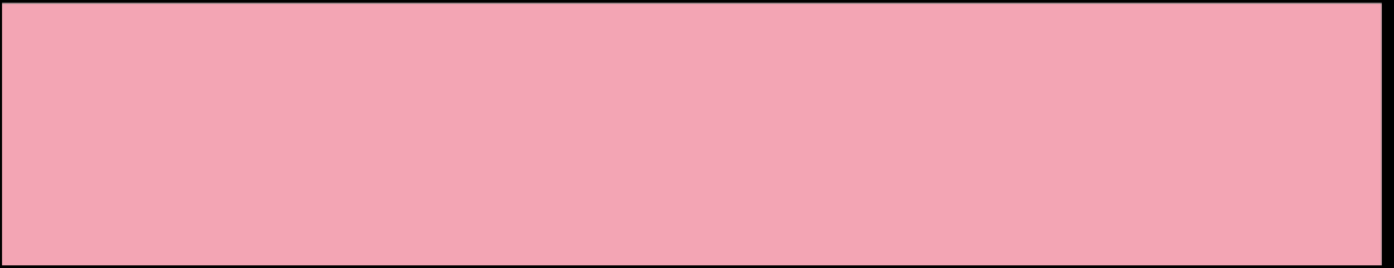


EQUALITY



MANIFESTO



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EQUALITY MANIFESTO

Dedicated to all Trans People Whom We Have Lost in our Fight for Equality

Happy 18 June, The Day of Equality with Trans People!

June 18 is the day that marks the regulation proposed by the World Health Organization in 2018 to remove trans existences from the category of illness. Having been deemed as a “mental health disorder” and medicalized for so many years, our existence began to be recognized not as an illness anymore by health authorities on June 18, once again as a result of the fight that we ourselves, trans people, have waged.

This turning point came 28 years after yet another symbolic date, May 17, 1990, which is now celebrated as the day of the fight for sexual orientation. It is important for us to mark both dates to embrace the history of all trans existences. We also think that the practice of “travel in equal”, that was delayed for so many years, mirrors this long road that we needed to travel in our fight for gender identity. For this reason, we announce that we will rearticulate the demands for equality by trans people on each and every anniversary of June 18, the day that we will commemorate as “The Day of Equality with Trans People”!

We would like to remind you of the fact that we have actually been entitled to this reclaimed equality ever since we were born and that no authority can deny any single LGBTI+ individual, regardless of whether inside or outside of binarism, this equality. We recognize the fight that each and every trans person has been waging since they were born as the history of our movement, as we have already declared in our “Trans Manifesto” which we published together back in 2012, adding it as an achievement to our trans movement that has existed ever since humanity came to existence! We are proclaiming our existence which has repeatedly been brought to agenda with the terms “solidarity”, “commemoration”, and “fight” by raising our demand for equality: No one is equal, nor is anyone’s life valued, unless they become equal with trans people!

**For this reason, we announce that we will commemorate
July 18 as “The Day of Equality with Trans People”
every year and rearticulate the demands
for equality by trans people!**

You ought to recognize trans existences!

“Everyone is equal before the law without distinction as to language, race, color, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such grounds. No privilege shall be granted to any individual, family, group or class. State organs and administrative authorities are obliged to act in compliance with the principle of equality before the law in all their proceedings.”

Why is it that the fight for constitutional equality has been ongoing for many years even though Article 10 of the Constitution, which legally concerns every single person living and institution established within the borders of the Republic of Turkey, states that everyone is equal? Even when every single person comes to our mind when the term “everyone” is uttered in Turkish, unfortunately, the concept of “everyone” formed by legal authorities, bureaucratic authorities, and State institutions does not denote every single person as such. It is obvious that the trans people are not a part of this notion of “everyone”. How else could we explain the fate of those trans people who have been subjected to arbitrary condemnations, thrown out of hospitals, made to face discrimination in police stations and court halls, excluded from the mechanisms of justice in spite of the statement “State organs and administrative authorities are obliged to act in compliance with the principle of equality before the law in all their proceedings”? How are we to explain that when finally the Law Against Hate Crimes is passed, thanks to the years long struggle of LGBTI+ activists, sexual orientation and gender identity-based hate is consciously left out of the bill? This is exactly why, for such reasons, our fight for constitutional equality continues. It can only be through a radical transformation that the disregard, as well as the practices and mentality of violence, of the State change. One of the important steps for this is a constitutional recognition of sexual orientation and gender identity which binds everyone. If you are referring to being equal before the law, you then ought to stop taking it for granted that everyone is cisgender and instead recognize trans existences.

In one of its resolutions, the Constitution refers to equality before the law as follows:

“(…) Equality before justice does not pertain to all of the citizens’ being subject to the same provisions in all aspects. One cannot assume the breach of the rule of equality before the law in situations where the subjection of certain citizens to other provisions is based on a justifiable reason. It is an apparent fact that there are quite a few differences between persons due to their dispositions or work capacity or health or any other qualitatively equivalent reason. (...)”

**We are not equal.
YOU WILL BECOME EQUAL WITH TRANS PEOPLE.**

You owe each of us a life!

Even though trans existence ceased to be categorized as an illness -on the very same day homosexuality did-, there is only one thing to say when we consider where we stand in the fight for trans rights today: “Your debt is due!”

The current practices in healthcare were molded in a not so distant past when medicine was ingrained with societal norms. The fact that these practices are still widely accepted and performed today, that these practices are an enormous obstacle standing in the way of people’s endeavor to express their own gender identity is not hard to grasp. It must be considered an obligation to recognize the fact that when submerged in social norms, medicine as a scientific discipline is discriminatory! Medicine as a branch of science does not, should not, and cannot have the authority to dictate humans as social existences how to express themselves to become a part of the society through the means of a binary sexual system, parading in social and political ideologies!

