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Media Bullies School Teacher to Suicide

A Most Tragic Result of Irresponsible and Bigoted Journalism

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Journalist, Richard Littlejohn

The topic of bullying has been coming up quite a lot recently within the counselling practice at the Gender Centre. Having organised workshops for both the Transtopia youth group in 2012 and more recently a similar one for the Women's Group, the topic has very much been on my radar.

His ignorant comments ignore the fact that children come into the world innocent, sharing none of the prejudices that we pick up along the way.

It was with both despair and anger then, that I recently read a story about a U.K. woman named Lucy Meadows. Ms Meadows, a school teacher, was previously known to her pupils as Nathan Upton, before deciding to transition.

The school was supportive and informed parents that Ms Meadows would be returning to work in 2013 as a woman. This was picked up by the media and received considerable media coverage. Much of the coverage was critical of her decision, questioning the impact on her students. One of the more uneducated and hateful pieces of writing was by a journalist, whose article, included the following:

These are primary school children, for heaven's sake. Most of them still believe in Father Christmas. Let them enjoy their childhood. They will lose their innocence soon enough ...

Nathan Upton is entitled to his gender reassignment surgery, but he isn't entitled to project his personal problems on to impressionable young children.

The transphobia and falsehood, in that paragraph alone, astounds. The writer is essentially stating that a transgender person working with children should not transition openly in the workplace lest the children lose their innocence. Innocence is one of those words used by individuals who fear something without understanding it, and loaded with emotion under the guise of "protecting" children. In this instance the only person doing damage to children is the journalist.

His ignorant comments ignore the fact that children come into the world innocent, sharing none of the prejudices that we pick up along the way. Children are open and interested in different ways of being in the world and the prejudices they learn are learned from adults. The newspaper article supports removal of a woman strong enough to transition in the workplace, because she is transgender, from a job she is reported to have done very well. This teaches children that there is something wrong with being transgender, and that transitioning should be done behind closed doors.

The article both shames and bullies Lucy Meadows. It also supports distrust for transgenders. Apparently this is the writer's way of protecting a child's innocence.

The greatest tragedy in all of this is that Ms Meadows killed herself in March, 2013.

Filling children's minds with hate is less the action of someone who has genuine concern for children than the action of using them as a platform for transphobic views. The journalist should explain how the need to discuss suicide and the death of their teacher protects their innocence, compared to the opening up of their minds to the truth of gender diversity in society.

Readers of this column know about transgender. Yet stories like this occur all-too-often and confirm the aggressive and damaging reinforcement of the gender-binary in society.

Lucy Meadows was a victim of bullying and the journalist was the assailant. In a fairer world that actually knows how to take care of people, he would be called to account.

Ms Meadows' story is also a stark reminder of just how serious bullying can be. Many people mistakenly believe that verbal and emotional abuse are somehow less damaging than other forms of assault. Let me be explicit with my response to that belief - it is completely false and a number of suicides that take place due to verbal bullying is evidence of that fact.

Words can pierce like a knife or be a soothing balm to the soul. At the Gender Centre, clients are welcome to use the counselling service to talk about their own experiences of bullying and the possibility of moving past such traumas.

Death of Lucy Meadows

From the Huffington Post:  The British primary school teacher who made headlines in 2012 after announcing she was transgender in a letter delivered to parents has died.

The Guardian reports that Lucy Meadows was found dead March 19 at her home in Accrington, Lancashire. Police are not treating the death as suspicious.

In a statement on Accrington's St. Mary Magdalene's School website, head teacher Karen Hardman writes, "It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of the death of Miss Lucy Meadows. Our staff will be working closely with bereavement teams and are here to offer the children and yourselves any support in any way we can".

Meadows, who had been teaching at the school for three years, announced she was transgender in a letter shortly before the holiday break.

As the *Daily Mail* reported, the letter read in part: "Mr. Upton has recently made a significant change in his life and will be transitioning to live as a woman. After the Christmas break, she will return to work as Miss Meadows".

A statement cited by *The Bolton News* quoted Meadows as saying at the time, "This has been a long and difficult journey for me, and it was certainly not an easy decision to make". After thanking colleagues for their support, she added, "I'd now ask for my privacy to be respected so that I can continue with my job, which I'm committed to and which I enjoy very much".

