

'It isn't hate to speak the truth': J.K. Rowling takes a stand against gender ideology, and we should stand with her

J.K. Rowling, the author of the bestselling "Harry Potter" book series, is the target of massive social media attacks for the second time in six months. Her social media sin? A witty tweet noting that the word for "people who menstruate" is "women," followed by a bold essay insisting "sex is real" and only females are women. She also tweeted: "If sex isn't real, there's no same-sex attraction. If sex isn't real, the lived reality of women globally is erased. I know and love trans people, but erasing the concept of sex removes the ability of many to meaningfully discuss their lives. It isn't hate to speak the truth."

Six months earlier, Rowling inflamed the Twitter-verse by defending Maya Forester, a female researcher in the U.K. who lost her job for insisting that "sex is real" and "transwomen are men." An employment court ruled that Forester's "absolutist view that sex is immutable" was "not worthy of respect in a democratic society." For these transgressions, Rowling has been verbally flayed and figuratively burned at the stake. She is the ongoing object of mob hatred, the recipient of vile threats and pornographic messages. To her credit, Rowling refuses to back down and insists she will not be silenced.

She writes in a lengthy essay defending her position that "we're living through the most misogynistic period I've experienced. Back in the 80s, I imagined that my future

daughters, should I have any, would have it far better than I ever did, but between the backlash against feminism and a porn-saturated online culture, I believe things have got significantly worse for girls. Never have I seen women denigrated and dehumanised to the extent they are now. ... I want trans women to be safe. At the same time, I do not want to make natal girls and women less safe. When you throw open the doors of bathrooms and changing rooms to any man who believes or feels he's a woman – and, as I've said, gender confirmation certificates may now be granted without any need for surgery or hormones – then you open the door to any and all men who wish to come inside. That is the simple truth.”

She continued: “I refuse to bow down to a movement that I believe is doing demonstrable harm in seeking to erode ‘woman’ as a political and biological class and offering cover to predators like few before it.”

What movement is she talking about? And why is it worth paying such a high price to oppose it? These are critical questions, for Rowling's experience has significance far beyond the rise and fall of one celebrity's reputation.

The “movement” Rowling references is the transgender movement, which monitors (and often dominates) public gender conversations and wields significant cultural power, pressuring corporations and policymakers to promote transgender rights and squelch rebellious outbreaks of “wrongthink,” as Rowling puts it.

By and large, the transgender movement is succeeding, with particularly devastating effects for women and adolescents. Public discourse is infected [with new gender identity terms](#) that corrupt the meaning of words such as “girl” or “woman.” Laws and practices designed to protect female safety, privacy and opportunity are being dismantled brick by brick. Transgender ideology is [promoted in schools the English-speaking world](#), confusing children with the lie that they

might be “born in the wrong body.” Small wonder that the number of confused children and adolescents has skyrocketed. In the U.K., Rowling’s country, the number of girls in treatment for “gender dysphoria” (distress from a perceived mismatch between body and identity) has risen an astounding 4,400% in recent years. Young adults such as Keira Bell, who identified as transgender in her teens, are duped into taking cross-sex hormones or undergoing double mastectomies, only to regret those decisions in adulthood. Men who identify as women bully their way into women’s sports (dominating because of superior strength and speed) and into women’s private spaces (restrooms, locker rooms, clubs). The final insult to women comes from men who self-identify as women: They claim the unilateral right to define who really “is” a woman (and those who disagree are labeled bigots).

Given the risks, why would Rowling – or any of us – speak the truth? After all, the facts speak for themselves. As biologist Colin Wright explains: “The nature of biological sex ... is connected to the distinct type of gametes (sex cells) that an organism produces. As a broad concept, males are the sex that produce small gametes (sperm) and females produce large gametes (ova). There are no intermediate gametes, which is why there is no spectrum of sex. Biological sex in humans is a binary system.” We need to speak up, however, because even obvious truths are now contested. Wright notes that as “more and more people refer to themselves as trans, nonbinary, two-spirited and gender-nonconforming, there’s been a push to realign the objective reality of biological sex to match one’s subjectively experienced gender identity ... the very notion of males and females existing as real biological entities is now seen as obsolete.”

Catholics should be deeply disturbed by these developments. The transgender movement’s rapid redefinition of what it means to be a human person – who we are – threatens our culture, religious freedom and human flourishing. Denying that we are

creatures wholly dependent upon God, gender ideology envisions the person as autonomous and self-defining; a person's identity is self-determined, regardless of biological sex, by subjective feelings ("gender identity") of being masculine, feminine, both or neither. Unlike Christian anthropology, which understands the human person as a unity of body and soul, gender ideology asserts that only the person's will matters. The body is merely a thing to be used or manipulated as one desires. The end result, according to Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*, is a "global war" on the family, because by denying sexual difference, gender ideology eliminates "the anthropological basis of the family" (No. 56).

The stakes could not be higher. This is more than a war of words. J.K. Rowling certainly deserves our support for her courage, but it is most important that she not stand alone. Let us pray for the courage to join together in a brave witness to the truth about who we are. Be not afraid!

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