

Edition 35: Women with Disabilities

and Inclusion in Feminist Culture & Movement

Transcribed by Jenna Di Quarto

:theme music - Real Voice by Thistle Pettersen:

:sauntering acoustic guitar fades in:

*"...But through the hallways of academia
And on the face of the moon...
The footprints of conquest
Haven't left us any room.
To say what we think, or...
To speak what we know...
To hear different voices
At least a sound from below..."*

*Oh-oh oh oh oh oh...
:vocalizing fades out:*

DANIELLE: Greetings! and welcome to the 35th edition podcast of Women's Liberation Radio News for this Thursday, March 7th, 2019. This is Danielle Whitaker, WLRN's newest volunteer from Atlanta, Georgia. I'm excited to bring my writing and editing background to the collective and look forward to helping spread our message through blog and press content.

This month's edition focuses on women with disabilities and inclusion in the movement. We will unpack the word "inclusion" as it gets thrown around a lot to attack feminists and women but we feel there is a positive definition and use for the word when looking at creating a diverse and robust women's culture and movement.

We'll hear an excerpt of an interview Thistle did with Ellana Crew, a blind 22-year-old woman from Baltimore that WLRN's Thistle caught up with by phone.

We'll also hear the words of Tara Ayers, a disability rights activist, who recently wrote a guide to using small claims court to enforce the California disability rights law. She's currently on the core organizing team for the Oakland Women's March. In addition, Tara was key to organizing accessibility for women with disabilities at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival for several years. She was interviewed by WLRN's Robin Long.

The team at WLRN produces a monthly radio broadcast to break the sound barrier women are blocked by under the status quo rule of men. This blocking of women's discourse we see in all sectors of society, be they conservative, liberal, mainstream, progressive or radical. The thread that runs through all of American politics, except for separatist feminism, is male dominance and entitlement in all spheres.

To start off today's edition, here's Damayanti with women's news from around the globe for this Thursday, March 7th, 2019.

:xylophone plays root-third-fifth to indicate news segment, fades into typewriter - keys typing, bell, and register return:

:mellow electric guitar-based jazz music:

DAMAYANTI: The rapidly growing feminist movement in South Korea, which came to the forefront last year after thousands of women took to the streets to protest 'spy cam' pornography, has now taken a stand against ideals of femininity with a number of women ditching makeup, cutting their hair short, and escaping the corset. South Korea's booming beauty industry with its wide range of skin-care and cosmetic products has earned the industry the nickname "K-beauty". At the same time, it is also known as a socially conservative country – it has one of the worst gender wage gaps among developed nations and is ranked 115 out of 149 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap report. In a viral video last June, actress Lina Bae, who earlier offered beauty advice to her viewers, wiped off her makeup and revealed the dark side of femininity, sparking what has been called the 'escape the corset' movement.

According to the police force of Quebec City, underage prostitution is so prevalent in Quebec City right now that pimps from elsewhere will move to the province to find a large home, make more money, and recruit more victims of prostitution. Victims are usually tracked and recruited through social media, where if they post information indicating their vulnerability, undercover pimps know whom to target. Home-share services, such as Airbnb, are particularly useful for this exploitation as the anonymity

provided through online bookings makes it extremely easy for pimps to continue their business.

In Argentina, an 11-year-old girl, called 'Lucia' to protect her identity, was forced to deliver a child after she was raped by her grandmother's 65-year-old partner. She discovered she was pregnant on January 23rd, and was placed under state care after suffering from self-inflicted lesions resulting from apparent suicide attempts. Although abortion is illegal in Argentina, a 1921 law allows it to be performed in cases of rape or when a woman's life is in danger. A doctor declared in court that Lucía faced "high obstetric risk" should her pregnancy be allowed to continue. While she told one of the psychiatrists at the hospital, "I want you to remove what the man put inside me", the health secretary of her state insisted that the child wanted to continue with the pregnancy. Having delayed action until 23 weeks into Lucía's pregnancy, health authorities decided on Tuesday to carry out a caesarean section. While anti-abortion campaigners in the country have been popularizing the rallying cry of "save both lives", women continue to be in danger as 45,000 unsafe illegal abortions are carried out every year under the current laws.

Also in Argentina, on February 15th, a group of women from at least two radfem organizations gathered in a feminist assembly to discuss participating in a march for International Women's Day. After a heated exchange between a male trans-activist and one of the feminists, he lunged at a woman who was speaking, disrupting the meeting and initiating a melee in the crowd. According to the women involved, numbers of trans-activists denounced the meeting before it happened. Only one man was violent and there was no response from the police because there was no complaint. The main organizers of the March 8th International Women's Day march are from a collective called "Ni una menos" ("Not one less"), a fake feminist organization who stayed silent regarding the disrupted February 15th meeting until February 21st, at which time they issued a statement condemning the feminist women instead of the trans-identified male who attacked them. The woman who bore the brunt of the attack had this to say about the event: "Yes, when we went to the assembly we were really scared because in the last 3 weeks, the threats had increased on radfem social media networks...And on the same day that the first meeting was going to take place, prominent social media published 2 notes distorting us and basically encouraging trans activists to attack us." In addition to social media posts encouraging trans-activists to disrupt the meeting, there were posters put up around the meeting spot condemning the feminists as 'fascists'.

In Scotland, it was recently found that Katie Dolatowski, an 18-year-old trans-identifying male who had avoided prison sentences for sexually assaulting a 10-year-

old girl in Morrisons, Kirkcaldy, and for filming a 12-year-old over a cubicle in Asda, Dunfermline, had been placed in a women's only hostel after his conviction. One resident in the unit for homeless offenders said: "This is a women's hostel and it's all women who work here. I feel sick and can't stop thinking about what [she] has done." Despite having taken advantage of his accessibility to women's spaces to commit sexual assault, this man was given opportunity to a hostel for female offenders, where women are likely to have experienced male violence and/or abuse, and many suffer from PTSD. This was *also* despite the fact that Dolatowski had been deemed to pose a "moderate risk" of re-offending by court. The Scottish Trans Alliance was contacted for comment but did not respond. This incident highlights the dangers of gender identity legislation, which are currently under review in Scotland, and if passed, would allow people to change gender by self-declaration.

In Spain, two pimps, Cristian and Sebastian Sandulache are facing 600 years in prison for a number of crimes they committed at a brothel they ran in Oviedo, including human trafficking, coercive prostitution, and money laundering. Two of their victims who gave testimony in court had been trafficked to Spain, believing that they were coming to the country with their boyfriends in search for better prospects. Once trafficked, they were beaten, raped, and forced to become prostitutes. Many victims in their brothel, whom the brothers regularly raped, became pregnant and were sent back to Romania, while others were forced to ingest Euro notes if they did not bring in enough money. One of the women, who had trained as a wrestler in Romania and was hence physically stronger than the other women, was subjected to much harsher beatings by the brothers. After one such beating, when she could not get out of bed, the men chopped off her arm with a samurai sword. Prosecutors also said that the rapists had modified their penises with the addition of metal balls to make their raping more painful. The men were not deemed a flight risk and hence released on bail while their trial continues. Meanwhile, prostitution is decriminalized in Spain, and the need for the adoption of the Nordic model, which is currently being drafted by the government, becomes visibly urgent.

