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STATEMENT ON MALICIOUS RUMORS

WOLF

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[/AUTHOR/LIERRE/](#)

APRIL 12, 2017

[NO COMMENTS](#)

Q: Why are you writing this?

A: WoLF has been subjected to a 5-month campaign of digital hate-stalking by one person. The uniform advice on stalkers is to cut off all contact with the stalker and deny them any access to you. What stalkers feed on is engagement. We know this. But WoLF’s stalker is continuing to spread lies about us, and her lies have encouraged others to create increasingly bizarre conspiracy theories about WoLF. We don’t know what to do but address at least some of her claims

directly.

We are also aware that research shows how repeating a falsehood, even in the service of debunking it, serves to reinforce the veracity of the false claim (https://www.skepticalscience.com/docs/Debunking_Handbook.pdf). This puts the victims of smear campaigns in a no-win position. All we can do at this point is present accurate information with the hope that people will come to a reasonable conclusion.

Our stalker has not named herself so we are not able to respond to her directly. She engages in wild speculation and accusation, primarily online, and always anonymously. WoLF is a small, entirely volunteer group, and we have collectively spent hundreds of hours correcting her lies. Yet the lies keep spreading. We are hoping that a full airing of the facts will address the real concerns women have as well as make others think twice before reposting malicious falsehoods that serve no one.

Through her actions, our associates have been harassed, our members threatened, our private conversations aired in public and out of context, our board members insulted and called out by name by anonymous accusers, our members accused of self-dealing, and our professional contacts baselessly accused of serious misconduct.

Further, all of these half-truths were used to spin allegations that WoLF's volunteers are helpless pawns, victims of a shadowy, conservative conspiracy — allegedly pre-dating our decision to incorporate — to try and capture information about individual feminists. The considerable irony of someone who has attempted to anonymously harass and embarrass our volunteers, only to turn around and allege that we're the ones putting members' information at risk, is hardly lost on us. Though under the circumstances, it's not very funny.

And though there are women who've brought up earnest, good faith concerns about our decisions, many of the critics who've most enthusiastically spread these stories have longstanding histories of personal and philosophical differences with the organization or individual members. We reserve the right to be skeptical of their objectivity.

While we understand and respect that not everyone is going to embrace our views and choices, and while we do take the concerns of other feminists seriously, we also have the right to make our own decisions and move forward

with them. We would appreciate not being harassed by those who disagree. Other feminists are free to engage in work that suits them better. We hope that they will. Our best wishes to anyone else who wants to start a radical feminist organization, we think it would be a good thing if more of us who are able were out speaking about our views under our own names.

That said, we have strong evidence and reason to believe that all of these aliases belong to the same person, a former member and an enthusiastic, early supporter of the WoLF v. USA lawsuit, whom we will refer to throughout the rest of this document as Mary Smith: Mary Smith, Dar Guerra, Vliet Tiptree, withoutfeathers, beasterwabbit, womensliberationfrontnews, and Illsa Huldufolk.

We would also ask that anyone who disagrees with her actions refrain from contacting her, or subjecting her to anything that could be interpreted as harassment. Such behavior helps no one. Our hope is that we can all move on from this and go our separate ways.

Q: Who has access to WoLF's member data?

A: Only the board and trusted volunteers.

Mary Smith had unfortunately been able in the past to create additional aliases in our members-only discussions, which she continued using after she resigned. While we have stepped up our security measures in response to recent events, we have no evidence that anyone besides her has tried to access any such information.

To the best of our knowledge, we've also identified all of the aliases that Mary Smith was using in our members-only group. She no longer has access to any of our conversations, though we suspect that another member who has also resigned had passed her additional information. We've established that our membership list is secure, and has remained so throughout.

We wish to assure our members once again that we have the utmost concern for your privacy, and have worked hard to protect your names from public scrutiny to the best of our ability.

The board would also never accede to any request for our members' information. Yet it's as important to note that no one has asked. Not one of the individuals or groups that WoLF has worked with over the last year, either through temporary

alliance or by contract, has ever asked for information on our members. It's never happened, it would never be agreed to.

Yet while Mary Smith is the only person who has put our members' private information at risk, and the only person involved who has subjected members to undue public scrutiny by name and by the public airing of private conversations, she and her associates have stepped up their insistence that WoLF has put undue focus on the harms of gender identity policy and activism. But she must be aware that the main reason her activity creates as much concern as it does is because numerous women have been credibly threatened over their views on this issue.

It's our direct experience with, and awareness of, the extent to which women with gender critical and sex industry abolitionist views are blacklisted or harassed by the left that has given us a very good understanding of how serious a threat the issue of gender identity politics is to women's political speech of any kind.

A woman branded a "TERF" or a "SWERF" has no place in liberal or leftist politics anymore. Not even in unrelated activities. A woman so accused can be relentlessly, publicly harassed and threatened until she loses an unrelated job or someone engages in criminally actionable stalking, and not one mainstream feminist or liberal male ally will say anything about it. How can we practice feminism or any kind of politics of women's liberation when most of our members are too afraid to put their names to their words? When we have to skulk around in secret to have any kind of meeting or conference without being harassed, or the venue and its staff threatened?