He's not only in the wrong body ... he's in the wrong job

by Richard Littlejohn, [Robin Winslow's blog U.K.](#) 
Wednesday December 26th 2012

Look, it can't be much fun being a woman trapped in a man's body. Believe me, ladies, there are times when it's not exactly a bundle of laughs being a man trapped inside a man's body.

So I have every sympathy for the 400 or so people a year who opt for 'gender reassignment' surgery to put themselves out of their misery.

I don't even have any problem with sex change operations being carried out on the N.H.S., provided it's a genuine medical necessity and not a lifestyle choice. Transsexuals pay taxes, too.

Schoolteacher Nathan Upton, 32, says he always knew he was born into the wrong sex. Yet he married and fathered a child, now aged three. It was only fairly recently that he decided to go public with his inner turmoil.

The first indications came when he began growing his cropped hair and dyeing it purple. He started turning up for class wearing pink nail varnish and sparkly headbands.

His pupils at St. Mary Magdalene's Church of England Primary School in Accrington, Lancashire, couldn't help noticing. A crayon drawing of Mr Upton by a Year 6 pupil on the school's website shows him with long hair swept back over his shoulders.

One parent said: 'I saw what I thought was Mr Upton dressed as a woman in town one weekend, but I decided I had imagined it.'

Oh no, you hadn't.

Confirmation came in the school's Christmas newsletter. It started innocuously enough, with a series of routine staff announcements. Then in paragraph six, out of the blue, BOOM! Are you sitting comfortably, children?

'Mr Upton has made a significant change in his life and will be transitioning to live as a woman after the Christmas break. She will return to work as Miss Meadows.'

It went on to stress that the school is 'proud of our commitment to equality and diversity'. Of course they are.

This week, the school's 169 pupils, aged between seven and eleven, were informed class-by-class that from now on, 'Sir' would be 'Miss'.

Teachers told them that Mr Upton felt he had been 'born with a girl's brain in a boy's body' and would henceforth be living as a woman.

Nathan Upton is now in the early stages of gender reassignment treatment. He issued a statement which read: 'This has been a long and difficult journey for me and it was certainly not an easy decision to make.'

So that's all right, then. From now on, kiddies, Mr. Upton will be known as Miss Lucy Meadows.

What are you staring at, Johnny? Move along, nothing to see here. Get on with your spelling test. Today's word is 'transitioning'.

Mr. Upton/Miss Meadows may well be comfortable with his/her decision to seek a sex change and return to work as if nothing has happened. The school might be extremely proud of its 'commitment to equality and diversity'.

But has anyone stopped for a moment to think of the devastating effect all this is having on those who really matter? Children as young as seven aren't equipped to compute this kind of information.

Pre-pubescent boys and girls haven't even had the chance to come to terms with the changes in their own bodies.

Why should they be forced to deal with the news that a male teacher they have always known as Mr. Upton will henceforth be a woman called Miss Meadows? Anyway, why not Miss Upton?

Parent Wayne Cowie said the news had left his ten-year-old son worried and confused.

For the past three years he has been taught by Mr. Upton, but has now been told that he will be punished if he continues to call 'Miss Meadows', 'Mr Upton' after the Christmas holidays. 'My middle boy thinks that he might wake up with a girl's brain because he was told that Mr Upton, as he got older, got a girl's brains.'

The school shouldn't be allowed to elevate its 'commitment to diversity and equality' above its duty of care to its pupils and their parents.

It should be protecting pupils from some of the more, er, challenging realities of adult life, not forcing them down their throats.

These are primary school children, for heaven's sake. Most them still believe in Father Christmas. Let them enjoy their childhood. They will lose their innocence soon enough.

The head teacher denies that pupils will be punished for referring to the teacher as Mr. Upton but added ominously that they would be 'expected to behave properly around her'. Nathan Upton is entitled to his gender reassignment surgery, but he isn't entitled to project his personal problems on to impressionable young children.

By insisting on returning to St. Mary Magdalene's, he is putting his own selfish needs ahead of the well-being of the children he has taught for the past few years.

It would have been easy for him to disappear quietly at Christmas, have the operation and then return to work as 'Miss Meadows' at another school on the other side of town in September. No-one would have been any the wiser.

But if he cares so little for the sensibilities of the children he is paid to teach, he's not only trapped in the wrong body, he's in the wrong job.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.