In India, thousands of women walked 10,000 kilometers (6,200 miles) across the country - covering 200 districts in 24 states - to raise awareness about the prevalence of rape. The 'Dignity March' started in Mumbai, and ended in Delhi, drawing sexual assault survivors from across the subcontinent. Rape is one of the most under-reported crimes in India - with some estimates indicating 90-95% of rape cases remain unreported. The conviction rate for crimes against women overall in India is very low - only 18.9%, compared to the average conviction rate for all crimes at 47%. According to the latest official crime statistics from 2016, conviction rates for crimes against women are at their lowest in a decade. Women wanted to raise a voice -

against a culture of victim blaming which disables women, especially lower-caste, lower-class, tribal, and Muslim women, from accessing justice; For better implementation of existing laws; For a more sensitive and accountable police force; And for more money to be allocated to end gender-based violence. They also demanded an end to medico-legal practices such as the two-finger test, which involves a medical practitioner inserting two fingers into the vagina in an attempt to determine if the hymen is broken and to test laxity. Although the practice was made illegal in 2013, it is still used to discredit sexual assault victims as being 'habituated to sex'.

Feminist Current founder, Meghan Murphy, filed a lawsuit against Twitter after she was banned from the platform over tweets referring to a transgender individual by their biological sex, and stated in a tweet the simple fact that "women aren't men". Twitter's policy read, "We prohibit targeting individuals with repeated slurs, tropes or other content that intends to dehumanize, degrade or reinforce negative or harmful stereotypes about a protected category", and in late October, Twitter added "targeted misgendering or dead-naming of transgender individuals" to its list of prohibited behavior, and applied the policy retroactively to Murphy's earlier tweets. After temporarily shutting down her account multiple times, they locked her verified account saying that she had violated their hateful-conduct policy. Before being banned, she had tweeted "I'm not allowed to say that men aren't women or ask questions about the notion of transgenderism at all anymore?... That a multi-billion dollar company is censoring basic facts and silencing people who ask questions about this dogma is insane." Her lawsuit accuses the company of "false advertising" and "deceptive" conduct as they have actively silenced women on a platform they have marketed as a place meant for the sharing of ideas.

In El Salvador, the supreme court has overturned a 30-year sentence for a teenage rape victim who was convicted of aggravated homicide after having a stillbirth. You may recall WLRN reporting on the story of Evelyn Beatríz Hernández Cruz, 19, who was found guilty in July 2017 on the grounds that failing to seek antenatal care amounted to murder. She had been raped repeatedly by a gang member, and had not realized that she was pregnant. As a high school student, Cruz gave birth in a toilet in April 2016 after falling ill with acute back and stomach pain. It was not clear whether the fetus had died in utero or after the delivery; But during her trial, the female judge accepted the prosecutor's claims that Hernandez had failed to seek antenatal care because she did not want the baby, and threw him into the toilet intending to kill him. Abortion in all cases is illegal in El Salvador.

The Canada Games Board adopted a new gender inclusion policy last December, which was applied to this year's Canada Winter Games that just took place. According to this policy, athletes can live and compete as the gender they identify with. The policy stated, "The CGC recognizes that sex and gender are not the same thing, and that individuals are born with different combinations of sex and gender as part of their identity". This came after U Sports, the governing body of university athletics in Canada, announced a new transgender policy in September that allows athletes to compete on teams that correspond with their gender identity. Some of the sports played in the Canada Winter Games include Swimming, Boxing, and Judo, events in which men will have a clear physical advantage over women, but will be able to compete under the female category.

In the Dominican Republic of Congo, research by local Non-Governmental Organizations has pointed out that women and girls have become increasingly vulnerable to sexual violence and stigma ever since the onset of the Ebola virus and in the subsequent efforts to offer vaccinations by the World Health Organization. The N.G.O.'s report follows calls by international health experts urging the W.H.O. to consider issuing a global alert in response to the outbreak. The report was presented in a national task-force meeting in Beni, and revealed that many women and girls were given vaccinations in exchange for sexual favours. Concerns were also raised over a reported increase in stigma and violence facing women. Some women are blamed for failing to prevent the spread of the disease. Women, who are responsible for caring for the sick and ensuring that children wash their hands, faced a rising workload, with many feeling traumatized and exhausted. One participant in a focus group said women are isolated during their periods, and are being accused of having the virus. There were also rumours on social media about women working on the Ebola response being given jobs in exchange for sexual favours.

In Costa Rica, four women have accused the former president Óscar Arias Sánchez of sexual assault within a 48 hour long period. Twice president of Costa Rica, Sanchez was extremely influential and had won the Nobel Prize in 1987 for his effort to bring peace to Central America. Two journalists and a book editor came forward after the New York Times and Seminario Universidad published accounts by a psychiatrist at a state hospital in San José, Costa Rica, who filed a formal criminal complaint against Mr Arias four years ago. The most recent of these was by Eleonora Antillón who was sexually assaulted by him while he was a presidential candidate and she was his press aide.

On February 24th, long time disability advocate Carrie Ann Lucas, died at the age of 47. For over a year, Lucas struggled from the effects of being denied coverage for a

trach and lung infection. Her insurer, UnitedHealthcare, denied her a specific kind of inhaled antibiotic that it was believed would have made all the difference in her recovery. A post to her facebook following her death stated "This created a cascade of problems, loss of function (including her speech). United Healthcare's attempt to save \$2,000 cost over \$1 million in health care costs over the past year. This includes numerous hospitalizations, always involving the Intensive Care Unit which is par for the course for ventilator users." Carrie Ann's legacy includes the founding of Disabled Parents Rights, and fighting against physician-assisted suicide laws. In 2017, she was arrest after a 58-hour sit-in protesting Republicans' planned cuts to Medicaid. The charge was 'police interference' after she refused to explain to the police how to operate her wheelchair, and instead offered the suggestion of googling its operation. This Amazon womon is survived by her partner and 3 children.

That concludes WLRN's world news segment for Thursday, March 7th, 2019. I'm Damayanti. Share your news stories and tips with us by emailing wlrnewscontact@gmail.com and letting us know what's going on in your world!

:Song interlude - Someday We'll Linger in the Sun by Gaelynn Lea:

:bowed, solitary violin gradually building with use of a loop pedal:

:string plucks:

*Our love's a complex vintage wine
All rotted leaves and lemon rind
I'd spit you out but now you're mine*

*We bit the fruit, it seemed a lie
I'll never know which way was right
Now side by side we face the night*

*And I love you~~~
And I love you~~~*

*We walked the pier and back again
It was the most scared I've ever been
You held my hand until the end*

And I love you~~~

And I love you~~~

*Don't tell me we've got time
The subtle thief of life
It slips away when we pay no mind*

We pulled the weeds out til the dawn..."

:fades:

DANIELLE: That was Gaelynn Lea with her song *Someday We'll Linger in the Sun*. Next up we'll hear excerpts of an interview Thistle did with [Ellana Crew](#), a blind lesbian feminist living in Baltimore who ordered a t-shirt from WLRN and then was put in touch with a proud and growing number of radical women in her area. She is deeply involved in blindness activism and was excited to talk about the practice of feminism within the context of the word "inclusion" as a blind woman who is friends with many sighted feminists.

Thistle PETERSEN: I have Ellana Crew on the line with me. She is a lesbian living in Baltimore and a friend of Julia Becks, basically, is how we were able to get in touch with Elena. Elena, would you like to introduce yourself to our listeners?