Mary Smith has, rather, been deliberately playing off the climate of fear created by this harassment in order to spread unfounded panic. Meanwhile, she advances the argument that we have been too concerned about this threat to women's activism, one that is so dire that we must conduct all our meetings and activities in secret, lest our members lose their jobs or be stalked in their own communities.

Why are women afraid to have it be known that they hold gender critical views? Why are women afraid to have it be known that they might wish to meet with other women to discuss their opinions on the subject at an entirely peaceful gathering in the woods?

We know why. That's why we're committed to protecting your privacy.

Mary Smith knows why, too. That's why she knew exactly what to say to spread the most fear.

Q: How did anyone in WoLF come to know Zachary Freeman?

A: Last summer, a member, whom we'll call Jean, first read a Medium article in which a transgender-identified male, Chernobiko, wrote what appeared to be an admission of raping a transgender-identified female earlier that year, and prior to Biko's appearing twice at the White House in 2016 to represent the transgender community. She quickly discovered that no public statement was planned by the Young Women's Advisory Council of New York City, on whose board Biko sat. She read the social media account narrative of the alleged victim, who refused to report the incident to the police for fear of what could happen to Biko in jail, including screenshots of text conversations between the two after the event. She read the social media conversation about this in the transgender community, which appeared to center around demands that Biko not be misgendered.

Jean began looking to get this incident publicized further, and contacted the Family Policy Institute of Washington, because of their part, and the part of their associates, in respectful outreach to the lesbian community over gender identity laws. FPIW's communication director at that time, Zachary Freeman, asked Jean if she'd be willing to write about the situation herself, anonymously if she wished, because he thought her perspective should be heard. So she did (<http://www.fpiw.org/blog/2016/08/11/there-was-a-certain-rape-a-look-inside-the-transgender-movement/>). In spite of that, Chernobiko went on to be featured in a photo spread in National Geographic's recent gender issue, and to speak from stage at the Women's March.

At the beginning of the year, Mr. Freeman got in touch with Jean to say he was working as an independent consultant now, and to ask if WoLF might be interested in working with him. He was put in touch with the board, and offered us a standard development contract with no retainer, which was reviewed by a professional fundraiser. Knowing our views on abortion, which are diametrically opposed to his own, he asked that money he might raise for us not be spent on political activity related to abortion access.

Importantly, Mr. Freeman's work is independent, and neither he nor any other

group has any claim on money donated directly to WoLF.

Mr. Freeman has also never asked for information about any of our members, the majority of whom wish to remain anonymous. The reasons for this he well understood from when he first told Jean that he and FPIW would protect her identity, which he and his former colleagues have done without fail, just as they promised. Unlike many of our former colleagues on the left, they have taken the time to look at the evidence of what's being done to women in the name of gender inclusion and take it seriously. Even after Mary Smith actively taunted Mr. Freeman online with claims about WoLF's members' activities in support of abortion access, Mr. Freeman made no attempt to seek member information.

We also wish to address the insinuation made in several of Mary Smith's posts that Mr. Freeman attempted to use a request for documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in order target or enable others to target violence toward researchers who work with fetal tissue. While we agree that such behavior would be reprehensible, we find no evidence to support this accusation. We also want to point out that this tactic of portraying FOIA requests is sensationalist and has been abused by industrialists on the right. For example, the owners of polluting industrial operations have sought to prevent environmental activists from obtaining basic information about their facilities by arguing that the activists would seek to target the polluting facility or its executives for "eco-terrorism." Mary Smith is engaging in that same type of disingenuous manipulation.

Q: What is WoLF's position on abortion, and how has it been affected by working with conservatives?

A: The board and our members are unapologetically in favor of full reproductive sovereignty for women and girls. We would never support any policy or initiative that restricted abortion access.

Yet as strongly as the board and our members feel about full reproductive sovereignty for women, all our efforts to date have been personal actions that are protected under our individual rights of free speech and political expression. Such activity is neither the property nor responsibility of the organization, regardless of how anyone feels. And the sharing of information through our volunteer-run social media channels remains within the rights of the organization itself to free political speech.

WoLF has never spent any money on political activity related to abortion access, nor do we have an expectation of such funding, nor does the organization have any paid staff who do such work, nor paid staff at all. We have been accused of stopping work on abortion rights, as if we had shut down a bustling program, or as if we had been able to restrict our members' political speech and activity.

The truth is that the only funded project that the newly-incorporated Women's Liberation Front has undertaken is civil rights advocacy representing the interests of women and girls in relation to gender identity policy.

It made sense when we were an unincorporated feminist network to conflate the actions and beliefs of our members with the actions of the group. But following incorporation, from a legal perspective, this is inaccurate, and misrepresents the relationship between any nonprofit and its supporters. No nonprofit has a legal claim to abridge, nor a legal responsibility to be accountable for, the constitutionally protected political activity of anyone besides paid staff or official representatives, while those individuals are acting in their capacity as staff or representatives, under the direction of the organization. It's not only the law, it would be a serious infringement on individual rights if it were otherwise.

