Sure.

MURPHY: So I'm really hoping I'm going to be able to get that up today. It's been a bit of a learning curve for me trying to figure out how to use the camera and stuff like that. And there's also a petition right now to have my account reinstated on Twitter. I can send you the link, but that's on Change.org, because I'm still wanting to get my account back. I don't suspect that Twitter is going to give me my account back, but I think that they suspended me — I mean, banned me, really — for a reason that doesn't make any sense, but also, even as far as this so-called misgendering rule goes, I didn't misgender anyone, because this guy goes by his male name. So it was really just an attempt to get me offline or off Twitter because I had a huge platform, people were listening to me, and I was criticizing men that they were trying to protect, because these men have some connections at Twitter, you know? It's just a real BS thing that happened [laughing]. So I'm hoping people will still try to support me on that.

WOODS: It sounds like it's a case of trying to make lemonade out of lemons at this point. I mean, they did do something that hurt you, but at the same time, they've given you tremendous publicity. And the question is, can you try and harness that and build something out of that? So the website is FeministCurrent.com. I'll link to it on our show notes page. This is Episode 1301, so it'll be TomWoods.com/1301. Well, best of luck, Meghan, and I enjoyed getting to know you. Thank you.

MURPHY: Thanks so much for having me on. I really appreciate it.