Ellana CREW: Sure. Hi, my name is Ellana Crew. I do live in Baltimore. Funny enough I met Julia because I just ordered a t-shirt from WLRN and Julia responded and was like, hey I think your address is pretty close to where I am do you want to meet up? ... and I've been hanging out with some radical women ever since. And I am a blind lesbian; I am 22-years-old, and I've been blind all my life...

PETERSEN: ...And earlier we did some emailing back and forth and you had talked about saying 'blind' instead of saying 'non-seeing', or, you know, 'sight-challenged' or something like that - can you talk about that distinction and why that's important?

CREW: Sure. So, in the blindness community in particular there are a lot of possible words that people tend to use to talk about blindness. Very common is 'low-vision' and 'visually-impaired', but you also sometimes see ones that sound a little more outlandish, like 'optically-precluded'; And they are usually created, not by blind people ourselves but, they're typically made by, sort of, sighted professionals or

quote unquote professionals in the field of blindness - people who go into schools and teach blind children how to use canes and how to read Braille, or use magnification devices as it were, or sometimes it's pushed by the parents of a disabled child - of a blind child - to say, 'oh 'blind' is too harsh a word,' especially because most blind people out there do have at least some level of remaining vision, whether it might be as little as only being able to see light and dark or something more substantial where I've got, where it's more like just looking through a foggy mirror all the time, even with glasses, and it creates a sort of visual hierarchy that has been kind of plaguing our community for decades. So we, at least in our community, most of us tend to prefer just the word 'blind' because no matter how much leftover vision you have, we know very well that we're all capable of the same exact things; We can use the same non-visual techniques, and we feel that using a lot of those visual marker terms is, number one just dishonest to who we are because we never asked to be called anything but blind - that was more created by sighted parents and professionals - and, we feel it doesn't really put us on kind of the equal playing field that we know that we really are on. None of us are better than the others for having more vision or less vision.

PETTERSEN: Mmhm. And, you know, this brings us to the topic of inclusion - you're saying that it's people who are not blind who are pushing terms to create hierarchies around vision and not being able to see as those of us who do have vision and can read, and, you know, all these distinguishing factors that are not necessary to highlight, really, because those of us who can see - we can get glasses that can correct whatever visual problem, you know? I don't know I see what you're saying, that it's like you're all on an equal playing field even though some of you can see some things, and that to be inclusive of blind people, it's really important to allow and to promote and encourage blind people to speak for themselves and to define themselves, and to say what terms feel and are correct for themselves - That's like a way of being truly inclusive, am I right?

CREW: Mmhm, yeah, definitely a big piece of the message is that, a lot of blindness activism done by blind people was really started as kind of a response to the fact that most of our decisions were being made for us by sighted professionals who didn't really know what it was like to be blind, so they just assumed, well if you're totally blind, clearly you can't do nearly as much; But when we get together and we talk amongst ourselves and we start asking each other questions, when we finally get to meet other blind people, we start realizing, oh there's really no difference - a totally blind person is doing the exact same stuff that I am doing, sometimes better because they're not trying to rely on a vision that's not really all that good, whereas some of us tend to fall into that habit of, 'oh if I could just turn my head the right way...'. So really

what it's been about is realizing that blind is not a dirty word and that totally blind people are not any lesser than anybody else, and that all of us fall into that category because all of us have to use a substantial amount of alternative techniques to, you know, get our daily tasks done every day, even if we do have a large amount of leftover vision. So it's a way to simplify things and say, we're not really all that different. We all use the same techniques and it doesn't matter how much left over vision you have. You're all entirely capable.

PETTERSEN: Mmhm. Yeah, and getting back to something that we were talking about before we turned on the recorder, about the word 'inclusion' and 'inclusivity' - I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit more about that in terms of sighted people or hearing people having ways of thinking that are exclusive unknowingly, and how that can be remedied, and how that word 'inclusion' often gets used as a weapon against women, especially with, you know, trans-ideology obviously, because we're not including men in the category 'woman'. Can you talk about, like, how that term can be used in a positive way in our feminist movement to be truly inclusive of all women of differing abilities? And then, you know, how we can stop using it in a way that's misogynistic.

CREW: Yeah so, I'm kind of at that point where I've started developing that sort of knee-jerk *:makes sound ~ whuh!:* reaction to the word 'inclusion' because it's just been used so overwhelmingly to try and push for trans-identified males into women's spaces and to push for 'everyone belongs in everything' and 'feminism is about everyone not just women'; But on the other side of the fence, too, I'm still in this other group where, as a blind person, I *am* regularly excluded from activities, not because I'm physically incapable but because of expectations from others, or because of just the simple fact that people don't always know, so I find that it's a word that still keeps coming back in a slightly different context as more important than I thought it was when I was starting to get a little fed up with it in just the feminist arena so... Women with disabilities are - we're out here. We're out here, we want to be part of the conversation. I think there are more disabled women out there who are in feminist circles than we necessarily know about at any given time, and...

PETTERSEN: ...Sometimes - maybe what you're trying to say is, those of us who don't have disabilities, we may need some coaching and some reminders for how to be inclusive, truly inclusive, and welcoming...

CREW: Yeah.

PETTERSEN: ...and believing in...Because really, what you're talking about, I heard you say quite a few times, is 'We are capable. We can do things.' We've known for years now how to help blind people see with a cane and with Braille - now with all the technology that's out there, like, really, it doesn't make sense to see blind people or deaf people as disabled necessarily. It's more like they have a different culture; There's a different way of doing things. And, I can say that, Michfest culture became... I feel like it was so feminist and inclusive in that feminist way, that's truly using the good side of that word, that there were the deaf and hard-of-hearing interpreters up on stage, the rock-and-roll music playing, and the interpreter there, usually dressed all in black looking very theatrical doing this amazing interpreting for the deaf and hard-of-hearing women that are sitting in a place close to the stage so they can see that... And it added so much for everyone, you know? Like it wasn't... Anyway it's just another way of hearing - hearing through your hands instead of through your ears, and so I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that too.

CREW: Yeah, I mean, when we bring in women from all kinds of backgrounds and all kinds of lifestyles, I mean there are endless things that we end up learning about all these other groups, just like we, you know, we talk regularly about what are the unique experiences of being a black woman specifically? What are the unique experiences of being a lesbian woman? And I think once we start talking to each other we start hearing these stories, we go, 'you know that something I hadn't quite considered,' and it strengthens our own understanding of the movement; So when we get together and start hearing from disabled woman, what are these experiences that are kind of heightened for disabled women or maybe even unique, and how can we learn from that? How come we start tackling those issues too and remembering that disabled women are part of our fight? They are part of liberation and - how can we learn from it to expand our own mission?

PETTERSEN: Yeah and, you know, Michfest really was a living example of doing that year after year. The other woman that we're interviewing for this program, Tara Ayres, worked with DART, the - I don't remember what the acronym stands for but it was D-A-R-T - and it was an area - I mean we were camping at Michfest, you know, so you can imagine, like, being in a wheelchair and trying to get onto The Land and into a tent and, you know... it was an amazing challenge and awesome feat that Michfest made it a priority to create an accessible campground. And they did it.

CREW: Yeah.

PETTERSEN: ...and I feel like in men's world, in male-dominated culture, you wouldn't see that kind of cooperation and inclusivity and diversity, you know?

