

Last Saturday, members and supporters of the Canadian Association for Equality (CAFÉ) marched in a pride parade. Not Toronto Pride, which is coming up June 28. CAFÉ marched in Richmond Hill with Pride York Fest. A good time was had by all.

Why is this newsworthy?

Well, inclusion by York Pride was something of a triumph for CAFÉ in that Pride Toronto refused them permission to march last year, and has now banned CAFÉ from marching with them this year, and for the foreseeable future.

As a member of CAFÉ's advisory board, I take this insult quite personally. I would never lend my name to a group whose principles or behaviour rendered them unfit to participate in any publicly-funded parade.

What makes CAFÉ so toxic that Pride is treating us like lepers? In a nutshell, CAFÉ offends radical feminists. They are offended because CAFÉ supports true gender equity, which means that while we are sympathetic to women's issues, we also care about the issues that negatively affect boys and men, both straight and gay.

CAFÉ educates the public on subjects like: the downward spiral of boys' educational ambitions; the gendered disproportion of suicide amongst teenagers (more than two-thirds male); the damaging effects of parental alienation syndrome, which disproportionately affects fathers; the under-reported, misunderstood or sometimes willfully denied facts around intimate partner violence, suppressing the very real and widespread phenomenon of male victimhood (straight and gay); and the near-total absence of resources for male victims of rape.

Some radical feminists think gender rights and justice are a zero-sum game. They think that if a group concerns itself with men's issues – even those they are forced by reason and evidence to acknowledge as legitimate – that group is somehow diminishing the importance of women's problems. Such a belief is absurd and no reasonable person needs persuading of its absurdity.

It is radical feminists holding that view who routinely – and proudly – disrupt CAFÉ speaking events with noisy protests and vandalism sufficient to prevent the talks going forward. And it is a handful of people with that view who successfully lobbied for the ban on CAFÉ in Pride Toronto on the grounds that they do not feel “safe” in CAFÉ's presence.

The ban is unjust and irrational.

For 18 months, the Canadian Revenue Agency studied CAFÉ's websites and events, as well as a peer-reviewed journal, *The New Male Studies*, to which several CAFÉ members contribute, before concluding it was a public-interest organization, and worthy of status as an educational charity.

The group's co-founder and executive director, Justin Trottier, is impeccably “correct,” progressively speaking. As executive director of the Centre for Inquiry, he urged the Ontario government to pass Bill 13 (Gay Straight Alliances) and organized protests against Uganda's “kill the gays” bill. As a regular guest on a popular Toronto radio show, he has consistently opposed Christian evangelist Charles McVety on the subjects of gay marriage, Toby's Act and adoption rights for gay couples. As a provincial candidate with the Green Party, Trottier championed pro-women, pro-gay and pro-environment causes.

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CAFÉ's membership reflects Pride values of diversity and inclusion. Leadership is spread amongst men, women, LGBT,

First Nations and members of ethnic and racial minorities. Nobody is there merely as a token of their identity group.

My friend Eleanor Levine, for example, a director of CAFÉ, is a psychiatric social worker at a women's clinic and the University of Toronto. She provides weekly therapy to men in distress at CAFÉ's Canadian Centre for Men and Families (CCMF), a safe space for peer support and fathering programs. The CCMF receives referrals from Women's College Hospital, Toronto Western Hospital, Catholic Children's Aid Society, Community Care Durham and other nonprofits. Recently the Street Haven Women's Shelter requested the use of the CCMF to shoot a fundraising video for their women's shelter.

CAFÉ champions "orphan" victims. Last month, CAFÉ presented a brief to the Ontario Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, urging the government to support victims who break stereotype, like women abused by other women, as well as problems afflicting gay fathers and men in cultural communities.

Complaints against CAFÉ usually cite its association with other organizations considered unfriendly to women. But detractors never cite primary sources: that is, any actions or behaviours or speeches or writings or policy statements issued by CAFÉ spokespeople that can be construed as misogynistic, or links to misogynistic groups. Because there aren't any. They only cite CAFÉ's ideologically-motivated critics.

Skeptics are welcome to peruse CAFÉ's website, which contains every communiqué ever released, and youtube links to every event CAFÉ has ever hosted (in many of which, by the way, the people who don't feel "safe" are the speakers and CAFÉ supporters; the aggressive protesters feel very safe indeed).

Pride's Dispute Resolution Process (DRP), which recommended CAFÉ's exclusion, is a mechanism appointed by the Pride Toronto Board of Directors to review and resolve complaints, supposedly at arm's length from Pride. But the speed with which the DRP's decision was taken (there was no urgency, yet it came down 24 hours after Trottier's response to notification of complaints requiring the resolution process) did not allow for any review of Trottier's defence, nor of the many letters of support – triple the number of complaints – that poured in afterward. Thus the DRP could not state – and did not state – that in its opinion CAFÉ actually violates the spirit or values of Pride, nor did it recommend permanent exclusion.

Yet immediately afterward came a statement from Pride: "based on a thorough reflection of all views, [Pride Toronto] will prevent CAFÉ from participating in the 2015 Pride Parade and all future parades and events organized by Pride Toronto." "Reflection" is not investigation and "all" views were neither solicited nor received in time for consideration.

(--image--)

The egregious hypocrisy in this affair is where the canker gnaws. In past parades, although inundated with complaints, Pride tolerated the hate-spewing Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (whose ugly, violence-approving, exterminationist rhetoric really did make many Jews feel unsafe) and is still happy to include the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, which is "linked" to LGBT-unfriendly Church doctrines.

It seems clear that the ban against CAFÉ is governed by left-wing political correctness, pure and simple. (Gay-friendly) Israel hatred: yes; all union voices: yes; support for gay men: yes; support for straight men: a resounding NO.

This draconian decision is based in ignorance and bias. In the name of the vaunted "inclusion" Pride has striven so long and successfully to see embraced by society for themselves, Pride Toronto should reverse its ill-considered ban. Or

those who fund Pride Toronto should reverse it for them.