The long-lasting medical approach to being trans as a disorder has not served anything but the consolidation of the ungrounded social bias that views trans people as “sick and deviated”. This has only led to the weakening of the fight of trans people, who strive to survive and to stand on their feet. The stories of all our friends who have been subjected to violence, bullying, marginalization, misconceptions of the self, and ultimately pushed to suicide or murdered up until today, are with us.

Those who hold the authority in the world of medicine, those who exert this authority to dictate the society what to do and what to say – yes, you owe each and every one of us a life! Each and every life that we couldn’t live, that you snatched from us, is to haunt you back, don’t you ever forget!

Those who have been accepted to be authorities by the society, simply because they are doctors – keep in mind that the day you dared to deem us “sick”, you have become a cog in the wheel of violence inflicted on us!

Our families kicked us out of our homes because we were “sick”! We could not attend school because we were “sick”! They didn’t employ us because we were “sick”! We could not become equal with the healthy ones before the law because we were “sick”! We spent our lives in prison because we were “sick”! We were subjected to violence because we were “sick”! We were forced to complete suicide because we were “sick”! We were murdered because we were “sick”!

**Each and every life that we couldn’t live, that you snatched from us,
will haunt you back, don’t you ever forget!**

Being trans does not only mean initiating the gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process by rejecting an assigned gender and declaring the opposite gender identity. A trans person might wish to undergo a surgical operation – or not. Trans identities cannot be confined to a single norm of existence.

In today's world, trans people who wish to proceed with the process and undergo surgical operation are facing quite many hardships. One of the leading hardships is the fact that the state insurance system does not cover the bills and control all stages of the process. Today, a person who begins the process is forced to cover a variety of costs ranging from the hormones they are supposed to take to laser epilation, from hair transplantation to a number of surgical operations not covered by state insurance. Operations supposedly covered by state insurance, on the other hand, get persons entangled into a cycle without options due to limited number of medical doctors who perform these operations, leaving them at the hands of doctors who have turned these surgical operations into a source of economic gain, demanding astronomical sums of money. Granting opportunity to those persons with money to realize themselves, the system, however, deprives those without money from existing. It is an indispensable need that the medical procedures be revised to allow everyone to benefit from healthcare and to grant equal opportunities for everyone!

Countless trans people all around the world are victimized by a system woven by law and medicine, solely in order to be recognized officially, accepted by the society, and remain alive. In Turkey gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process is “guaranteed” by the State via laws just as in many other countries, continuing, however, to be a corrupt system that is devoid of humanitarian practices, that has to change and yet resists change. In certain cases, transsexual persons unwillingly sacrifice their bodily integrity in the name of letting themselves exist. Law and medicine keep on resisting perpetually in order to force persons to comply with the binary gender system as if they are unaware of existential diversity, to imprison them in one single norm, and to still keep their oppressive hands on us.

Trans people at times end up being forever deprived of reproductive capacity, using the wrong drugs under the name of hormone therapy, and being pushed to surgical operations they themselves do not desire, just to be able to change that oppressive sex marker in their ID cards or to simply get rid of the discriminatory and marginalizing attitudes that they experience. Basing the binary gender system on a vagina and a penis, the ruling mentality imposes on trans people the processes that are supposedly easy, without letting them know how hard these processes are and how costly they can be. They are basically trying to make all of us “eligible” for a vagina or a penis. We then repeat, “The diversity of trans existences cannot be denied!”

Trans people are humans and trans rights are human rights. Trans people do not have to live for anybody's perception of eligibility! With trans existences having been excluded from the mental health disorder category, the laws that regulate the gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process should be rearranged in a way that is compatible with human dignity. This rearrangement should reinstate the freedom of trans people to determine their own existences, basing this reinstatement of freedom on their personal statements in all fields of life.

The compulsory psychiatric reporting necessary for the permission of the surgical operations that persons wish to undergo with their own consent within the scope of the gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process should be abandoned without further delay. The compulsory sterilization practice hidden in the legal definition “operations compatible with medical aims and methods” should come to an end at once. All the procedures and items necessary for the

gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process should be made available free of charge for the trans people as a part of the state insurance coverage.

While struggling against all the negative consequences of the healthcare system and medicine, trans people do not encounter any justice mechanism protecting them. The irreversible harms that might occur in persons' bodies and even possible deaths within the scope of the gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process are assessed as "complications", eliminating the possibility of legal procedures on the way to seek one's rights. One cannot even ask anyone to account for the negligence or the mistake on the part of medicine. The lack of trust in justice does not only keep persons from fighting against the rights violations that they undergo during the gender reassignment (gender transition/body construction) process. Trans people many times opt for remaining at home and recuperating upon diagnosing themselves, instead of resorting to a health institution, even when they catch flu. They can take the risk of dying instead of going to hospital and trying to benefit from their rights that are supposedly guaranteed by the State, that they are entitled to have simply for being humans, due to the maltreatment and discrimination by the health system that they want to benefit from.

All those working within the health system that mistreat, discriminate, or inflict violence on us are responsible for these deaths, and all the judicial organs that, as reflectors of justice, refrain from imposing deterrent sentences on these persons are supporters of their deadly acts. The lack of trust in justice is not only a deepening ditch standing in the way of trans people trying to voice themselves against this injustice; it is also a large abyss diminishing their capacity to fight against rights violations that they face in every aspect of their lives. This abyss is the system itself. We thus repeat, "Take your hands off of us! We did exist, we do exist, and we will continue to exist."

It is an urgent need that a compulsory course on gender issues be integrated into the curriculum of all relevant university departments that have ties with the medical and judicial systems. The students who will in future hold positions of power within these systems should be educated to prevent negative consequences of prejudice and bias... Deterrent and equitable legal sanctions should be imposed on all those persons who perform unfair practices during their careers in the medical system.