Celebration of diversity. Of course, yes, there are issues to be resolved and there are conflicts and problems but, I guess what I'm trying to talk about is like, the richness of the culture that can come forth when every disability is viewed as a challenge to overcome, and, you know, find other ways. It's like the water's always flowing; If there's a boulder in the way it's going to flow around the boulder, you know? So, just sort of a different way of looking at disabilities. I wonder what you think of that.

CREW: So I do at least - before I address the general topic of accessibility, I do want to talk a little bit about what you were mentioning a couple times about viewing disability as not necessarily disability but, you know, just a difference and, I do want to say that, in most communities, the word 'disability' is important to us and it is something that we do like to use and that we do intentionally identify with and it is because of the way that we think about the word disability. So to a lot of people, they hear that word and, there's a community out there, particularly sighted or able-bodied professionals sometimes, but sometimes disabled people themselves that says, 'oh the word 'disability' on its own is already a bad word. You're just setting yourself up for a negative attitude. When you look at the root - it's like, 'dis', which is 'not', and 'ability', which is... 'ability', *:laughs:* ...and, you know, there's this idea that the word itself carries all these negative connotations and is going to set you up for negative thinking; But to many of us the word 'disability' is nothing more than a term to describe something about our body. So like, just as though the word 'woman', to me, does not, like, automatically mean, you know, daintiness and femininity and subordination and just all these feminine gender roles, and it literally just means 'adult human female', the word 'disability' also doesn't have to mean anything like hopeless or incapable of having, like, a family or participating in society or, this is sort of hopeless bleak attitude. To me it literally just means that there is some sort of mechanical function somewhere in the body or maybe the brain that doesn't work the way it's supposed to, hence the 'disabled' - it is not able to perform the way it is probably intended to, but it doesn't carry any of that social understanding of, "disability' has to be a bad word because it means that it's negative and it's bad and..."; No, it's really just about the physical characteristic, not about all these social expectations.

PETTERSEN: Right, it's just describing the physical characteristic, similar to what you're saying about the word 'woman' - adult human female.

CREW: Exactly.

PETTERSEN: 'It's a fact that my eyes do not have sight,' and that's a fact and there's nothing bad or wrong about that, and I guess that's what I was getting to. But I mean

it's just very interesting how these things work to create a society and, getting back to Michfest culture and society and how it's different than male culture and society.

CREW: Yes.

PETTERSEN: Like you'd never go to a rock-and-roll camp out concert in the woods in men's world.

CREW: No. *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: ...and by 'men's world' I mean, you know, any rock show pretty much. Even if there're women there, it's like, most of the people on stage are men performing, *:laughs:* you know? And it's not going to be a place where they're going to have a deaf interpreter up there,

CREW: No.

PETTERSEN: ...you know what I mean? Like, it's not going to be a place where they think about people in wheelchairs and, 'how are they going to be able to get down to the dance floor?' or... It's been very beneficial in Michfest culture for everyone to pay attention to each other and all of the different things that we bring - a lot of them from men's world, you know? Like racism and all these horrible things that that we bring - internalized misogyny - to Michfest culture, but... I'm about to cry saying this...

CREW: Oh! *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: One of the last things I saw in 2015 when Michfest ended, was a woman of color from the Women of Color tent - you know the group that had their separate space within this separate space - and she said, you know, 'I miss you my sisters. I can't believe it's over. ...Where we came to this place for 40 years where misogyny existed, you know; We had internalized misogyny but, we had a workshop for that.' You know? And it just made me realize that women are working it through; Like, women aren't afraid to look at the demons of society and face our own demons and do the best that we can, and we should be in charge of the entire world! *:laughs:*

CREW: *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: You know? Because it's like, instinctual almost, you know? I don't know if you ever got to go to Michfest - did you?

CREW: I did not but that's exactly what else I wanted to bring up. Like in women's spaces, there is power like nowhere else to really think about how we actually interact with each other and how we actually include women in the conversation that doesn't happen in men's spaces in nearly the same way. Women's spaces, especially in fem-like, genuine feminist spaces where we actually are already operating with a really high level of critical thought and class analysis... In men spaces you don't really get that, you just get pushed aside as an afterthought; But we are in this unique position where we are already always trying to consider the fact that there are multiple layers to any woman circumstances in the world, and we are ready to learn about it and to take it in and work with it and say, 'okay, let's figure out how to make this work for you,' and make this work for you to where, unlike any other space, women spaces don't become quite so loaded down with all of this... with all of these prejudices. It doesn't become as weighted down with these messages of racism and ableism and all these other things out here...

PETTERSEN: ...Or it's there but -

CREW: Right.

PETTERSEN: I wish we could I could remember her name - 'we've got a workshop for that...'

CREW: Yes!

PETTERSEN: '...so if you want to talk about it and go work on it and work it through, we provide the space - a safe space - to do that.'

CREW: Exactly.

PETTERSEN: You know?

CREW: Like it's going to be there, we were raised with these prejudices, it's not going to be easy to get it - you know, you're not just going to entirely get rid of everything super fast, but, we're in a space where we can create that and women are receptive to it. We say, 'we want to learn and we can create that workshop,' and women will come.

PETTERSEN: Well, and I love your optimism! You're 22-years-old, you never got to go to Michfest; It ended in 2015...

CREW: Yeah.

PETTERSEN: ...What do you see for your generation coming up, as far as creating these safe, women-only spaces? Because, I mean trans-activism has just gained in power since Michfest ended, as far as from my vantage point, and so, like, where are women going to be able to gather without getting totally harassed and shut down?

CREW: Oh gosh. And that's one of the most difficult things to think about, and I do think about it, and I worry that we're not going to have some of these spaces in a few years, or we're already starting to lose some of them now. I have been extremely proud of the places that are standing their ground though, trying to rebuild something, trying to establish female only space...

PETTERSEN: ...Like Michigan Family Reunion for example?

CREW: Exactly, exactly.

PETTERSEN: Are you going to go?

CREW: I'm going to try very sincerely. It has been about money for the last year or two for me...

PETTERSEN: Mmhm, mmhm.

CREW: ...But there's also - transportation is a concern of mine, mostly because I'm not going to be able to get in a car and drive up there so, I'd have to fly...

PETTERSEN: Mmhm.

CREW: ...but, you know, these festivals do sometimes happen to happen in, kind of, in the middle of the woods, you know, as we do, in the middle of not-easy-to-get-to places, which means there's *probably* not going to be a bus stop outside or a Greyhound stop right there.

PETTERSEN: Mmhm.

CREW: So the transportation from an airport or from wherever....

PETTERSEN: You know, it's good to hear your cheerfulness and your optimism being the age that you are and, never having been able to go to Michfest, you know. I want to agree with you. I was really impressed by the Ohio Lesbian Festival which is an all-

inclusive, anybody who identifies as a woman - you know, even if you don't - like some - one girl brought her boyfriend *:laughs:*

CREW: *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: *:laughing:* Like, why, you know? But, even with that, the way that they see 'inclusion' - I talked with the Ohio Lesbian Festival director and she's like, 'That means everyone. That means radical feminists. That means we include lesbian, radical feminists.'

CREW: Oh wow!

PETTERSEN: And so, because of that, it - I mean again, it was women! Women are able to do things...

CREW: Yeah.

PETTERSEN: ...in ways that I just don't see men able to work on social issues and problems amongst themselves the way that women are able to do it. It's so impressive.

