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## Father calls the police on woman swimming topless in river in order to "protect" his children

Emmie Tyson is a Washington State topless activist in her twenties. She shares this story about her life-long activism starting when she was 7. Recently, on July 9, a father called the police on her for swimming topless in a river because he wanted to protect his children playing on the river bank.

I identify as gender-fluid, but embrace my female body. My physical body doesn't define my gender.

All my life I have felt somewhat disappointed by what I could and could not do as a woman. When I was a kid I dreamed of being a Boy Scout. All my friends were Boy Scouts and I wanted to join them on their adventures. Unfortunately, I could not join them. I was confused. Why couldn't I join my friends? Why was I being excluded because of something I was born with and could not change? Eventually I accepted it and moved on.

**One day, my father took me to the YMCA pool. I was about 7 years old and I loved swimming.** The pool wasn't in our town, so I didn't get to go too often. When I got into the changing room I realized I forgot my swimsuit top back at the house. There was no time to drive back and grab it because open swim was coming to a close. My dad and I politely asked the lifeguard if I could wear some of my street clothes into the pool. He explained how only swimwear was allowed. We then asked if I could just go shirtless. I had no breasts, and if my hair was shorter I could have been easily mistaken for a little boy. He objected and said that it would not be appropriate. I went home without going swimming that day.

**I asked my mom and dad numerous times why I couldn't go swimming without a top when the boys could. Nothing they said made any sense, and it still doesn't.**

Last year I started getting interested in being involved in the topless rights movement. Being gender-fluid; some days I just don't feel like a woman, but I embrace my body. I am treated with more respect and equality on my more masculine days. Being topless doesn't feel wrong at all. It feels natural. All the boys were doing it, why can't I? I can't change the body I was born with, besides, women are beautiful.

**Then, on July 9, 2015 in Snohomish WA, at 9:45 pm, I almost got charged with a crime for going topless.** It was dusk when my friends and I decided to go swimming. Out of respect I asked the people around me if they minded me going topless, and nobody minded except one man. He said that he didn't want his children "exposed to it". I walked down the river until I was out of sight of his children. I took my shirt off once I was fully submerged in the water. I had my back facing the side of the river he was on the whole time. I made sure not to let his children see, and they paid no attention to me. Once it was dark and they were leaving, I swam closer to their side of the river. About five minutes later there was a police officer on shore shining a light in my face. He asked me to come to shore and put a shirt on. He explained to me that the man contacted the police. The man claimed he "saw everything" and wanted to protect his children. The whole evening I was at least 100 yards away, underwater, with my back turned towards them, and it was almost completely dark out.

Although I had witnesses, the man almost pressed charges on me. **I just wanted to feel like an equal. I wasn't attacking his family, I was just enjoying the same rights that men have.** It felt terrible knowing that I could be arrested for something on my body that I did not choose to have. I could be arrested for having something that 51% of our population has. Men have nipples, and some even have breasts! **Men don't ever have to worry about being put in jail for showing their chest off.** They don't have to worry about being constantly sexualized by the media.

If we only see topless females in porn, then of course female breasts will be sexualized. **I would feel less dysphonic in my own body if I had the same treatment as men.** I'll take the good and the bad.

**I just want to be equal.**

*Emmie is organizing a GoTopless Day event in Snohomish on Aug 23rd.*



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