



ellen krug  
writer, lawyer, human

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## **An Open Letter to the People Who Hate Me**

I woke up this morning to a blog posting about a “Free Speech Bus” that targets transgender humans and which is starting its trek across America, with New York City as its first stop.

As reported by Dominic Holden of BuzzFeed ([link](#)), the bus is a project of the National Organization of Marriage, the International Organization for the Family, and CitizenGo, a conservative online advocacy platform based in Spain.

The purpose of the “Free Speech Bus,” as Holden writes, is to evangelize that transgender people “don’t exist” and that non-transgender persons (known as “cisgender”) “must rise up to complain about their growing acceptance.”

On its website, NOM describes the reason for the bus being that “gender is based on biology, not bigotry. Men and women were created equally, each given a gender that is fixed, immutable and complementary. Rather than perpetuate a lie that gender can be changed based on emotions and feelings, we should encourage people to embrace and love who they were made to be.”

According to Joseph Grabowski, a spokesperson for NOM, the hope is that taking the bus across America will unleash a “silent majority” of people who are frustrated by the discussion about transgender people. As Holden reports, while Grabowski said that “We need a discussion about how to respect everyone,” he also claimed that being transgender is a “disorder” and that a respectful discussion about trans people “does not extend to recognizing a transgender person’s identity in public settings.” “They can live that out in private settings,” Grabowski is reported as saying.

I’m sorry, but this “Free Speech Bus” is simply too much. In essence you are about to go across America saying (a) that along with a few million other humans, I’m mentally ill; (b) that I don’t have a right to be *me*, let alone to show up in public; and (c) that I really should have tried harder to continue living as a man.

My response: *Why do you hate me so much? What did I ever do to you?*

For the record, I did try my absolute best to live my life according to my birth gender. I built quite a successful life living as a man—the kind of life that everyone aspires to have. It was filled with love, material possessions, money and social stature. When my gender issues wouldn't abate, as manifested by non-stop gut tugs and pulls, I tried like hell to do everything I could—multiple therapists, drug therapy, and resorting to alcohol as a way to cope—to remain living as a man. None of that worked.

I'm here to report that gender isn't something that one can choose. One's gender simply is. Mine happens to be female even though I was born with a penis. I even wrote a memoir about it, *Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change* (2013).

I respect your right to your religions and religious views. I don't seek to deny your existence as humans. Why in the world do you seek to deny mine?

I can assure you that I'm a good person. In fact, since transitioning genders eight years ago at age fifty-two, I'm a much better person than when I lived as a man—I'm far more compassionate, less judgmental, and more willing to work to make the world a better place.

So why do you hate me so much? More importantly, do you have any idea what your "Free Speech Bus" will do to younger people struggling with their true gender identity? Don't you realize that your "free speech" is a message of hate—and yes, that's what it is: hatred and intolerance—and that it goes to the hearts and souls of young people? How many young humans are you willing to let take their lives because you foster a society of intolerance?

How many? I want to know.

I train and speak on the power of inclusivity and compassion. Your "Free Speech Bus" is the opposite of this work. You have no idea of the degree to which you are harming humans.

Or maybe you do. Perhaps that is the point.

*ellie*