CREW: Yeah, men just don't work together that way, they don't have those discussions nearly as well. They're really not interested in having those discussions in the first place, and women come from this place where we've all been in that excluded class of people, to the point where we have these conversations and we say, 'yeah, we want to talk it out. We want to actually make some common ground here,' and that's kind of incredible.

PETTERSEN: Right on. May it continue into the unforeseeable future...

CREW: *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: ...and *:laughs:* aw, Ellena! I can't wait to meet you in person, thank you so much

CREW: Of course!

PETTERSEN: ...for this interview today. Yeah, is there anything else you'd like to say to our WLRN listeners who are largely lesbians and radical feminists?

CREW: I would say, keep on going. Don't lose hope, don't give up on the fight yet; Remember that disabled women want to be included and do the best you can to make that happen whether it's as simple as adding an image description to your organizations photo post, or adding captions to your videos, or transcripts to your audio files, or making a physical venue wheelchair accessible or... I mean the list could go on in theory but *:laughs:* there are definitely things that can provide barriers that we absolutely have the tools and the power to remedy. We have the power to make accessible PDF documents and we have the power to make whatever we want at this point so, don't give up, don't lose hope, and remember your sisters.

:Song interlude - I'm a Whole Lotta Woman by Johnnie Mae Dunson:

:acoustic guitar and harmonica - blues riff throughout song:

:spoke-sung:

Now when I was a little girl

:riff:

I was just runnin' around

:riff:

I made the clouds come out

:riff:

I made the sun go down

:riff:

Now wasn't that a woman

:riff:

I'm jus' a whole lotta woman

:riff:

I say I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm jus' a love makin' woman

:riff:

Yes I was born

:riff:

[indiscernible]

:riff:

I was born to be a lover girl

:riff:

And I don' have no fear

:riff:

Now ain't I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm jus' a great big woman

:riff:

I say I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm just a heart-breakin' woman

:riff:

You know I spoke to the water

:riff:

And I come to see

:riff:

I looked at the leaves, man

:riff:

And made 'em fall from a tree

:riff:

Now ain't I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm jus' a whole lotta woman

:riff:

I say I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm jus' a love makin' woman

:riff:

You know I had all the boys

:riff:

Goin' aroun' crying

:riff:

I had the women crackin' up

:riff:

And it was drivin' men outta dey minds

:riff:

Now dontcha know I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm a heart-breakin' woman

:riff:

I say I'm a woman

:riff:

I'm a love breakin' woman

:riff:

Heeeey Jimmy!

:riff:

Lemme hear some guitar, man

:riff:

Heeeey!

:riff:

Lemme hear some guitar, man

:riff:

Oh yeah

:riff:

:acoustic guitar soloing over blues riff:

Alright, bring some guitar, man

:soloing continues:

Alright...

:harmonica soloing:

:fade out:

JENNA: That was *I'm a Whole Lotta Woman* from Johnnie Mae Dunson. Now we turn to an interview Robin did with [Tara Ayres](#). Ms. Ayres is a cultural activist who has spent the last 43 years producing women's, and lesbian and gay concerts, theater and other cultural events - first in Kansas City, then in Connecticut and Wisconsin, and now in the San Francisco Bay Area. After years of producing women's concerts and dances in Madison, WI, she served for 9 years as the Artistic Director of StageQ, Madison's LGBT theater troupe. A disability rights activist, Tara recently wrote a guide to using small claims court to enforce the California disability rights law. She's currently on the core organizing team for the Oakland Women's March. This interview segment begins with

Ms. Ayers talking about bringing accessibility to the Michigan Women's Music Festival.

Tara AYERS: Long before I had a disability, there used to be a lesbian separatist camping area at Festival and one of the things we did there was lay rug paths through that area and areas where the festival itself didn't because we wanted to make sure that the meetings and gatherings we were having there were accessible to women with mobility impairments so, you know... I do know that, you know, what was going on at Festival had an impact on a lot of women - how well that translates into practice globally, I don't know. I just feel, I do feel like Festival was responsible for moving a lot of women forward on a ton of issues and disability would be one of those.

Robin LONG: It sounds like the whole learning curve during the entirety of Michfest would make a great book.

AYERS: Oh I'm sure it would! *:laughs:* Well, I'm sure for those of us who kind of grew up at Festival, you know, I'm sure we've got a different take on that than women who came in at the end who, you know, for whom radical feminism and lesbian feminism was a brand new concept. I'm sure to a lot of women who are coming in later it just looked like a lot of weird rules, you know? ...And I certainly heard that from younger friends who, you know, hadn't been there before - it's like they didn't understand it; And then some women just took to it like ducks to water so... It wasn't like there was a user's guide to coming into this bizarre alternative reality that was Michfest.

LONG: Mhm. Well, Michfest for so many of us was like a utopia. What have your experiences been since Michfest compared to that? Especially in women's events?

AYERS: Uhh...well... *:laughs:* Hmm... You know, I mean one of the things Michfest was for women with disabilities was - you know, there was a thing I think for a lot of women at Michfest - that moment where you realized that you were not going to be sexually assaulted there and were able to - you know there's been a lot of writing about this and certainly a lot of discussion about this - for women living in a rape culture, we are braced all the time and hyper-vigilant all the time against the possibility of sexual assault and one of the things that tons of us have talked and written about with regard to Festival is that, you know, being in this women-only environment for a lot of us allowed us to relax profoundly in a way we didn't anywhere else in the world and I don't want to overstate how safe Michigan might or might not have been for women of color or for women with disabilities but at least with regard to rape culture... You know I think that for all of us there was a moment early on where, you know, you might be naked in the showers under the sky or you

might be walking home - walking back to your tent late at night - and suddenly realized and being tensed against, you know, what we're always all tensed against and suddenly realizing that no one was going to jump you; That you were actually, physically safe in a way you never were anywhere else in the world, and that's an amazing feeling. ...And so I think that's kind of true globally for women who went to Michfest and, for women with disabilities the fact that - I mean the downside to the disabled resource area, to DART, is that it could feel ghetto-izing; You know, that we were all kind of crammed together and it wasn't folks who necessarily really had anything in common or would have... You know, some of us would have chosen, absent disability, to be in quiet camping, and some would have chosen to be in loud and rowdy camping, and some would have chosen to be in family camping, and some would have chosen to be in the Twilight Zone, right? So...

LONG: Sure.

AYERS: ...It wasn't a group of women who necessarily would have chosen to all be camping together based on our camping needs but, because it - so, it *could* feel ghettoizing but, that's the downside; The upside is, it created community so that women with disabilities got to meet and talk to each other and experience a sense of community that a lot of women with disabilities don't have in the greater world, right? ...Because a lot of women with disabilities aren't in disability community... Though I do know women with disabilities who camped in DART, in some cases only because they needed access to electricity for their CPAPs, and then got radicalized around disability because they were in that kind of community so, you know, it did... I think it did for adult women in some ways what 'crip camps' - what summer camps for disabled kids - did for a lot of kids with disabilities is that they, you know, they throw people together and those people make community with each other, so I actually think that actually was a real upside of DART.

LONG: Well, I was wondering what projects you've been involved with since Michfest - you're a very busy woman.

