A statement on the Seattle Central Public Library and the Women’s Liberation Front:

Despite substantial community opposition, the Seattle Central Public Library will host the anti-trans organization the Women’s Liberation Front (WoLF) on February 1st. WoLF aggressively advocates for a “sex as gender” understanding of human identity that erases trans, intersex, and gender nonconforming (GNC) people from what we imagine as human. As advocates of the Northwest Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse, a Seattle-based, nationally reaching anti-violence organization, we are experts at identifying patterns of power and control. Through this expertise and as trans, intersex, and GNC people ourselves, we recognize WoLF’s exclusionary language as a violent tool used to attempt to gain power over our community.

The goal of their intentionally manipulative messaging is to convince the public that we perpetrate rather than suffer violence and that our existence and empowerment are the source of that violence. From our sustained advocacy against interpersonal violence, we understand that dehumanizing and villainizing people are intentional and strategic precursors to committing violence against them. In working to bar trans, intersex, and GNC people legally and culturally from what the public understands as human, WoLF hopes to encourage our exclusion and thereby justify harm against us. In the face of this violence, we assert our community’s irrefutability. We are an enduring fact. Our existence is ancient and guaranteed. And our authenticity is inalienable.

Our advocacy empowers us with an understanding of how histories of trauma and systems of oppression structure our society and our relationships. From this perspective, the Central Library’s justification to host WoLF in support of intellectual freedom and equal access to public space is neither trauma-informed nor systemically aware. Their reasoning ignores that expression and access are not neutral opportunities. Hierarchies and oppressive systems determine who speaks, where, and how loudly. For an institution insisting on intellectual freedom and equal access, the Central Library neglects its own complicity in making expression and access neither free nor equal.

By hosting WoLF, the Library not only legitimizes their violent messaging, but also fails to send an important and powerful message that we will use this statement to communicate instead: the existence of trans, intersex, and GNC people is not debatable in this community; our exclusion from the legal and institutional protections of this country will not be tolerated; and institutions dedicated to sowing hate, fear, and division are not welcome here. The Central Library’s decision begs the question of who the library is for and deepens an already substantial trust deficit with queer and trans communities.

Our work at the Northwest Network is to support queer people who have experienced harm as they return to their bodies, their communities, their families, to their places of security and autonomy. As members of trans, intersex, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming communities, we want to say unequivocally that any model of liberation built on our eradication is simply another form of tyranny. This is what WoLF offers. This is what the Central Library is making space for.
Solidarity in difference is strength and the source of our community’s power and resilience. And so, we join with the Alphabet Alliance of Color, The Board & Staff of Seattle Out & Proud, Coalition Ending Gender Based Violence, Gender Justice League, Ingersoll Gender Center, #LuluNation + Crew with Mr. B, Pride Foundation, QLaw Foundation of Washington, Queer the Land, Trans Women of Color Solidarity Network, and U.T.O.P.I.A. Seattle, to support Seattle queer communities, to oppose WoLF’s trans-exclusionary agenda, and to call on the Central Library to consistently prioritize the safety and well being of queer and trans communities, now and in the future.

To our trans, intersex, and GNC community, we all are here for you. Please do not hesitate to reach out for support. And from the Northwest Network, as always, call us if you need us.