Sarah Smith interviews Graham Linehan. Newsnight. 2020

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| SS | Well, Graham Linehan is with me now. You wrote a piece in the papers at the weekend, you say you’ve been vilified on social media and that you’ve even lost work as a result of speaking out in this trans debate. Why have you got yourself mired in this, you’re not a trans person, you’re not a woman, why have you made this your issue? |
| GL | Well, the main reason is, women can’t speak about this, women like...I’ll admit, I’m not great person to be in this conversation I’m a comedy writer and I’m very blunt, but the thing is that there’s a lot of women, like Kathleen Stock, Jane Clare Jones, academics, who are very compassionate but they protect their boundaries and the boundaries of young lesbians and women in general and they do so in a very quiet and respectful way. But, whenever they are asked to speak there’s protests, they get shut down, Kathleen Stock had a freedom of information request about her emails, you know it’s insane the abuse and harassment they face. So, I thought I’d step and, you know I don’t have a boss as such. |
| SS | Yes, but has you stepping in made the debate any better. I mean people say the language you use, some of the dismissive terms that you’ve used, some of the dismissive terms you’ve bandied about have actually increased the toxicity of this debate.  |
| GL | Can you give me an example? |
| SS | Yes, you (laughs) I can give you several if you want. What about comparing people in the trans debate to speaking out against Nazis, I mean that’s pretty extreme |
| GL | Well, there’s a couple of parallels. One is that at the moment children are basically being experimented on with puberty blockers, for instance  |
| SS | (interrupts). Oh, come on, you’re not seriously trying to say that children going to the doctor and saying that they are worried about their gender is akin to children being experimented on in Nazi Germany? |
| GL | I’m afraid I am because Lupron which is a drug which is supposed to be meant for end stage cancer treatment, prostate cancer treatment is being given to young girls, it has never been tested on girls, it has never been tested on women, that’s been happening to young women |
| SS | Interrupts. Look there’s a couple of issues here. One of them is that these are doctors who are doing this, and you don’t have any medical training to know about this, but the other is that they are doing it by choice it is deeply offensive to compare this to Nazi Concentration camps. |
| GL | No, No. don’t get me wrong I’m not comparing this to Nazi concentration camps that’s not that’s not … |
| SS | No, that’s basically what you said that they are experimenting on children I what the Nazis did and what doctors are doing today  |
| GL | Well, essentially if you look at the Tavistock 35 psychologists have quit the Tavistock in three years does that sound |
| SS | Interrupts. That’s one of the centres which deal specifically with people who think they want to change their gender |
| GL | Yes, that’s 35 over three years, do you think that sounds like a healthy environment for children? |
| SS | I’ve no idea what the reason why people might be leaving but I know  |
| GL | I’ve spoken to other people  |
| SS | (talks over GL) But I know children being able to come forward and talk about issues that they feel it’s entirely up to them what they want to do that’s nobody’s business nobody’s forcing anybody |
| GL | No, I’m sorry but you don’t tell children that they were born in the wrong body because they are children, and they will believe you. That’s the emer (assume he broke off and it was the beginning of “emergency”).I;ve seen kids, there are reports from the Tavistock, there are reports of kids as young as four brought in these are children, children are still believing in Santa when they are ten it’s ridiculous , it’s absurd and what surprises me  |
| SS | Interrupts.. Why do you think, what evidence do you have that young children are being told they are born in the wrong body? Just because we are having a debate about self-identification doesn’t mean that young children, who still believe in Santa are told that they have to change gender, that’s ridiculous exaggeration.  |
| GL | No, no well one of the other things that Tavistock whistleblower’s reported was that homophobic parents were bringing in their gender non-conforming kids and telling them to “fix” them, you know. There was a dark joke that went around the Tavistock where they said in a couple of years there’d be no gay people left, you know, that’s why I compare it to Eugenics programmes, it’s extremely serious and all I am asking for , all I am asking for is that people like me and the women that I support are not attacked , their meetings aren’t protested, they aren’t abused on twitter . I’ve been sued, I’ve been reported to the police |
| SS | I know you have |
| GL | My wife address has been published online. all these things have happened because I am trying to make this less toxic |
| SS | (talks over him) Talking about eugenics and comparing the trans debate and omparing trans activists to nazis is not going to make this debate less toxic. What you are doing is fanning the flames, you are throwing fuel on this  |
| GL | Trans activists are threatening the feminists I support with rape and death threats, okay, that there is an equivalence between the two. I am absolutely happy to step outside the conversation completely once women like Kathleen Stock and Jane Clare Jones are allowed to speak |
| SS | Quite a lot of women think they can speak for themselves, thank you, and they don’t necessarily need Graham Lineham to come in and talk for us |
| GL | Well, the of women, that I support, value my support and are glad that I am amplifying their voices |
| SS | Amplifying the toxicity of the debate when you come here and you  |
| GL | No, No These women are not toxic |
| SS | I’m not saying they are I’m saying your comparisons are pretty toxic, coming in here and talking about Nazis. If you want to have reasonable debate about what is going on with Gender Identity, we can’t talk about Nazi’s  |
| GL | The thing about the Nazi comment was what I was trying to get across is that thie is a hinge moment in history just like during the Nazis and we always ask ourselves the same questions. We ask ourselves what would I have done? Would I have bowed down? Would I have done everything I was told to do, or would I have resisted, would I have stood up alongside people who were trying to do the right thing, that’s what I am trying to do at the moment and it’s being made very difficult. Years ago, we wrote to Stonewall, way before I compared trans activists and we said “could we please bring down the toxicity of this debate, could we please just look at some of these issues, some of these points when women’s rights conflict with trans issues and just talk about it… and within the day Stonewall said No |
| SS | They said to us, today, when we invited them to come on the programme they gave us this statement they said “Trans people face huge levels of abuse in all areas of their life, they quote statistics that in all areas of their life tha hate crimes have increased 37% in the last year and say they are proud of their work towards trans equality  |
| GL | Yes, but the reason hate crimes have increased is because everything is now transphobic including saying things like men aren’t women, these are considered transphobic statements so, the reason these hate crime statistics are going up is because the bar has been set so low for what is considered transphobic. There has to be a conversation about this, this is absolutely crucial children… |
| SS | (cuts him off). that is all the time we have for this evening. I am fairly confident that it will continue on social media…Graham Linehan, thank you for that.  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

;