Health insurance is a right, and we demand this right in the name of all our trans friends, living or deceased, to whom this right has been denied from past to present. We ask the medical system, which is claimed to be for everyone, to be more easily accessible, safe, comprehensive, and free of charge for ourselves, too!

**Trans people are humans and trans rights are human rights.
Trans people do not have to fit their lives in
anyone's perception of eligibility!**

We do not owe anything to anyone, yet we are owed so much!

There is a place, a home, where everybody wants to live. If we are to search for homes, then we decide what kind of place we want to live in and rent or buy the one that fits our criteria and budget. It shall have a comfy bathroom, a large kitchen, and a living room from where one can watch seagulls fly.

Life has been planned in such a cis-centric way that one lives by having no idea about the great transphobia and the most pejorative agenda concerning trans people. If you are a trans person, the whole process of access to accommodation does not work merely according to your budget, nor is it the criteria that determines the location of your future home. You need to first find a real estate agent who will not slam the door on your face, then find a neighborhood where you can live and minimize the violence that you might be subjected to, and then find a homeowner who might rent out their home to you, and then get yourself accepted by your neighbors in the block, and in the meantime pay around almost double the rent that has been announced to be the standard for everybody else. If you have completed all these stages successfully, now you can do criteria evaluations concerning all the remaining options before you. You can ask someone else to rent an apartment on your behalf; but then you will inevitably become dependent on that person. The story still does not come to an end even when you succeed in renting an apartment. The State might show up anytime and seal your home even despite the court decisions, in a totally unlawful manner.

The situation is even worse for older and refugee trans people. All the services and opportunities claimed to be for “EVERYONE” by the State do not apply when it is about trans people. The doors of women’s shelters and nursing homes are not being opened to trans people. Furthermore, the handful of such places that exist are being closed down. Turkey’s first and only trans shelter Eylül Cansin Trans Guest House was closed down, CLOSED DOWN. It was left without budget and vacated. Since a new place was not allocated to the guest house, old people, migrants, refugees, and disadvantaged people were thrown out on the streets without any remorse whatsoever. When it comes to the liabilities of trans people, however, they are taken care of without a moment of delay, of course. Taxes are collected, trans people are expected to abide by the rules of the society, they are warned to not pose a threat to the order and, unsurprisingly, they are told they should never forget that they owe a lot to this society. We say it once again: We do not owe anything to anyone. And yet this social order, this life owes us so much. This social order will be disrupted. We will not bow down to what is imposed on us in the name of the “rules of the society”. These rules will be revised together with us.

Trans people are still not being employed!

You owe us equality. You owe equality to each and every trans person that you have pushed out of the daily life through systematic discrimination and the violence for which you are responsible, as you kept silent, ignored, and remained a bystander in the face of this violence. We struggle to survive and to exist in all these realms of life you invaded, we struggle by fighting, by making love and simply by resisting. For our struggle, you owe it to us to use the power, granted to you by your position you are so proud of, to provide the positive discrimination in employment for us. You owe it us to stand silent in a corner or clear the path for us while we struggle. You owe it to us to create venues where trans people can express themselves freely, and building safe spaces for them so that they do not face discrimination and harassment while they struggle.

Trans people are not employed today. They are made to confront working conditions which are far removed from an understanding of equality even when they are employed. Their labor is ignored, many times they end up having to work under indecent working conditions at jobs they do not wish to do, as they are forced to show a much better performance than any cisgender worker, to get promotion or just to remain employed.

We will reclaim the realms of life you have invaded, in the name of each and every trans person that were expelled forever from a field that they yearned for by being traumatized during the employment phase, alienated from the work that they enjoyed doing due to mobbing based on their identities, or subjected to heteronormative and cissexist harassment the whole day in their offices. We will scream from the bottom of our lungs for each and every trans person who has been a victim of cissexist violence. We did exist, do exist, and will exist!

The world keeps turning, trans existences keep thriving!

“Think good, and it will be good,” “There is no impossible,” “You can do everything if you work hard enough,” “See, it turns out that you should have strived more,” “See, he made it against all odds” – these are all but phrases of motivation and consolation that have long stuck to our tongues, reigning the most reflexive corners of our minds and not even requiring any effort to contemplate on, or remember for that matter, to let out of our mouths any longer... THE GRAND ILLUSION. Just imagine, for a moment, a migrant or a refugee who had to flee their homeland just because they are trans. Have them stand against you face-to-face, remember and articulate the very phrases of motivation and consolation. “It ended up bad because you thought bad,” “You could not continue with your study because you did not study enough,” “If you had strived enough then you could have been residing in a safe place now,” “You’re in this situation because you are not successful enough.” How positive these phrases were, and yet how violent they are. Let’s now correct this mistake. It has always been all those cisgender (non-trans) people who sat at the desk where you were supposed to sit; this is because you have been subjected to the bullying of your peers since the very first day when you felt willing to study. You have been subjected to domestic violence. Everyone and everything, from the lecturer to the security officer, from the restrooms to the locker rooms, were designed to have you excluded and were designed only for your cisgender peers. You could not pursue education because you were pushed away from all the opportunities of scholarship within the grand lie of equality. You needed to work, and yet you were not employed.

You wanted to shut yourself in your room to study for the exams, you wanted to do your homework but you could neither seek accommodation in the dormitories, nor did all those flourishing real estate agents open their doors to you. What else do we need to hear and see to accept that there are children who cannot study because they are trans in the times when even the mere articulation of the fact that trans children exist can create such a commotion?

