



# SCOTTISH LESBIANS

Dear Directors of Glasgow Women's Library,

We are writing to you with our concerns about Glasgow Women's Library's response to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the related 16 Days of Activism campaign. We also wish to raise concerns about GWL's current approach to collecting, archiving, and exhibiting grassroots feminist campaign materials.

Two members of Scottish Lesbians visited GWL on Saturday, 25th November, having registered to visit the exhibition of placards. This event had been promoted as being about the 16 Days of Activism, and we therefore expected to see a strong focus on materials from groups working to eliminate violence against women and girls.

We were greeted at the exhibition by a woman who introduced herself as [staff member] and said she was the library's [redacted]. She said that the exhibition contained trans rights placards, reproductive rights placards and placards calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

There was indeed a strong focus on these issues, with the trans rights placards taking the central focus in the exhibition, both in number and in prominence in the display. There were some reproductive rights placards placed less prominently at one side of the room, and [staff member] informed us that many of these had been made by the Cabaret Against Hate Speech group.

We are, of course, as grassroots activists, aware of the Cabaret Against Hate Speech, as they turn up regularly to protest against feminist events with the aim of closing down discussion and preventing women from gathering. Our most recent experience of CAHS was at FiLiA, an international feminist conference held in Glasgow in October. Tom Harlow, and other members of CAHS, stood outside the conference (having narrowly failed to prevent it from taking place at all), screaming 'Fuck You' at women attending the conference. This was a conference attracting female delegates from many different nations, many of whom are experts in working to eliminate violence against women and girls, and it was a shameful moment for Glasgow when they were verbally abused by males on their way into the conference.

Other placards on display in GWL's exhibition were taken from protests held by CAHS and others outside Edinburgh University, when CAHS led the crowd in shouting misogynist and ageist insults at women who were there to attend a screening of *Adult Human Female*, a film which addresses women's rights in relation to transgender ideology. This screening was cancelled. Regardless of your stance on sex and gender debates, it is apparent that Tom Harlow and CAHS achieve their aims through intimidation of women, and by attempting to disrupt and close down debate.

It is completely shocking for us as feminists that Glasgow Women's Library chose to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by providing a further platform to a group characterised by male aggression towards women. It is difficult to see this as anything other than deliberate provocation, which is unfathomable given GWL's history, origins and purpose.

We asked [staff member] about the absence of feminist placards in the display. She said that GWL had many feminist materials but that this exhibition was focused on recent material. We asked about materials from current feminist campaigning groups including those with gender critical beliefs. [Staff member] indicated that there were a few things from such groups within GWL, but added, twice, 'they don't align with our values'.

The website of Glasgow Women's Library states, 'we hold a wonderful treasure trove of historical and contemporary artifacts and archive materials that celebrate the lives, histories and achievements of women. From Suffragette memorabilia and 1930s dress making patterns to rare 1970s Scottish Women's Liberation newsletters, it's all here!'. Further, it states, 'Empowering women is one of our key aims. We have grown from a small grassroots project into the main hub for information by, for and about women'.

We have serious concerns about the dissonance between GWL's status as 'the main hub for information by, for and about women' and the assertion that feminist and women's rights groups are not aligned with GWL values. We are appalled at the celebration of the work of men who employ intimidating practices such as shouting obscenities at women and taking individual photographs of women arriving at events.

We request clarification of GWL's policies on collecting, archiving and displaying materials 'by, for and about women', and any exclusion criteria in operation in respect of these policies. We seek an explanation of how GWL is working to fulfil its remit as 'the main hub of information' for women, given that the exhibition on Saturday can clearly be seen as an insult to women campaigning for the elimination of violence against women and girls.

With regards,



Lesbians Denied  
Women Voting with our Feet (Sole Sisters)