

# Towards a Trans-Inclusive Feminism in our Jewish Communities

While feminism has come in many waves, at its core is the belief that women, like all people, are entitled to equal rights, and to be treated with kavod, with dignity and respect, no matter their gender, background, or sexual identity. Historically though, trans women have been marginalized within feminist movements and efforts, viewed as outsiders rather than integral voices with unique lived experiences.

**True feminist liberation requires dismantling all systems of oppression, including those that police gender identity and expression.** Trans-inclusive feminism acknowledges that the struggle for gender equity must include and uplift transgender women, transgender men, and gender-nonconforming individuals.

## TRANS-INCLUSIVE FEMINISM MEANS....

### Valuing All Women's Safety

Transgender women are women. We will keep repeating that: transgender women are women. Transgender women are being specifically targeted and are currently bearing the brunt of the assault on transgender people in the United States. Again and again, discrimination and violence against transgender women are presented and justified in the name of “protecting [cisgender] women.” But when transgender women are deprived of basic rights, and excluded from women’s spaces, they face significantly higher risks of harassment and assault than cisgender people do by having trans people around them.

Those of us who hold feminist values cannot justify prioritizing the safety of cisgender women over that of transgender women — whether in bathrooms, on sports teams, in domestic violence shelters, or in a synagogue sisterhood. Fearmongering around trans women in women’s spaces is rooted in the same patriarchal myths that have long sought to control and divide women. **Safety is not a zero-sum game, and we must reject the idea that protecting one group of women requires excluding or endangering another.** True feminist solidarity means rejecting exclusionary policies that seek to pit us against one another and harm those who are already placed at highest risk.

### Recognizing that Gender-Based Discrimination and Violence Impact All of Us

Every person has a stake in gender equity, and is negatively impacted by systems that distribute power and safety based on gender. At the same time, each one of us brings a unique experience of our own gender, the ways that our genders intersect with our other identities, and personal stories and lived experiences. A broad-based and effective feminist value system requires that we get real about the stakes for the various communities that make up a movement, and understand how to be in solidarity with one another, particularly when we face different risks.

## Affirming that Trans Rights Are Women's Rights

Core principles of transgender liberation such as self-determination, bodily autonomy, equity, personal dignity, and an end to violence and oppression have long been integral to feminism, even though some iterations of the feminist movement have ignored and, in some cases, opposed trans rights. A values system that holds that “biology is not destiny” must apply this tenet to the right of each person to understand and express their own gender identity free from outside interference and challenge the idea that womanhood is defined solely by biology. **A movement that fiercely fights for the right of each woman to control her own body must fight equally fiercely for the right of each transgender, nonbinary, and intersex person to control their own bodies.**

Conversely, laws restricting the freedoms of transgender people rely on harmful gender stereotypes, often explicitly making the claim that women are delicate, weak, and in need of protection. By supporting trans rights, those of us who hold feminist values actively dismantle the very stereotypes that have been used to justify centuries of gender-based oppression.

## Approaching Gender from a Place of Abundance, Not Limitation

A feminism that is informed by transgender dignity is not simply about the “acceptance” of trans women in feminist spaces, it is about recognizing that the rigid binary gender system oppresses everyone. A rigid binary system presents gender as mandatory, offers two and only two ways to be in the world, and creates a dynamic where each gender must be defined in opposition to the other. **A more abundant approach to gender can be to uplift that there are as many ways to be in the world as there are people, and that each gender can be defined on its own terms rather than as the “opposite” of something else.**

Just as a feminist value system must include and uplift trans women, it must also recognize that trans men and nonbinary individuals are part of the movement. Feminism's goal is gender liberation, not rigid adherence to a binary that punishes those who do not conform. Patriarchal policies and ideas harm trans men and nonbinary people too — through medical discrimination, gendered violence, and systemic erasure. A feminist value system must fight for the rights of all people oppressed by gender-based hierarchies.

**Feminism is at its strongest when it fights for all women — cis and trans alike — while challenging restrictive gender norms for everyone. To be truly inclusive, to live up to its own objectives, those of us who hold feminist values must embrace trans and gender-nonconforming individuals as full stakeholders in the struggle against gender-based oppression. In doing so, feminism does not just expand — it becomes more just and more powerful.**

### References/Further Reading:

- [Towards a Trans Feminism](#), Boston Review
- [We've Always Been Nasty](#), Them
- [Trans Rights Are Women's Rights](#), ACLU
- [5 Things to Make Your Feminism Trans-Inclusive](#), HRC
- [Trump the Feminist Hero?](#), Jill Filopovich
- [Trans Youth and Athletes Belong in Sports](#), Keshet

***"My right to be me is tied with a thousand threads to your right to be you."***  
- Leslie Feinberg