You persecuted children all the time while you kept chanting “The future belongs to children,” “Children are innocent,” “Children are sinless,” “Children are angels,” etc. Deny it as much as you can – the world keeps turning and trans existences keep thriving. Some of those children you persecuted have already grown up, calling you to account for what you did. Turn a deaf ear to the facts, shut your eyes to them; you won’t be able to prevent the facts from hitting you in the face, however. Those days of finding shelter in the lie of equality are long over, and the process of becoming equal has just been kicked off for real. Equality is when persons having the same conditions are treated the same. Cisgender people have not asked even for a second, “What if I need to use the restroom?” on the one hand, and trans students who are compelled to ask this question every time they need to

use the restroom on the other, do not live under the same conditions. Cisgender students who use public transport and have their transport card punched without any reservation whatsoever on the one hand, and trans students who try to go on living with the constant anxiety of what they might encounter on the street every day on the other, do not live under the same conditions. Cisgender people who pass through checkpoints freely on the one hand, and trans people who are exposed to condescending arguments each time security officers stop and search on the other, do not live

We are not equal. YOU WILL BECOME EQUAL WITH TRANS PEOPLE.

It's time to play the leading role!

We are fed up with the false representations of your media. Your ways of representing us are expressions of your hatred and transphobia.

For many years the pages of your newspapers backed the hatred with each and every word and phrase that targeted us and legitimized the actions of the perpetrators, reproducing discrimination again and again. The “I thought she was a woman but found out she was a transvestite” news of yours have denied the womanhood of trans women, normalized hate crimes, and legitimized the perpetrators. Perpetrators either enjoyed impunity or benefited from remissions thanks to your words and phrases. You presented our self-defense as “transvestite horror”. You transmitted the transphobic and moralistic policies of the ruling power to your third page news.

You allowed no space to trans people before the camera, nor behind it. Cisgender actors played trans characters in your series and movies, receiving compliments and awards as “they looked so trans,” when in fact trans people and trans actors could have played these roles.

You occupied our space. You exhibited your transphobia with the excuse of being “realistic” (not to mention who actually finds it realistic!). In your stories trans people either became victims of assaults and murders or completed suicide, playing the leading roles of sad-ending movies or becoming objects of ridicule. You victimized trans sex workers by confining them into the stereotype of forced sex work.

The new media with the claim of democratization, i.e. social media, has mediated in the digitalization of the hardships that trans people experience in their daily lives, the language of violence against trans people, hate speech and threats, all the while perpetuating them in another venue. You did not take the necessary and sufficient measures to prevent these from happening.

We are now disclosing, solving, and deconstructing your discourse that marginalizes, criminalizes, and victimizes us through our genuine media. We will expand further our media network and solidarity. We are building safe spaces where we will be able to produce and exhibit our own reality and tell our strong stories, reclaiming our spaces that you have long occupied. Transvestites exist, trans people exist, trans actors exist, trans directors exist! It is high time trans people and their stories played the leading role in all venues, in line with the equality principle, and with the right discourse!

Another feminism is possible!

The history of feminist struggle has been carved into memories as the history of freedom against the powerful, the dominant, the ruling. Concerned with the freedom of all women who are targets of patriarchy, this struggle reveals day after day the possibility of another world.

Despite this practice, there is an understanding among certain feminisms that instills the trans-exclusive and transphobic construct of cis-heteropatriarchy, which does not want to give up on its cisgender privileges, right in the heart of feminism. This understanding contradicts the very history and methods of the feminist struggle.

Displaying itself as cis-feminism, this understanding establishes power by carrying cisgender-supremacist attitude into the feminist struggle, transforming into the opposite of feminism when it is about trans people.

Trying to ooze into the feminist struggle, this understanding undermines the ground on which this struggle has been built so far, paving the path to a cis-feminism that allies itself with cis-heteropatriarchy which is the source of hatred, violence, discrimination, and phobia.

Excluding trans people from the feminist struggle and aiming to widen the gap between the trans and feminist movements, this approach serves to weaken both movements in their fight against cis-heteropatriarchy.

Despite all the trans-exclusive constructs, a feminism that does not question the agency of trans people is possible. Another feminism is possible.

A feminism with no room for the cis-heteropatriarchal language of violence is possible. A feminism where all feminisms thrive with their differences, learn from one another, gain further depth, and increase feminist opportunities, is possible. Building a new feminist world where all the constructs through which cis-heteropatriarchy flourishes are eliminated is possible.

It is possible to build a future where the feminist method will be improved, and where there will be no violence, discrimination, cisgender supremacy, and transphobia, only if we get together, contact one another, and develop practices of self-criticism.

This is what trans people believe in, and they do, and will keep on doing, their best to make the approach of “the transphobic cannot be feminist” into one of the main principles of feminism.

Violence against trans people are not thunderbolts striking from clear skies!

The totality of the time period that humans as a biological species and a social existence with personality go through since birth till death within the linear course of the universe can be termed as “life”. The course of life, as well as all the actions that a person experiences throughout this course, can be defined as “living” or “to live”.

Having brought about countless discussions in many realms such as the philosophical, the religious, and the legal since the primeval ages of humanity till today, the right to life is dealt with on a universal scale and manifests itself as the most basic right of humans.

It is only with reference to the right to life in the first place that one can debate the use of other rights and liberties. However, one can observe, when one examines the history of humanity, that there have been many obstacles posed before the uniqueness of the right to life, and that these obstacles have obliterated the right to life, i.e. the most basic right that a person is endowed with. It becomes a critical obstacle before the right to life for those who don't rule when those who rule think they rightfully enjoy the authority to determine the limits of living and exert this authority on the lives of the former.

In this epoch we live in, where social sovereignty has been accumulated and collected in the center, those who rule reflect themselves in accordance with the quality of the social stratum over which they have established superiority. When one tries to define those who rule, who have established superiority over persons with trans experiences, one is confronted with a comprehensive definition. The definition will be further crystallized when other social identities other than trans ones, all of whom they exert power on, are taken into account. Indeed, all humans find themselves in the position of rule when non-human beings and the nature become the focus.