AYERS: I am. Well my major commitment these days is that I'm on the core organizing team for the Oakland Women's March so, I produce the rally for the March and I also coordinate access. So that's my major formal activity these days. For a while I was on the board of directors for the group that's buying The Land where Michfest used to happen though I'm no longer on that board, but ...You know, I wander around a lot and participate in a variety of groups and actions, it's just that the Women's March is the only thing I'm formally engaged with these days, so...

LONG: And how different is it for you to do the women's March as opposed to working on The Land at Michigan? Are there a lot of the same things you need to think about and planning or...

AYERS: You know, organizing something in a city is a lot easier than coordinating, trying to do access on an undeveloped piece of rural land so, you know... And there are still things that we switch up every year and try to do better. I mean you know, this was only the 3rd March this year so, it's not like we've got years and years of experience under our belt but, you know, I've also - when I started working on this I could draw on years of my own and other people's experience in putting this together so it wasn't like I was starting from scratch. So you know, I definitely draw on my experience with Michigan but this is, I have to say - coordinating access for something for a one-day event in a city is *a lot* easier than coordinating access for an undeveloped piece of rural land for a week for, you know...

LONG: *:laughs:*

AYERS: ...hundreds of women, so...

LONG: ...Yeah. Well inclusivity isn't just providing physical space...

AYERS: Right.

LONG: ...so that people can access, it's also a mindset...

AYERS: Right.

LONG: ...What can the women's community do to be more open to including people from various disability cultures into their community?

AYERS: Well, I mean I think the starting place is that there has to be an understanding that disability inclusion is a social justice issue, it's not 'being nice to poor cripples'; It's not making sure that your friend with a disability can get in; It's about creating the kind of world we want to live in and it's about social justice, so I think starting with that kind of mindset - because you know, almost all almost every trope about disability is about 'taking care of those poor people', and you know... This isn't about taking care of us; This is about social justice. This is not about people with disabilities as objects of pity or as needing anything special because - you know it's interesting, most disability rights activists I know cringe at the phrase 'special needs' because - I don't have any special needs. I use a wheelchair to get around, but I don't have any special

needs. I need, you know, food and shelter and meaningful work and enough income to live securely and I need housing and I need to be loved - I need the same things everybody else needs; What happens in an ableist culture is that, you know, certain people look like they don't need anything. I mean the closer you are to a wealthy, able-bodied, white male in this culture, the less needy you look because the entire culture is set up to meet your needs and provide for your needs, right? ...And the further away from that you are, the more 'special' your needs look. I mean, able-bodied people have had their dependencies normalized, and people with disabilities - our needs look abnormal, they look 'special'. Well our needs aren't special, we just need to be able to get in the door and participate fully with everybody else. But you know, the tropes of disability are all about, you know, 'doing special stuff for those special people', which looks costly and burdensome and hard to do; And that's only because we've got a mindset that says, 'the people with disabilities are the problem,' not, 'the lack of access is the problem,' not, 'the attitudes are the problem,' not, 'the injustice is the problem,' you know? ...And if we would just, you know, settle for whatever our problematic bodies - whatever able-bodied people feel like doing for our problematic bodies, then, you know...mostly if we would go away and shut up then everything would be okay... But again, you know, if you don't actually have - if you can't shift your thinking from, 'the bodies of people with disabilities,' or, 'the bodies and minds of people with disabilities are the problem,' to, 'the lack of access and the institutional barriers to access, and ableism are the problems,' you are never actually going to create an inclusive culture, you're never going to create a truly radical movement.

LONG: Hm.

AYERS: ...And above and beyond that you then you actually need to educate yourself, in the same way that I as a white woman have an obligation to educate myself about racism and white supremacy, you know, you've got to go out and do some work to make that happened. ...And a lot of folks, you know, they say they want to help people with disabilities or they want to make the world more accessible, and the minute you actually ask people to do any work around this, they disappear, and it seems too hard for them, so... Anyway I'm sorry, I interrupted you.

LONG: Oh no that's fine. I was also wondering, are there any special considerations people should take into account for people with invisible disabilities?

AYERS: Well absolutely, and you know, one of the things that - I mean, because people with vis - I mean wheelchair users, when somebody says 'a disabled person', everybody visualizes a wheelchair user, right? I mean maybe some people might

visualize somebody - a blind person using a white cane, but you know, when you say 'a disabled person,' almost everybody visualizes a wheelchair user, and there are tons of hidden disabilities and, the problems that folks with invisible disabilities have is that, A) their need for services is policed so, you know... I was actually on the train last week and there was a young woman sitting across from me who, I'm pretty certain has some kind of mobility impairment because I watched her get on the train and it looked like she was walking - like walking might have been a little bit painful for her. So she sat down - I was sitting - my wheelchair and I were parked in the parking place for wheelchairs - but she sat down in one of those seats that's reserved for seniors and pregnant women and people with disabilities and, you know, somebody who got on the train as it got more crowded later gave her shit for taking up that space... And it's like, I would bet a paycheck that that woman needed that spot and, you know, somebody who was trying to protect people with disabilities was actually being incredibly oppressive to her. So you know, there's that problem; And then there's also - one of the most common hidden disabilities is chemical sensitivities and, you know, how ubiquitous scented laundry detergent and fabric softener is and scented personal care products, and then people actually wearing cologne on top of that... I mean I have friends with multiple chemical sensitivities who can't be in social justice places because nobody says in addition to, 'this space is wheelchair accessible,' nobody says - or hardly anybody says - 'be fragrance-free here.' There are disability rights groups where I live who ask people to be fragrance-free when they come in, and I have a couple of doctors offices where I go where they ask their patients to be fragrance-free, but, it is so unusual and people just can't access the world if they can't walk into the cloud of toxic chemicals that is the average gathering place... There's a queer anti-fascist network here that I have friends who are involved with and I have been on their case about having fragrance-free events for the last two years, and you know, they keep approaching it and then they say, 'oh we can't enforce that,' and, 'what do we do if people show up who aren't fragrance-free,' and it's like, you can make the ask! If you put in your publicity that people need to be fragrance-free then you at least have a chance in hell that people are going to come fragrance-free; Why are you not even willing to take that step?

LONG: Would a fragrance-free area in a large gathering even make a difference?

AYERS: Oh yeah, absolutely and in fact it is what disability - there is a disability-centric performance art group here in the Bay Area called Sins Invalid and one of the things they do - also the disability studies program at UC Berkeley does this too - is that we create a fragrance-free area inside the venue and then we will put a fragrance-free moat around it - so for example, I am not chemically sensitive but I haven't used - I've been fragrance for years and years because I'm not going to contribute to making

people in my community sick, and and also because I've been reading about MCS for so many years I don't particularly want to add to my personal toxic load that people are carrying with all the chemicals in this culture so, anyway I don't need chem-free space but I am fragrance free because I don't want to make people sick so, you know, when Sins Invalid has a concert they have fragrance-free seating area that's generally at the far side of the hall so, you know, it is as safe as possible, and then there's generally a moat around it where people like me sit because I don't need the chem-free space, but I can help provide a barrier. So yeah, absolutely, that makes a huge difference. So asking people to come fragrance-free - you know, we are 100% certain that even if you ask people to come fragrance-free, not everyone will or people - people can't even smell their own products, right? Or you know, people who use unscented laundry detergent and fabric softener - still, if you're using a public laundromat, you're going to pick up the residue of the fragranced products that other people used, even if you're not using fragranced products. So there are a ton of gradations of how stinky people are based on trying to be or not trying to be chem-free - But even in a fragrance free event we know people are going to show up who are fragranced...or, you know, there are people who are chemically sensitive who can't deal with animal dander and there are people who have service dogs, so you need to be able to address the varying needs of people in your community and having a fragrance-free seating area is one of those ways, so...