Further, confusion between individual speech and the organization's funded work would violate the spirit of there being a legal separation between the corporate entity and the individuals involved, what's referred to as the corporate veil between personal and corporate accountability. The directors, officers, or staff, if any, let alone members, of a charitable organization, cannot treat the organization as if it were their personal property or identical with their own, independent actions. This would be inappropriate, and would also potentially subject individuals to unnecessary personal liability.

So when the organization was offered funding that was contingent on it being spent solely on an area of mutual agreement, it seemed reasonable to accept. There are many nonprofit groups that focus on one or two narrow policy topics, regardless of how many other topics members and staff may feel strongly about. A group our size, once it is legally incorporated, cannot responsibly commit to do active, funded work on the full range of issues about which we feel strongly, at least not at this stage.

Millions of people also work directly in, or in support of, abortion politics. We don't have the numbers or the resources as an organization to significantly affect this fight. Further, given the dizzying array of options available to donors who

want to directly support abortion access or political rights, it seems unlikely we would have a strong, unique case to make regarding why we should be the recipients of funds to support that cause.

And even our critics must know that liberal-allied abortion rights organizations, those who are doing the bulk of the work to provide reproductive healthcare access to women and girls, do not want our public help, and would be obliged to reject it if it were offered. Some of our members are directly aware of this. Their experiences include: having been personally protested by liberal abortion rights supporters, reading fliers for pro-choice events that stated that women with gender-critical views were unwelcome, or being told in clinic escort trainings that all their language regarding pregnancy had to become gender-neutral.

We aren't sure that our detractors have entirely thought through what it is that they would like us to do differently, or where they think money or resources for that would come from. Having political opinions isn't the same thing as having an organization take action on them. Anything a member or supporter could have done on her own without financial support from us before, she is just as free to do now. As noted, this is still an all-volunteer organization, and what gets done is what the people who show up have the wherewithal to see through or the funding to make happen.

Q: How did WoLF choose its current legal counsel?

Our requirements for counsel were that they 1) be practiced and knowledgeable in the necessary areas of administrative and civil rights law, that they were 2) confident they would not be vulnerable to the sort of trolling, stalking, and harassment that has led to many of our members being blacklisted, and that 3) they were still willing to work with us given an accurate understanding of the situation. We were surprised that even one person fit this description, let alone two. And we were pleased that our main lawyer was willing to work for a significantly discounted rate compared to the market rate for experienced lawyers.

Because there are lawyers who are members of WoLF, we've been asked why one of them couldn't take on the task. Unfortunately, they weren't specialized in the right areas of law, nor were they barred in the right jurisdictions. It simply wasn't an option for them to represent us, even if they had been able to work without pay, and they were right to advise us of that.

The other feminist lawyers that our members did approach for consideration were in favor of gender identity laws, and wouldn't have been compatible for that reason.

Q: Why did you decide to incorporate?

Having decided that we needed to fight for women's civil rights in the face of a significant threat, and for the members on whose behalf we filed our lawsuit, we needed a way to raise money for our legal advocacy that wasn't going to to anyone's personal bank account. The potential tax liability and lack of transparency that would have been involved in using a personal account was too big a risk.

The amount raised last year was also sufficient that it triggered a requirement to register as a nonprofit with the IRS, in addition to the state incorporation. We're in the process of completing this filing in order to comply with the law, and the representations we made to our donors. Having taken certain actions last year, as an organization, this isn't optional.

Q: Have you considered how it looks for some in the feminist movement to partner with conservatives who disagree with us on reproductive health, employment and housing non-discrimination on the basis of same-sex attraction or sex stereotyping, and marriage equality?

A: Feminists around the world have partnered with government officials across the spectrum, churches of all stripes, and conservative individuals in many cases to advance or defend women's rights as the opportunity arose. Should we, moreover, refuse to speak to conservative women, as if we had no experiences or concerns in common?

The left has been accusing radical feminists of working with the right when it wasn't even true, for years now. Meanwhile, men on the left have no such restraint. They'll gladly praise each other for working across the aisle (<https://www.hrc.org/blog/ahead-of-march-1-deadline-south-dakota-gov.-meets-with-transgender-people-a>) to meet important goals. They'll gladly support programs whose results they like, but that were passed mainly with conservative votes or sponsorship.

Holding us to a different standard, as compared to male-led movements on the left, is purely sexist. Arguments from the assumption that the men on the left are

paragons of every liberatory virtue, or feminist aspiration, are not borne out by the facts of the lives of women on the left, especially those of us who mainly interact with liberal men. We are not, and should not be seen as, the property of any male-led movement.

We also don't believe that refusing to ever deal with anyone who disagrees with us is how political progress generally happens, let alone how many of us can afford to live our daily lives. It doesn't usually work on the job, in our neighborhoods, at school, or anywhere else where we can't pick who gets to participate and who doesn't. Though we do believe in the strength of our arguments, and the common sense notion that women objectively exist, and are female. We're going to make that case to as many people as we can, as effectively as we can.

No one has to come along. But we aim to try something different than what we had previously been doing.

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