Concerning persons with trans experiences, those who rule manifest themselves as a man living in harmony with the sex assigned to him at birth and having heterosexual orientation. All persons and institutions that hold these features think they can exert power on trans persons to the extent that they hold these features, organizing the praxis of everyday life in accordance with this thought. Those who rule, who can be defined as cis-heteropatriarchy and whose scope can be widened to include cisgender supremacy or not having any trans experience, are snatching from the hands of trans people the right to life, i.e. the most basic and unique right a human is known to be endowed with.

Establishing hegemony over and exerting pressure on trans people, those who rule manifest themselves in rather diverse forms in the praxis of everyday life. The cis-heteronormative pressure and the tools of those who rule against LGBTI+ can be observed in all fields of life. The phobic and discriminatory attitude of law enforcement officers (police, watchmen, etc.) constitutes the oppressive side of pressure. The fact that judicial practices are based on the same construct poses an enormous obstacle before access to justice. Education, health, workforce market, routine of everyday life, transphobic atmosphere of the streets – all of these exhibit the embodiment of those who rule bottom-up and the transphobic construct of this embodiment.

Life, or living, is not only about breathing in and out by oneself, nor is it about providing opportunities to the body to perform all of its activities of liveliness. What matters here is the safety of life and sustaining life in a decent manner.

It is an incontestable fact that trans people's right to life is not secured in any field, from everyday life practices to their positioning in the society. One of the most important problems that trans people confront is the presumption of cis-heteropatriarchy that it can have a say in the right to life when trans people are concerned, and that the imposition of societal dynamics based on this presumption which hinders trans people from sustaining a dignified life. It is not sufficient to wait for the dissolution and collapse of the cis-heteropatriarchal and cisgender-supremacist locus of hegemony, which views the existence of trans people and their right to life as something to be questioned, criminalized, obstructed, and ultimately terminated.

The progressive consciousness as the carrier of humanity's social values needs to be mobilized for the dissolution and collapse of this locus of power. Without any doubt, it will be the very trans

people and all others within the LGBTI+ spectrum who hold this consciousness and will transform the society around this point of consciousness.

It is the most urgent need today that all the masses who have been wounded by the persecution of those who rule perform the historical role of gathering together in a trans-comprehensive way in order to build a world where there is no hate speech by very well-known perpetrators against trans people, no phobic assaults, no lynching, no trans suicides, and no trans murders. It should be acknowledged that violence directed toward trans people, trans suicides, and trans murders are not thunderbolts striking from clear skies. These incidents appear as the most political actions that trigger the traumas of the society.

It is none other than the manipulative violence of cis-manhood to label trans people, who have become the targets of cis-heteropatriarchal and cisgender-supremacist focus, as subjects of terror by criminalizing them. The very subjects of the violence, discrimination, hatred, and phobia inflicted on trans people, namely, those who exert this terror on trans people resort to blaming the victim in the name of hiding their own role as perpetrators, intending to make life unsustainable for trans people through their black propaganda against the latter.

Trans people recognize this intent in the praxis of everyday life, trying to sustain their lives as subjects aware of this intent and to protect themselves against this black propaganda. The restrictive aspect of living life in this way, when liberties are concerned, is obvious.

Their liberties restricted, their existences rendered invisible in the praxis of everyday life, and their rights violated, trans people do not fit in the social stratum that those who rule in today's world have framed for them and try to confine them in; nor do they have the obligation whatsoever to fit in it. The first days of an epoch where, together with all the colors of life, trans people let themselves exist in all realms under the cisgender rule as conscious subjects are being experienced right now. And the epoch to come is a trans epoch.

The biggest obstacle in front of trans subjects who will benefit from the right to life is the cisgender-supremacist power, i.e. people who cannot leave aside their privileges and who have proclaimed themselves as the hegemon, and their supporting masses. It is not trans people who are supposed to change and transform themselves but those who have created privileged areas for themselves by violating the rights of trans people. It is this focus who has to accept that trans people also have the right to life equally and who has to restore back the rights of trans people.

The resistance of this focus is triggering a societal crisis; and yet, progress itself continues on its course by overcoming all the hindrances in front of it. The breaking of the resistance of the focus in question can only come true through the intersectional struggle of all masses, with conscious trans subjects at the forefront, targeted by this focus.

It is these masses that will be the determinants of the trans epoch to come. The longing for a world where life is unique for all humans and living beings, where there is no longer any supremacism, and where equality has become ordinary, will bring together and transform

Trans people will reclaim all their usurped rights one by one, starting with the right to life. This is a historical necessity.

Life and Right to Life

Day of equality with transgenders. Or equality of transgenders?

It's such a day, well, supposedly.

My ass.

Who are we going to be equal with, ayol¹? How equal are we among ourselves, anyway? Are we going to be equal with cisgenders? How? Why would I choose to be equal with a cisgender in the first place! I've lived through all this shit. How can I erase those experiences from my memory, my body?

Cisgenders are born as they are, living as cisgenders. Where do I come from, where do I go? Each and everyday is different and new. I know what woman is about, I know what man is about, the devil and the deep blue sea.

I've seen fires so fierce, just let me be. You are scared of fire, go save yourself. I've been wounded so much, none of them killed me. Kür¹ it was here.

It killed.

Dying because you are trans, killed because you are trans, no access to health system, no access to no system... these are our stories.

There is a handful of things you can become when you are trans – either hate crime victim or, say, hormone transformation surgery something, and discrimination here and there... Yes, these are all. But is this what our lives are only about?!? Living like a tree, one and free and siblings like a forest,

coming in waves like gay pride, so many seas,
this longing is ours, surely is :)

Life is strong enough to mend the wounds. Seems so. We try to believe it is so.