LONG: That can get complicated.

AYERS: It can, but you know something, if people just - what often happens when you start talking about, 'oh well somebody has a service dog and somebody else needs an allergen-free area,' people's eyes glaze over and then they throw their hands up in the air and say, 'well this is just too hard.' Well we don't let people get away with that when we are talking about addressing...a whole variety of women's issues, right? So the fact that we need to talk about sexual assault and order to end sexual assault, but that some women who are sexual assault survivors are triggered by that, doesn't mean that we don't have the conversations and it doesn't mean that we haven't figured out ways to accommodate conflicting needs around that, whether it's trigger warnings or content warnings or being really clear in our publicity about what's happening at a particular event; We know we just need to get creative about addressing this and folks in disability community know that we've got varying access needs - everybody not just people with disabilities - people have a variety of different access needs and if we talk about them we can come up with creative Solutions for them almost all the time... And sometimes that means live-streaming an event so that folks who can't physically get there because of barriers or because of chronic fatigue or because of multiple chemical sensitivities can watch from home or be part of it

virtually, so, some of this is just about a willingness to be curious and engaged and talk to each other about how this stuff works, and... You know, anybody who's been in the women's movement for any length of time, I would hope has an appreciation for the fact that curious questioning leads to really amazing results, and it's actually no different with disability, it's just a matter of, you know, being willing to ask the questions and then to listen to the responses of people with disabilities about how that works for us because, you know, I actually am sick to death of able-bodied white women able-splaining to me why, you know, whatever it is I need isn't really necessary or why it's impossible to do. I'm sick to death of that in the same way - and actually I get more of that than I get men mansplaining to me, but, you know, I hang out more with feminists than I do with non-feminist men, or men in general but - in the same way that white women, I hope in this era, understand that they need - that we need to listen to women of color's experience when they tell us that we messed up or when they tell us what's necessary or they talk to us about racism and white supremacy; Without thinking it's their responsibility to educate me, I do actually feel strongly that I need to listen to women of color and I need to follow their leadership. Able-bodied women need to do the same thing with regard to disability, and also able-bodied women, and women with disabilities for that matter, need to understand that we're not monolithic in the same way that I just talked about how, you know, you say, 'person with a disability,' everybody pictures - actually everybody pictures a wheelchair user, everybody pictures a white man in a wheelchair - that's what people picture when you say 'person with a disability.' You know, they don't picture somebody who's autistic; They don't picture a person of color; They don't picture a blind person in general; They don't picture someone with multiple chemical sensitivities. So you know, we're not monolithic and in fact, as somebody who does disability awareness training, I spend a lot of time educating myself about disabilities that I don't share because I'm part of a community that includes a ton of people and so I need to be -you know, I need to really understand what deaf culture is about; I need to really understand what it's like to be blind and visually impaired, or at least what the access needs are, so... We're not a monolithic group of people in the same way - anymore than people of color monolithic or that women are monolithic.

LONG: Mmhm. That's a great take-home, definitely. Once again, we are going to put a list of resources for people who want to educate themselves on our website so you can check that out yourselves. So what are you looking forward to? Do you have any projects coming up?

AYERS: Well I'm doing some disability justice training with a friend for the Women's March in a couple of weeks, so I'm looking forward to that. I actually wrote a guide to using small claims court to enforce the disability rights law in California and I'm

actually working on getting that up on some websites so that it's more readily available to people than it is right at the moment; Right now it's kind of going hand-to-hand so I'm working on that... I'm looking forward to the rain stopping and being able to get outside...

LONG: *:laughs:*

AYERS: ...and enjoy the sunshine and fresh air!

LONG: *:laughing:* Oh my goodness, well you're talking to someone who's in Ireland so the rain never stops. So I hope you enjoy your sunshine...

AYERS: *:laughing:*

LONG: ...Send me a little bit. *:laughs:* Great, well thank you so much for joining us with Women's Liberation Radio News and I hope that you return to us often to catch us up on projects you're working on.

AYERS: Okay, thank you!

:Station tag - percussive 'crack' followed by dark, thumpy guitar with reverb:

:multiple collective members' voices:

"This...

"This...

"This...

"This...

"This...

"Is WLRN...

"WLRN...

"WLRN...

"Women's Liberation Radio News...

"Women's Liberation Radio News...

"Women's Liberation Radio News...

"Women's Liberation Radio News...

: dark, thumpy guitar fades out:

:reversed cymbal crash quickly rises up to a stuttered drum fill of kick, snare, hi-hat:

:fades into mellow lo-fi instrumental hip-hop music:

Sekhmet SHEOWL: We've got to talk about disabled women and girls and what feminism owes them. Those of us who are able-bodied and able-minded can too easily forget the unique struggles disabled women and girls go through and how they are specifically oppressed by men and male socio-cultural systems. We can also neglect to hear and acknowledge the contributions of disabled women and girls to our movement if we're not careful, or leave out the disabilities some feminists live with when we do acknowledge them for their work and ideas. Being female in this world is hard no matter who you are and what condition your body and mind are in; But to be female and disabled is to face an even more difficult life than an able-bodied, able-minded woman faces, across all races, classes, countries, and sexualities.

Disabilities can manifest in many different ways: chronic pain, paralysis, missing limbs, mental illness, blindness, deafness, chronic illness, mental disabilities, learning disabilities, and developmental disabilities. Some women are born with their disability, and others acquire it at different stages of life, due to injury, illness, or old age. Many disabilities are invisible but no less influential in women's lives than the disabilities everyone can clearly recognize just by looking at a person. Some disabilities prevent women and girls from living independent, autonomous lives, while others simply make life more difficult or uncomfortable than it is for able people. The world is generally engineered for people without any disabilities, which creates more obstacles for disabled people in daily life that can stop them from doing the things they need or want to do. Even what seems like insignificant inconvenience to able women can degrade a disabled woman's quality of life, draining her energy or demoralizing her over time.

When it comes to the cause of many disabilities women and girls live with, it's worth asking how much of it males are responsible for. Whether we consider male violence and sexual violence or the many ways males have destroyed and poisoned our environment, or even the stress of poverty, financial insecurity, and overwork, we must acknowledge that life in male-dominated, male-designed society has real, damaging effects on the female mind and body. We all know that the mind, heart, and body are intimately, inextricably connected. So much of what men do to us directly and what they do to the whole planet and the human species hurts us mentally and emotionally, which can contribute to the breakdown of our bodies. Oppression can create mental illness. Environmental toxins men produce can make us physically sick

and yes, disabled. Environmental factors men are responsible for can also lead to birth defects. How much disability in the female population would disappear altogether if we lived our whole lives in physical safety, financial security, and a clean, healthy environment? It's impossible to know, but I'm willing to bet a majority of women and girls who suffer from chronic illness, mental illness, and even developmental and mental disabilities that could be traced back to experiential trauma or environmental poisons their mothers were exposed to during pregnancy would not be disabled in a world without males.

