

Some Key Points from Davis

Davis tells the story of his son, who announces he is transgendered. Although his parents are tolerant liberal college professors who believe in the social construction of gender, they have difficulty accepting this.

Four waves of gender activism:

1. Feminist movement
2. Gay/lesbian/bisexual movement
3. Queer activism
4. Transgender activism

“This generation believes that earlier activists, while challenging various kinds of gender abuses, still clung to the notion of the criticality of gender per se. First-wave feminists, for example, never doubted that being a woman was essential to their mission. Likewise, although gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals challenged the notion of mandated or “normal” sexual preference, they saw their identity as defined by a ratio of one’s gender to one’s sexual choice. That is, a lesbian could only be defined as a woman who chose another woman as a sexual partner. Even some conservative post-operative transsexuals cling to the gender binary, saying ‘I was born the wrong gender, and now I’ve become the right one.’”

However, Davis’ son finds that some other transgendered people don’t accept him because he hasn’t taken hormones and doesn’t plan to have surgery.

Two goals of the trans liberation movement (according to Feinberg):

“Both women’s and trans liberation have presented me with two important tasks. One is to join the fight to strip away the discriminatory and oppressive values attached to masculinity and femininity. The other is to defend gender freedom—the right of each individual to express their gender in any way they choose, whether feminine, androgynous, masculine, or any point on the spectrum between. And that includes the right to gender ambiguity and gender contradiction. It’s equally important that each person have the right to define, determine, or change their sex in any way they choose whether female, male, or any point on the spectrum between. And that includes the right to physical ambiguity and contradiction.” (Feinberg)