

In 15th century France, a woman named Joan of Arc was sentenced to death and burned at the stake. Her crime--the charge which permitted this outrageous sentencing--was Cross-Dressing.

When we seek to codify and legislate what DRESS is permissible by people based upon their assumed or "biological" gender, we are participating in a long and violent tradition that has been used to violate basic rights of self-expression (to say nothing of practicality) of ALL people, regardless of their gender. This bill, obviously and outrageously, seeks to target trans and LGBTQIA individuals, to mandate their very existence in public as obscene. That in and of itself should be reason enough to oppose it. Because trans individuals, and ANYONE who chooses to dress in drag for ANY REASON AT ALL be it performance or just delight, deserve the same rights as the rest of us to express themselves through their clothing and apparel. To use clothing as a means to engage with art and culture, to share their joy with their community without harassment, bullying, or abuse.

In Elizabethan England, ONLY men were allowed to act on the stage. ALL parts in EVERY play (Shakespeare! Marlow! The Greeks!) were performed exclusively and solely by men and boys, including the parts of characters who were written as women. Those actors dressed in drag, publicly, EVERY PERFORMANCE, and their art was enjoyed by everyone of every age and class, royalty, nobility, and peasant alike. Were those performances then, OBSCENE? Are we really, in the year 2023, MORE puritan as a society than ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND in the 16th Century?

As an Adult Cishet Woman, when I wear a hooded sweatshirt (my most favorite item of clothing, which took YEARS of effort to track down and obtain, at no small expense) that presents in highly accurate detail the costuming of a male character from a movie I love, I am cross-dressing. I AM CROSS-DRESSING. Will you tell me that hooded sweatshirt on my obviously female-presenting body is OBSCENE? That I cannot appear in public, or in the eyeline of anyone under 18, wearing PANTS and a zip-up HOODED SWEATSHIRT which covers me fully from neck to toe?

Of course not, you're thinking. Of course this bill isn't meant to apply to me, a Cis Woman wearing pants and a Star Wars costume. But where in the bill does it specify that? Where does it say this legislation doesn't apply to any of us, choosing to express ourselves through our clothing choices? How will you determine who is and is not cross-dressing OBSCENELY in their daily life, going out with their friends? And HOW will you codify that? How will you stop any other person, high on the power they've been given to parse who is or is not performing their gender to the appropriate degree and NOT overstepping into the line of cross-dressing, publicly, from using the law you've created to attack me? Or your daughter? Or your wife? Your Scottish Husband who loves his ancestral dress? The patrons of the Renaissance faire attending in their utili-kilts? Your sister or brother? Your cousin, your aunt and uncle, your best friend of any gender who always looked pretty androgynous, who now has to worry every time they go out that they'll look too masculine in a dress to some jerk on the street and end up arrested because this bill was signed into law?

When you strip the rights of any people, you strip the rights from ALL people. You strip away the rights of your neighbors, your friends, and yourself. And if you think you're safe from this gender binary nonsense--I promise you, it's only a matter of time before, without ever intending it, these laws harm you or someone you love, as well.