We stand up somehow no matter what happens, and continue. And this makes us powerful.

Heee-man.

We open our hearts to what has been lived and will be lived, more than welcome.

Let live.

Been lived.

We have these phases in our language for good reason. We live them it seems.

If cisgenders have their privileges, then we have our experiences. We will be equal so they say, they have to say goodbye to their privileges. But we are not going to wait on the side for their will to twitch, no way.

Living, and staying alive many times, is a fine art.

Life does not always go on the way we want. We cannot express our identities freely everywhere, every time, nor can we be ourselves every time. Staying alive many times hinders us from realizing ourselves even when we feel it is a lie.

There are those, for instance, who do not undergo surgery to stay alive, even when they want it so bad. And there are those who do undergo surgery to stay alive, even they don't want it at all.

Just as there is no such thing as LGBTI individual, there are a thousand and one states of the thing called trans, you see.

So many as we are.

We cannot utter the names we picked for ourselves every place, every time.

The details that seem too simple for cisgender people who do not have this experience, and who would never have thought about these details, become the focus of our lives.

It is not equality perhaps but our longing for justice that is eternal, when they do not even care

¹An exclamation word in Turkish language that is used, or thought to be used, by women and thus would be considered too feminine to be uttered by a man. Ayol is widely used by the LGBTI+ community in Turkey. (translator's note)

about our lives hidden in details.

Living is no joke, you have to live in all its seriousness

Like a bird, for instance.

Meaning we are done with intersexual transitions, and now want to transform interspecies.

Is this state found in the catalogue of mental disorders? Cause if not, let's have it there.

Who are you to judge me? WHO ARE YOU?

We are the mirror of the society. With our lives and our deaths.

Badmouthing us, hating us, what the hegemony cannot confront
their hypocrisies, fantasies, desires and the ways of handling all these.

We know what government protects these.

Life is as heavy as a truck full of coal sometimes.

It is not easy to come out of the closet to ourselves, our family, our acquaintances. Nor is it an obligation, either. How many times does a transgender come out of the closet in their lives? With how many identities? What is the sum of interior agonies of a transgender?

Much of our lives passes by with questions that even quantum cannot help find solutions.

It is a long road for one to find oneself. It is sometimes an entire lifetime in front of the doors of the courthouse if we want to use hormones and undergo surgery, on top of it. But then when are we going to live?

It turns out we make life into prayer beads and shake it. This is true.

These bursts of anger are not directed at "cis-tem" only, or cisgender homosexuals.

It is daring to think they are the authority to decide whether we are this or that, as if there is any merit to being this or that.

We spend a whole life to stay alive. A whole life in turn, a whole life, you know.

Bullshit...

Bullshit indeed, but true.

Friendships and social ties are vital as dear Ali said.

Solidarity saves lives.

We can only beat this bullshit through solidarity.

But solidarity with whom?

**In all honesty, a trans who wants to do military service
shall not face discrimination because they are trans, of course
but if only there was no military service at all, is where we stand.**

**Do not let nationalist trans people die, but let nationalism
not exist at all.**

My last word shall be to cisgenders again. Are you the one who is strong?

**Are you, the boss, the millionaire, the robber baron, the owner of factories – are you the one
who is big?**

No.

I am the one who is big, I am Kaşar Usta².

You are nothing next to me.

You do not have the slightest worth in my eyes.

Becoming equal.

My ass.

Rüzgâr Buşki & Ulaş Dutlu

²The part that begins with "Are you, the boss, the millionaire" and ends with "slightest worth in my eyes" is cited from a renowned Turkish movie (Bizim Aile, 1975). The protagonist, Yaşar Usta, stands up against the cruel factory owner with these words. In Buşki & Dutlu's version the name "Yaşar" is replaced with "Kaşar", which is a slang word in Turkish language used to refer to a woman who is sexually promiscuous or at times to a person who is shrewd and/or cunning in various matters such as business, human relations, etc. (t/n)

My Story, Our Story

I would like to tell the story of a trans woman as if it was a fairy tale. I believe I can express myself better with this story.

Back in 1999, a naïve youngster who did not know what being LGBTI+ was about, let alone LGBTI+ rights, found herself engaged in forced sex work; this young person was a woman, however, a trans woman.

There was no laser epilation back then, and the young woman would shave her beard, apply powder on her face, and wear makeup. That's how she would work.

As months passed, this trans woman experienced many violations on the street. She saw, heard, and learned things...

In 1999, residing in the apartment of a cisgender sex worker, this young woman was a person who would go out at nights while she would sleep and not leave home during the day, just so that the neighbors in the block would not see her. One day she ran into some others living in the block as she was leaving the apartment to buy bread. It was from that second on that this trans woman's troubling story of seeking accommodation and living somewhere had begun.

The residents of the block gathered in a week, saying "We have a transvestite in our block" and wanting to send the trans woman out of the block. In the meantime, they did not refrain from pressuring the trans woman's flatmate, eventually succeeding in kicking the woman out of the building.

As the trans woman found herself abandoned on the street, not knowing what to do, she resorted to the idea of staying with people like herself. She managed, albeit with much difficulty, to move next to those like herself.

The conditions of the apartment where she moved were rather very poor. How hard it turned out to live in an apartment with six other people! For around a year the woman stayed with those friends who resembled her. She made a boyfriend during her stay and started to look for an apartment where she could stay with her boyfriend as she managed to save some money.

