

*:a washy electric guitar leads in playing a progression:*

*:keyboard joins, and a drum kit comes in with a hip hop beat:*

Sekhmet SHEOWL: We can almost unanimously agree, as women around the world, that 2020 was a horrible year. We all had our lives disrupted and significantly changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still ongoing, and so many of us find ourselves worse off now at the beginning of 2021 than we were a year ago, especially when it comes to our professional and financial situations. We all have health concerns and anxiety we didn't have before the pandemic began, and we can't be sure when or if life will return to pre-pandemic conditions. Eight months of social distancing, working from home or unemployment, the shut down of public places, and a virtual elimination of group recreational activities have taken their toll on many of us, emotionally and psychologically. 2020 was a year of great loss. We lost jobs and money and things we had looked forward to. Many women lost people they cared about to death, whether through COVID or some other disease. We are still in a state of grief, and we will be for a while. Most of us seem to be cautious about 2021, and that makes sense. We don't want to get our hopes up. But we do want and need 2021 to be better than 2020. I don't think many of us can take a repeat of last year.

On the bright side, 2020 did see valuable feminist action take place around the world.

South Korean feminists formed their country's first-ever Women's Party, a culmination of the last few years of intense feminist movement building there. Thanks to those feminist women, South Korea also legalized abortion during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy in 2020.

Mexican feminists displayed some of the most powerful and memorable direct action of the year when they protested in the streets of Mexico City against the femicide that continues to plague their country. They marched with signs and face paint, full of passion and anger. Some of these women took over a federal building in the capital and turned it into a women's shelter.

Polish women protested in their streets when their Right-Wing Catholic government further restricted abortion access to near total illegality. Polish feminists also formed an LGB Alliance organization to represent them as pro-woman, pro-homosexual activists with objections to transgender ideology.

Afghani women were granted the right to have their names printed on their children's birth certificates and other national identification for the first time in Afghanistan's history.

JK Rowling built on her original 2019 Tweet defending biological sex with a well-written piece published on her website explaining her take on the gender identity issue. Despite all the death and rape threats and the abusive backlash she experienced on Twitter and the ridiculous hit pieces that liberal media spewed all over the internet in response to her, she remained steadfast in her position through the rest of the year. She even defended lesbians on her Twitter page, for her millions of followers around the world to see.

British courts ruled that children under 16 cannot consent to puberty blockers, thanks to detransitioner Keira Bell.

Just last month, Argentina finally legalized abortion. Thousands of women cried and cheered with joy in the streets when the news broke. Argentine feminists fought long and hard for that win, and at last, two decades into the twenty-first century and almost 50 years after the U.S. legalized abortion, they can enjoy it.

So, 2020 was not a total loss for women and girls, on the political front. The struggle continues, as it always does. But we can take a moment to be grateful for these victories and for the fact that women worldwide still care enough about themselves to fight male oppression.

I, for one, am not sure about setting any expectations for 2021 on the feminist front. As I said before, a cautious approach to this new year makes sense. We're all hoping it's a year of recovery from the events of 2020, and if we do mostly recover by the end of 2021, I think we should be satisfied with that, even if we do nothing else. If 2021 is even half as unpredictable as 2020 was, we're in for challenges we're probably not prepared for, and if we're lucky, we'll experience some unexpected positive developments too. Maybe 2021 should be a year that feminists focus on nurturing ourselves, replenishing our inner reserves, reflecting on what we experienced in 2020 and how we might move forward. We should continue to play it safe with our physical health for as long as the COVID pandemic rages, and we should definitely understand that just because the 2020 calendar year is over, we haven't automatically healed from its trials and losses. Be gentle with yourself and the women in your life in 2021. Look for peace and pleasure wherever you can find it, even if you continue to live in survival mode for a while. There's always going to be a never-ending stream of things to be

pissed off or worried about, if you're a woman. In 2021, allow yourself to take a mental break from all that as often as you can.