



**“Let the Trans  
Women Speak!”:  
A Response to  
Camp Trans 2010**

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We bitches have frayed nerves. Over the past week, everything, or almost everything, has wounded us, and what didn't was at the very least irritating. What follows is a brief analysis of the events of this year's Camp Trans , and a resulting dialogue on the moments of hostility which have been brought into openness due to these events. We're not shy of conflict, and this is our attempt at elaborating the civil war that underlies the fracturing of Camp Trans:

While the story could likely begin many years ago, it perhaps suffices to say that Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, with its "womyn-born-womyn" attendance policy, was born of a feminist desire to police the bodies to ensure that they were adequately Woman enough to build a positive "sisterhood" away from patriarchy, the political power of which apparently cums from the barrel of a penis. Camp Trans began as a 'community' based in its support of trans women's inclusion into the virulently transphobic festival under the banner "Room for all Kinds of Womyn." It is these legacies that bring us to last week. Conflict begins at the annual vigil at MichFest gates: after being approached to turn his engine off while a history of Camp was being recounted, a tow truck driver threatens two trans people's lives, aggressively misgenders a trans woman, and ultimately wields a large tow chain threatening to kill all of the trans people who had surfaced to protect their friends. MichFest workers act as barriers between Camp-goers and the driver all while commending the him for his valor. All of this, in many ways, is a regular occurrence for those who unthinkably defy the gendered violence of society every day. The basis of conflict lies not in this confrontation, but rather the response of the larger "Camp Trans community" in response to the bashing. Community meetings began with calls to process how those enraged at the bashing were "triggering" to people because of the "aggressive yelling" and "violent energy" of those directly involved in defending their friends against patriarchal violence, a group made up of mostly trans-female identified and genderqueer people. While

those threatened with their lives sought to immediately respond, the community consensus meeting pushed off the question of responding until finally refusing to take up a response because “trans women feel uncomfortable about the situation.” This culminated in a “trans women’s caucus” which stated their intention to assimilate into MichFest and build their own camp there, despite the fact that they had visibly seen trans women almost killed with no response from MichFest. When other trans female campers spoke to voice their indignation about complicity in this violence, another camper yelled, “Let the trans women speak!” This silencing is the context in which we write. While The Voice of the Trans Women has spoken, we, some of the abjected and artificial trans females, remain discursively erased from the conversation in sacrifice to the politics of identity. But we are not shutting the fuck up any longer.

Ultimately, we see the events of this year’s Camp Trans as yet another failure of identity politics and its correlative form, the Community. In the events of this year’s Camp Trans, we once again see community used as an apparatus used to recuperate the potentiality of radical struggle. We watched as the most reactionary and assimilationist trans female voices were said to “speak for most of the trans women at Camp” in wanting to ignore getting bashed and join the festivities of MichFest. Some went as far as saying in the caucus that they “want to pass as women and women are not violent.” Consequently, rumors circulated that those trans female folks espousing a non-pacifist response to being almost bashed to death were secretly “cis men appropriating women’s experiences to justify their violent attitudes.” For us, in the words of an obscure journal from Europe, violence is what has been taken from us, and today we need to take it back, from tow truck drivers and transphobic music festivals and all those who seek to use our bodies as political capital to advance liberal politics.

The stakes of continuing on the line of flight of liberal activism seems clear to us now. Trans activism

has not moved us toward the destruction of gender terror. We have moved from woman-as-womb to woman-as-estrogen-levels and woman-as-peaceful-loving-responses-to-oppression. In this way, Camp Trans represents the new cutting edge of patriarchy, one in which citizens of the Community replace the Patriarch or men as a class as police to quash resistance outside of legal processes and make sure that there is only one resounding Voice of the Trans Women through gender-policing. We remain committed to the struggle to unleash our power on those who would enforce on us the worst forms of gendered violence, be they on the hallowed Land of MichFest or in our own “community.” From now on, the only force that stands a chance at ruining the forces which ruin our lives is one built on friendship, affinity, and shared desires to end domination. Fuck gender essentialism, recuperative consensus meetings, privileged feminist pacifism, and those apparatuses or people who seek to speak for any of us on behalf of women or trans people or anything. We will demolish it all. We’re mean bitches, we have our own voices and from now on we will only be speaking our own power or nothing at all. Get with us or get the fuck out of the way.