

Arguing on Behalf of Trans Schoolkids

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by Kilian Melloy

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A UK journalist wrote of the problems faced by transgendered school children, saying that, "If the human rights of gay and lesbian children in our schools are... routinely ignored, then the rights of transgendered children are not even recognized as existing."

Phil Beadle wrote on the subject in a Feb. 17 article that appeared in the British newspaper The Guardian.

Beadle went on to describe how his attention was drawn to the problems transgendered kids deal with by Natacha Kennedy, a former school teacher who herself is transgendered.

Beadle explained his general theme, writing, "As Debra Davis, of the Gender Education Center in the US, says, gender is only simple 'if you're an earthworm'."

Beadle continued, "Transgenderism is a catch-all term that, broadly, encompasses anyone whose gender identity does not unambiguously match that which they have been assigned."

Added Beadle, "Transgendered does not automatically mean transsexual.

"The vast majority (95%) live in the role of the gender other than that which they have been assigned, without ever considering gender reassignment surgery, but the fact that the average age of someone choosing such surgery has been consistently and for some time 42 years of age suggests that many spend a substantial proportion of their adult lives suppressing their transgenderism."

Beadle noted that one estimate places the number of transgendered people in the general population at 1%, which translates to about 10 transgendered children in a larger school.

Wrote Beadle, "Whereas gay, lesbian and bisexual children may come to

a realized understanding of their difference post-puberty, transgendered children often come to this awareness before they are eight years of age."

Beadle quoted Kennedy as saying, "Bullying of transgendered children is utterly vicious and is completely ingrained in our culture."

Wrote Beadle, "And what is the result of such bullying?"

"Unhappiness, loneliness and suicide attempts."

Beadle went on to cite a representative from the support group, Mermaids, which provides resources to transgendered children and teenagers and their families.

She said, "A number of our children have made attempts on their own lives, thankfully unsuccessful."

But not always, wrote Beadle, referencing the case of a 10 year old boy, Cameron McWilliams, who killed himself by hanging.

McWilliams, Beadle noted, had sought to be allowed to use makeup and girls' clothing.

Kennedy said that, "there is no effective recognition of the problems that transgendered children face.

"Most of them are aware they are transgendered for most, if not all, of their time in school.

"Most leave as soon as they can because in the school system, which demands that they show respect and tolerance for other minority groups, they are not tolerated themselves by others," added Kennedy, who advises that schools have an obligation to provide life-saving education.

"What transgendered children need is for their teachers to talk to their classes about transgenderism and its problems, even if there may not be a transgendered child in the class," said Kennedy.

"Those who are in the classes need to know that they are OK. They are not freaks. They have rights. And there are many others like them."

Citing a law to categorically protect citizens from prejudice based on

race, religion, sexuality, gender, and other factors, Beadle wrote that the bill would not extend similar protections to transgendered Britons, and called for that oversight to be corrected.

A profile on Kennedy hosted by the Guardian Web site noted that Kennedy "has been transgendered since she was very young and now campaigns on trans issues."

The profile added, "An academic at London University, she researches the cultural and social effects of information technology."

Beadle noted that teachers looking for materials on transgendered kids could log onto Kennedy's Web site.

Kilian Melloy reviews media, conducts interviews, and writes commentary for EDGEBoston, where he also serves as Assistant Arts Editor.

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