Disabled women are also significantly more vulnerable to male sexual violence than abled women are. As predators are wont to do, males prey on the weakest and most easily overpowered women first, because those women are perceived as easy targets. Women who can't run away from males, fight them off, see or hear them, or even communicate to others about the violent attacks are simply easier to victimize than able women. A 2006 Canadian study estimated that disabled women are four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than able women are. Another Canadian study conducted in 1991 estimated that up to 83% of developmentally disabled women are sexually assaulted. An American study from 1994 reported that disabled women are at least twice as likely to be raped or abused compared to the general population. And the fact is, it's usually men who are in close contact with disabled women who rape them: family members, friends, caretakers and care givers, men that the woman's family knows and trusts, and men that the women choose to date or marry. Disabled women and girls are vulnerable in their own homes and in the facilities some of them must live in due to their disabilities.

That males would be so heinous as to violate disabled women and girls, knowing how much easier it is to get away with it compared to getting away with victimizing abled females, should not surprise you. The reason I bring up this gruesome truth is because radical feminism has always been chiefly concerned with male violence against females, and as radical feminists, we must be aware who the most vulnerable women and girls are so that we can advocate for them, and protect them. This means that abled women and girls work to the best of their ability to make sure that predatory males don't get the chance to abuse them, rape them, or otherwise harm them. Under no circumstances should abled women leave disabled women and girls in the unsupervised care of men. Under no circumstances should abled women leave disabled girls alone with males of any age, and that includes male family members. Plenty of anti-feminist women will say that such a policy is extreme and assumes guilt of "nice" men and boys—but what has the irrational trust of so many able women gotten disabled women and girls? A shocking rate of rape and abuse that far surpasses the rate abled women and girls experience. Males have shown us they can't

be trusted, especially with disabled women and girls. It's time we put those women and girls first.

Despite the fact that a majority of disabled women can't do political activism the same way abled women can, disabled women can and do and have made important contributions to the feminist movement since it started. Their words, their creativity, their financial support, and their ideas count just as much as those of abled feminists. I think of Terri Strange, who has rheumatoid arthritis, and Bev Jo, who has had at least one chronic illness most of her life; I think of my lesbian feminist friend Christina, who has more than one debilitating chronic illness. These are three of the most brilliant, steadfast, and productive lesbian feminists I know of who are alive today. They have so much strength and resilience that even as they suffer with physical pain and difficulty, they continue to engage with the feminist community, produce feminist content, and build feminist relationships as much as they can. They're an inspiration, and they prompt me to ask: if disabled feminists can do as much as these three women do, how much more can abled feminists do for the cause? More than many of them are doing. I don't mean that as a judgment; I simply want to point out how much potential and power all women have, regardless of their ability or disability, to fuel the feminist movement if they put their minds to it. All the energy and time that so many abled women waste on men could accomplish so much for women and the feminist cause if they decided to redirect it. Disabled feminists are already doing so much with less than what abled women have to work with.

Feminism doesn't leave any woman or girl behind in the fight for female liberation from male oppression. I can't speak for all radical feminists, but I think the only good way to live feminism and carry the banner of the cause is to hold the most vulnerable and victimized women and girls in the world at the center of everything we do; To make their lives and their safety the foundation of our politics. Disabled women and girls are among those most vulnerable females, and women who are lucky enough to live without any disabilities must remember them and do what we can for them, especially because many disabled women and girls can't speak up for themselves or defend themselves against violent and predatory males. We must also make our physical spaces accessible to disabled women and girls and listen to their voices in the feminist conversation. Disabled women have a lot to teach us about the consequences of male-dominated society and what women are capable of. Some of the smartest, most committed, most insightful, and most radical feminists among us live with a disability. Let us care for them, learn from them, and work with them in solidarity for our collective liberation.

:simple kick/snare starts in, followed by bass melody, and eventually additional light percussion indicating outros:

APRIL: Thanks for listening to WLRN's edition 35 podcast this Thursday, March 7th 2019, focusing on the topic of women with disabilities and inclusion in the movement. We learned a lot this time around about being truly inclusive so in that spirit, we have made a commitment to publish transcripts of our podcasts within one week after they are released to make them accessible to our deaf and hard-of hearing sisters. Look for those on our WLRN wordpress site. I'm April Neault. If you'd like to get in touch with us, send us an email to wlrnewscontact@gmail.com, and thanks for tuning in!

THISTLE: WLRN would like to thank our guests this month for sharing their views on women with disabilities and inclusion. Thank you so much Ellana Crew and Tara Ayers for speaking with us. I have a quick note to add for those of you listening before March 15th...Sheila Jeffreys will be speaking on panels in New York City that day and there are still limited tickets available! Check out our Facebook page to see the Eventbrite links, or shoot us an email at wlrnewscontact@gmail.com to get all of the info. If you're not able to attend, WLRN will be live-streaming the panel discussion featuring Ms. Jeffreys and three de-transitioning women from 2-4 PM Eastern Time on our Facebook page on March 15th. So be sure to tune in if you can't make it to New York! This is Thistle. Thanks for listening to WLRN.

JENNA: This is Jenna. I am happy to announce that we raised \$150 in less than 48 hours after we announced our fundraiser to buy WLRN a station hard drive to backup all of our media files. Thanks so much to the listeners who donated. We count on our listener sponsors to make WLRN possible. If you like what you are hearing and would like to donate to the cause of feminist community radio, please visit our wordpress site and click on the donate button. Check out our merch tab to get a nice gift in exchange for your donation as well. Or consider making a monthly donation that can be automatically withdrawn from your paypal or bank account. It's easy! WLRN can receive a monthly donation of any amount that gets automatically taken out of your account so you'll hardly even notice. Even five dollars per month helps the station with its costs and cause to continue ever onward! Just go to the WLRN wordpress site and click on the donate button. Thanks for staying tuned to listener sponsored, feminist, community radio. This is Jenna Di Quarto. Until next time, stay strong!

SEKHMET: And I am Sekhmet SheOwl. Thanks for tuning in. Next month, we will focus our program on the benefits and drawbacks of working with both the left and right-wing. We selected this topic in light of the recent Heritage Foundation panel

discussion held in Washington DC and the conversations surrounding it in the feminist sphere. Our handcrafted podcasts always come out the first Thursday of the month, so look for our three year anniversary edition on Thursday, April 4th, 2019. If you'd like to receive our newsletter that notifies you when each podcast, music show and full-length interviews are released, please sign-up for our newsletter on the WLRN wordpress site. And now you can find WLRN on Spotify! Just search for Women's Liberation Radio News in the Podcast Results section. Thanks for listening. This is Sekhmet SheOwl signing off for now.

DANIELLE: This is Danielle signing off on another edition of WLRN's monthly handcrafted podcast. You can find us on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Soundcloud in addition to our wordpress site. Thanks for listening!

DAMAYANTI: And this is Damayanti. Our monthly podcasts are always crafted with tender-loving care and in solidarity with women worldwide. Thanks for your support! We would love to hear from you so please share, like, and comment widely.

:music ends with loud snare hit and big reverb decay:

:theme music - Michigan (Gender Hurts) by Thistle Pettersen:

:driving acoustic guitar fades in:

:vocal harmonies:

*"...But how will we find our way out of this?
What is the antidote for the patriarchal kiss?
How will we find what needs to be shown?
And then after that
Where is home?
Tell me
Where is my home*

*'Cuz gender hurts
It's harmful..."*

:lyrics fade out: