

Claiming Freedom

Against The State's Artificial Crisis-Building In The U.S. A Transwoman at TSA Security

Jane Clark

Fifth Estate note: Modern civilization is experiencing a crisis in part related to the proliferation of borders and the surveillance required to enforce them. Jane Clark's article, "Claiming Freedom," describes in personal and poignant terms one example of the ongoing regularized surveillance, even extending to violation of bodily privacy, and the process of stigmatizing and isolating those who are seen as outside defined borders of categories of normalcy.

In addition to the transperson experience described, this kind of degradation is regularly inflicted on many people with physical disabilities, who can't walk a straight line through security check points without the aid of a mechanical apparatus, because they are blind, are wheelchair users, or sometimes even those using walkers. Others with medical appliances, such as metal joint replacements, or hearing aids are also subjected to this kind of bodily violation. Many young or old people with cognitive challenges who become confused and frightened by the instructions given and the requirement that they walk through the scanners alone are violated in the same way.

Eliminating surveillance and other police functions, including the TSA, needs to be part of the strengthening of broader social movements and the development of authentic autonomous community ties if we are to gain any real security.

Overhead signs proclaim terminals, food courts, boarding gates, and boarding zones. The Starbucks glint of neon green & white, the sexy shine of LED menus, the gruff faces of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers, and travelers' worried looks, or bored looks, all set the scene for American airports.

I felt so violated when the TSA ran my body through the full body scanner, as if it was a passive object that could be securitized as much as my bags and pocketfuls were. The scanner declared my crotch a yellow area, an anomaly. It didn't matter that I told them that I was a trans woman, several times; the TSA in front of me shook hir head and smiled, saying nothing but, "Female supe! We need a female supe!"

The white, middle-aged supervisor then informed me how ze was going to violate my space, to inspect my ass and my entertainment district for explosives, or a 9mm Luger handgun. I told hir it was my treasures that set off the machine, my non-cis female treasures. Ze smiled, politely patted horizontally and vertically against my crotch, my ass.

The TSA supe asked me about my school, tried to make me comfortable, as if this event could possibly be made comfortable without my consent, without the capacity to say no, and have that no be respected. Honestly, I didn't give a flying fuck if ze voted with hir dollars, or knew someone who went to my school. This event was violence, abuse, a manufactured invasion that occurred without my consent, allegedly for my safety and all others at the

airport. But I didn't ask the TSA or the US government to assume that role for me, and I do not consent to their security procedures.

I wanted to flee as I saw the TSA about to violate my body, but I knew an NFL-worthy tackle would await me with cuffs for my wrists and the threat of a gun or a club to boot. So. I stood, frozen, my only option to be subject to the security state-justified, mild rape that was forced upon me.

I immediately drafted a complaint for the TSA and the department of Homeland Security after the violation, but realized that the event followed TSA/HS regulations.

Governments both manufacture and exaggerate crises as tools to infringe on the autonomy and self-determination of those they claim as citizens. The TSA's manufacturing and artificial heightening of crises justify the routine violation of non-cis travelers, namely trans folks, non-binary folks, gender non-conforming folks, especially those of color, and especially those whose trans embodiment runs contrary to what is considered a normative woman or man's body.

Transness can be embodied in various ways. There can be trans women with penises, trans men with vulvas, enbies with entertainment districts that don't match the woman or man label foisted upon them, or intersex folks whose bodies don't fit cisgender assumptions.

When we talk about 9/11, and the seizure and use of planes as huge makeshift bombs, the narrative almost always focuses on the 3,000 Americans killed by the assault. We don't talk about the hundreds of non-combatants who die every day at the rifle point and drone salvos and tank missiles of the United States, whose lives mean little or nothing to most people of the US empire.

I hope you don't perceive me as wanting more trans-inclusive TSA checkpoints. I want that as much as I want capitalism to become more humane and more justifiable; while I try to ally as a white woman with Black people resisting, asserting, and demanding their needs for the long game of Black Liberation, having a black boss or CEO at my job doesn't change the fact that ze'll pay me a marginal fraction of the value I produce, that I am forced to work for hir because sources of my survival are privatized and resold back to me for someone else's profit, at my direct expense.

I am calling for the total abolition and full dissolution of the Transportation Security Administration, the reducing of its statutory powers till they are no more. I call all cisgender people to action, to resist and protest and demand this authority reduction and ultimate abolition, and also invite my non-cis comrades to do the same. Fuck the loose-labeling of terrorist being given to anyone who uses violence without government endorsement, fuck the use of violence by anyone who uses it to bully and abuse others instead of solidarate the liberation of all of us, and fuck the TSA!

May it dissolve quickly and smoothly, like a tablet in water; may you act in this vision with me; and may we resist all the terrorists up-high who murder, exploit and degrade all those they oppress!

Jane Clark lives on a homestead in Philadelphia. She likes cats, anarchacommunism, and herbalism.

Related: Chattanooga mom sues TSA for slamming her disabled daughter's head into the ground by Ellis Smith, *Times Free Press*, July 1, 2016 (<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2016/jul/01/chattanooga-mom-suing-tsa-slamming-her-disabled-daughters-head-ground/374044/>)

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