

Let's talk about trans feminism, memory, and present-day utopias with Iza Nico Borrelli

My name is **Iza Nico Borrelli**. I am a trans non-binary person; my pronouns are **they/them**, though sometimes I like to change them.

I am a **PhD student in gender studies**, specifically in political science, where my work focuses on **gender politics**.

I am also an **author** and a **trans militant activist**, active both in grassroots movements in Italy and in transnational spaces. I am currently the **co-chair of Transgender Europe**, where I work together with many others on trans rights at the European level.

00:01:06

What inspired you to become more aware of feminism and gender equality? Was there an early experience that shaped this awareness?

For me, activism is very deeply connected to simply being alive.
Maybe this is because I am a trans person.

I would sometimes love to forget about social injustice, but it's not really possible. It's a constant reminder in my life, and also in the lives of people I love and my comrades. When you are part of a marginalised community, you don't really have the privilege to separate yourself from politics.

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That's why, for many of us, the idea that *the personal is political* is not just a slogan. It's something you feel very deeply. Even something very ordinary – like walking down the street or having a coffee with friends – can become political, because society constantly reminds you where you are “supposed” to be placed, what your hierarchical position is within a patriarchal system.

At the same time, activism for me is also about **community**.

It's about being practical. It's about mutual aid. It's about staying together. It's about cooking and eating together, about making the days lighter, especially when we are facing repression or a very hostile political context.

So for me, **trans feminism is a political practice**.

It's something you do every day. It's not about symbols. It's not about slogans. It's not about saying “I am a trans feminist”. It's about **practicing trans feminism** and constantly trying to become a better person, a better comrade.

It's about trying to be the kind of person you would want beside you – when you are fighting, when you are on the bus at night, or when you are walking home alone.

00:03:30

You are the author of the book *Gender Is Over*. What is the core message of the book, and what motivated you to write it?

Gender Is Over is an essay, and yes, it definitely challenges traditional gender norms.

At its core, the book is also a **political proposal**. It focuses on what I call the **genderisation of society** – meaning how deeply gender norms structure our lives, our institutions, and our access to rights.

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The central question is: how could we live in a society where people can identify however they want – as women, as men, as non-binary people, as intersex – without society disciplining them for who they are?

This is not abstract. It's very concrete. It's about access to healthcare, administrative systems, housing, work, parental rights. Our lives should not be restricted or regulated by gender norms.

While writing the book, I also tried to reconstruct the **Italian context**. Where are we politically? What are communities and activists doing? How does institutional repression manifest itself? How are gender norms embodied within Italian society?

I also made a very conscious effort to include the perspectives of other **trans activists, trans collectives**, as well as feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements. I didn't want to speak alone. I wanted the book to reflect a collective struggle – what we are doing, where we are resisting, and where our conflicts and limits are.

00:06:06

What are the biggest challenges facing feminism and gender equality movements today, in Italy and internationally?

I think that right now the biggest challenge for feminism is **surviving and resisting** in increasingly hostile political environments – in Europe, but also globally.

We are seeing a revival of authoritarian politics that directly target women's rights, LGBTQIA+ communities, and migrants. Activists are being criminalised, silenced,

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pushed to the margins. Institutional repression is becoming more sophisticated, more normalised, and harder to confront.

At the same time, feminism is also challenged internally. There is a risk of becoming comfortable, symbolic, or depoliticised. I think feminism today must remain **radical and transformative**.

The struggles of trans people and migrants are not separate from feminism. They expose the boundaries of citizenship, bodily autonomy, and freedom more clearly than anything else. Feminism has a huge responsibility to stay revolutionary – not just in language, but in practice.

00:07:58

Looking ten years ahead, do you think things can improve? How do you imagine the future of gender politics?

To be honest, I don't have big hopes for the general political situation right now – but I would really love to be wrong.

For me, the future doesn't start in ten years.

The future starts now.

I am a big fan of utopia, but not as something distant. Utopia is not something that only exists in the future. LGBTQIA+, trans, and feminist communities already build utopia in the present – even while living under repression or in dystopian conditions.

We build utopia through care, through mutual aid, through everyday practices. When survival itself becomes resistance. When solidarity is not a hashtag, but a lifeline.

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Utopia is built when we organise demonstrations even when we are exhausted. When we cook food together. When we answer messages. When we show up for each other. And also when we allow ourselves to say: *today I can't, I need help.*

Politics is not only speeches or theories. It is practical. It is relational. That's where utopia lives.

00:11:58

How should we shape the dialogue on gender in Europe? Who should be shaping it?

This is a very complex question, and I can only give my humble opinion.

Right now, gender has become the symbolic glue of reactionary politics. Right-wing movements use “gender” as an enemy – as a contagion, as a threat – to unite very different political actors under one agenda.

At the same time, movements are often forced into a **reactive position**, responding to repression instead of setting the agenda themselves.

I think we need to be more **proactive**, while recognising how much work communities are already doing. We need to create our own spaces – spaces of survival, debate, care – and centre the experiences of trans people, migrants, and those most affected by systemic violence.

This also means practicing **radical listening**. Listening with the possibility of being changed. Not approaching conversations with dogmas, but with vulnerability and openness.

Politics, especially our kind of politics, is fundamentally about **relationships**. Complexity makes us stronger. Radicality means going to the roots, not simplifying reality.

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00:21:30

Is there something important you would like to add that we haven't asked?

Yes. I want to talk about **memory**.

One of the first things reactionary movements try to destroy is memory. History teaches us this very clearly. Fascism attacks books, archives, histories. When memory is erased, people feel isolated. They forget that they belong to a lineage, to a collective struggle.

For trans and feminist communities, memory is a powerful form of resistance. It affirms that we have always existed. That our movements are rooted in centuries of struggle.

Memory is not static. It transforms the present. It allows us to recognise ourselves in other people's stories. Sometimes, when another trans person shares a childhood memory, I suddenly remember something about myself that I had forgotten – because repression also makes us erase ourselves.

Building archives, preserving stories, remembering those who came before us – this is political work. Because what reactionary politics are trying to say is not only that we do not exist, but that we have **never existed**.

Memory says: this is not true.

And remembering is how resistance survives.

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