The boyfriend looked for an apartment for months but had to face "We cannot rent you an apartment" as the answer from real estate agents and homeowners whenever they heard the mention of a "trans woman" resident. As days passed by, the trans woman was miraculously able to succeed in renting an attic on Ballibaba Street in Çankaya District – and at what cost! She agreed on 200 Lira per month for the attic when the average rent back then was around 80 Lira, all because she was a trans woman. The trans woman moved to her place, did not make the slightest sound just so that the neighbors in the block would not be disturbed, as she knew well that she would have been kicked out right away with the slightest nuisance that would bother them.

Having realized how hard it is to find a roof over her head, renting an apartment, and surviving, the trans woman gradually set her mind on one thing throughout the years passing by: Always keeping in mind what she had learned, she started to save money and it was time to buy an apartment.

The woman got to meet numerous real estate agents and homeowners. In each conversation, she was rejected with the words "This is an apartment block for families," and she realized that they

would not sell her an apartment even when she had enough money. She got to see how difficult it was to buy an apartment even with the money she had saved then.

As time went by, the trans woman finally found an apartment on the street where she lived. She called the real estate agent to go see the apartment right away, feeling great about the place at the very first instant. She was indescribably willing to buy that apartment. The agent asked for 140 thousand Lira but when the other people living in the block put pressure on the homeowner not to sell it to a transvestite, the homeowner ended up deciding not to sell the apartment. The trans woman got very sad at this situation, still having her mind set on buying that apartment.

As she was pondering on what to do, suddenly her boyfriend came to her mind. She decided to buy the apartment on his name rather than hers. Suddenly, the so-called 140 thousand Lira-apartment was reduced to 120 thousand Lira for the boyfriend. Since it was a man, you know, who was going to buy the apartment, they sold it to him right away. What they did not know, however, was that the man who bought the apartment was the trans woman's lover. The trans woman had her wish to own the apartment come true this way. She was grateful that she had a trustworthy boyfriend who loved her. As she was deciding to buy the apartment on her boyfriend's name, the woman was actually hesitant because she had witnessed the hardships some of her friends had to endure in similar situations. Indeed, many of her friends had confided money to their lovers just out of love, but then got swindled in the end.

The trans woman began preparations to move to her new apartment after buying it; the block superintendent, however, pushed her boyfriend to a side on the very first day of moving. It turned out that the residents of the block saw the trans woman entering the block as furniture was being carried. "We do not want to see you in this block," said the superintendent to the woman's boyfriend. Upon seeing this, the trans woman walked up to the superintendent, yelling at him, and a discussion followed. Having moved to her new apartment right upon this unpleasant incident, the trans woman tiptoed for several months so that no problems would occur even when it was her property now, trying to live very carefully. This was because her mind was overwhelmed with the anxiety of the possibility of getting kicked out upon petitions signed by the residents. As years went by, the block and its residents gradually embraced her. Persons who would not even step in her apartment, nor say a word, nor want to see her in the block for two years began to greet her, talk to her, and even invite her to their apartments. At some point they even asked her to become the superintendent of the block. That trans woman lives in that same apartment block up to this day and still is its superintendent. That woman is me. I am Selay.

What I mean here is that the need for accommodation and finding a place to live is still a very complicated one for trans people to realize. Even when you have the money for it, there are obstacles that you could never imagine if you set out to rent or buy a house.

The story I have told you is just a tiny fragment from my life.

It is impossible to count the chances of what you might have to go through. For one, you are surrounded by fraudulent real estate agents that try to trick you. They initially help you rent an apartment and take their commission. Then they file a complaint about the apartment flat that they helped you rent and have it shut down. As you move out, they rent the same apartment flat out to another trans person. And remember – they get their commission each time they rent an apartment out to someone. They rent out apartments, which would be worth no more than one thousand Lira in today's conditions, for two thousand Lira, simply because they are well aware of

the situation that if we cannot rent that apartment, we will have to stay out on the street and will rather give them two thousand Lira than end up homeless. This is not what humanity is about.

What real estate agents do is a crime and, unfortunately, since all these crimes are met with impunity each time they are committed, trans people are still being discriminated against and they continue to be exploited today.

All those who have caused what I have experienced and had to live through are guilty. Real estate agents, homeowners, apartment block residents... All those people who have kicked me out on the street are directly responsible for the unjust treatment I have received. The discrimination they have done is a rights violation and a crime. All the LGBTI+ individuals who have received such unjust treatment need to take legal action and follow the process meticulously. This brutal system will never change unless we fight against it. Accommodation is a right and we trans people will never give up on our fight for this right!

Selay Ulusoy

TK

“Honey, is your husband vers?”

“Hey sis, is the brother-in-law gay?”

“Oh, I’d fucked him before” ...

We’ve been debating gender trouble for a long while now. Some of us reject the binary gender system and some even say “oh I’m binary”. I had earlier claimed that “trans” is an umbrella term; it might thus not mean anything when there is no context to it. It might mean a lot, however, when you utter the phrases above to a nineteen year old-girl.

You can both hurt her in the context of her self-realization and self-expression, and be discriminatory and abusive in the context of where she positions her partner and where her partner is positioned.

Reflecting on “partner rights” requires observing a crowd that does not comprise a part of LGBTI+, which each of us are subjects of – our lovers, beloved ones, friends, fuckbuddies, comrades, those whom we make love with...

Just as we cannot discriminate against any LGBTI+ person, nor can we discriminate against an LGBTI+ partner concerning the people they have relationships with. The situation is even more complicated when it comes to trans partners. It is because, as we see in the abovementioned example, value judgments regarding gender roam in just like a truck with no brakes, and partners are blamed for “not being man/woman enough” when trans partners are at stake. What is more, those who have “class hatred” make the accusation that only lower-class people select trans people as their partners.

These accusations are the reflection of phobia-based behavior that aims to establish power and restore social order just like any social prejudice does. Thankfully I have never witnessed any “transvestite”, or a “transvestite’s husband” for that matter, get intimidated by these labels forced onto them by the society. Therefore, when the phrase “transvestite’s husband” is uttered, we should not be thinking in the first place whether they might be gay or vers; we should instead remember that they are a person, just like us, who has been the target of discrimination that we have been fighting against ever since we were born.

Perhaps it was a big luxury to discuss the bullying among ourselves, discriminatory attitudes that we exhibited toward one another, ostracizing and such stuff as we spend years smothered in our fight against hate crimes...

I am one of those who criticize the State and the system on every occasion; it is high time, however, that we talked about the rights of trans partners, the high society life we lead within ourselves, and the bullying involved. This is because if we do not talk about these and instead allow such teasing and bullying to continue, we are to witness the sad end of another friend like Eylül Cansın.

We must stand up against all kinds of bullying and discrimination so that there are no more “Eylül Cansın”s, that everyone can live with equal rights and opportunities, and we must shatter those bias we deemed “unquestionable”.

Şevval Kılıç

Explanations

May 17th International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. It is the day when the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases in 1990. This day is celebrated as the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia through various activities in Turkey.

Cis-centrism is the understanding that structures politics and daily life by placing cisgenders at their center. It is a system of attitude, prejudice, and discrimination that favors cisgender identities, marginalizes trans people and renders invisible their existence, and views the needs and identities of trans people as less important than those of cisgender people. Toilets designed for cis-women and cis-men can be an example to cis-centrism.

Cis-feminism is the understanding that embraces the essentialist body concept of the binary gender system in a normative manner and pushes trans identities outside of feminism. It is a trans-exclusionary understanding that sees only cis-women as the subjects of feminism and wages the feminist struggle for their good only. It does not see trans women, and trans people in general, as subjects of feminism. For instance, it has been a cis-feminist practice to assign male identity to those with trans experience who claim to be women and bars them from participating in 8th of March rallies.

Cis-heteronormativity Merriam-Webster defines heteronormativity as “of, relating to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality”. Cis-heteronormativity, on the other hand, imposes the condition that the subjects denoted by this concept be cisgender. It imposes heterosexuality as the norm and being cisgender as the necessary condition.

Cis-heteropatriarchy is a term used to explain the rule and power of the cisgender heterosexual man. It is also used with the purpose of further concretizing patriarchy and exposing the gender identity and sexual orientation of patriarchy.

Cisgender is a term used for people whose sexual identity is the same as the one assigned by doctors at the time of their birth. This term is used as the opposite of the term “transgender”. The most important aspect of using this term is the wish to eliminate the marginalization of trans people. Using this term, one refers to non-trans people without marginalizing trans people. In daily political use the term “cisgender” is sometimes abbreviated as “cis”. In Turkish, the term “natrans” (lit. non-trans) is generally used. For instance, if a person has been designated/assigned as “male” by doctors at birth, if this person claims to be “male” concerning his sexual identity, if he is happy with the “male” identity and continues life this way, then this person is cisgender and is defined as cis-man.

Cissexism is a type of sexism. It can also mean cisgender supremacism. Cissexism involves prejudice and discrimination against people who are not cisgender. It comprises the belief, and the practices that have evolved around this belief, that non-cisgender individuals are “inferior” and “worthless” by nature and that it is cisgender which is “normal”. Cissexism can develop either on a conscious or unconscious level concerning one’s feeling of oneself and one’s self-expression. It is a way of thinking that only sexist people find normal and right. It is a pejorative term for all trans individuals and all others who have anatomical features outside of “male/female” binarism. Cissexism is closely related to the terms “transphobia” and “transmisogyny”, albeit different. Cissexism focuses

on the “rightfulness” of cisgender experience rather than the “wrongfulness” of trans experience, used mostly as a relatively more nuanced reference to prejudice and discrimination against non-cisgender people. (Source: <https://gaiadergi.com/bir-cinsiyetcilik-bicimi-olarak-cisseksizm/>)

Criminalization is a term used to denote the act of rendering something illegal or criminal, making it a crime. The criminalization of trans identities is a situation that is confronted very often. The term expresses the effort to view being trans as a crime and to create a negative perception by rendering the trans existence criminal. The news headline “Transvestite terror” commonly encountered in Turkish media is an example.

Eylül Cansın is a trans woman who, at the age of 23, completed suicide by jumping off the Bosphorus Bridge in the morning of January 5, 2015. Having become a symbol upon the later release of the video which she shot shortly before her suicide, Eylül Cansın is the most concrete answer to the question of why trans suicides are political and why each of these suicides are murders.

Intersectionality / Intersectional Feminism Intersectionality is actually not a new term. It was first coined in 1989 by lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw, who advocated the thought that one cannot view the hatred directed towards different groups due to the various social identities of individuals separately, as it would not reflect the reality. Her objective in coining the term was to show that classifications that lead to negative discrimination are interrelated, i.e. that they “intersect”. With her formulation of intersectional feminism, Crenshaw urges feminist theory to recognize the fact that not all women might have the same privileges. Accordingly, women might face oppression and unjust treatment due to physical disabilities, social and/or economic status, ethnic origin, physical appearance, age, religion, level of education, gender identity, sexual orientation, and many other similar reasons. Crenshaw did not advocate for the confiscation of what people have, nor the idea that people have committed crimes because they were born with privileges. She aimed instead that women from all segments of the society shall find themselves a place within feminism and be represented in women’s solidarity movement. (Source: <https://gaiadergi.com/kesisimsel-feminizm-nedir/>)

Kür is a word in Lubun language used to convey meanings such as lie, fake, not genuine, etc.

Natrans is a term coined by Ali Aligül Arıkan and used to denote non-trans/cisgender persons.

Trans Manifesto is the manifesto written by trans people of Turkey uniting against transphobia, published in 2012.