

Edition 37: Women's Sports

Transcribed by Jenna Di Quarto and Charlotte Monteith

: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:

Robin LONG: Greetings!...and welcome to the 37th edition podcast of Women's Liberation Radio News for this Thursday, May 2nd, 2019. I'm Robin Long.

This month's edition focuses on the state of women's sports as we move forward in time seeing more and more trans-identified males entering competitions, teams, and applying for sports scholarships as the concept of "gender identity" continues to gain traction in society. We'll hear excerpts of an interview I did with Linda Blade, a track and field coach, and Beth Stelzer, founder of the new organization Save Women's Sports. You'll also hear Thistle's compelling commentary about the sanctity and beauty of women's sports and how female bonding on an all women's team can and should be appreciated and encouraged in society.

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 WLRN's Jenna DiQuarto with the news:

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

:lo-fi hip hop beat fades in - kick/snare/bass, eventually brass samples:

Jenna DIQUARTO: Irish Journalist Lyra McKee, recently murdered in Derry, Ireland, was laid to rest in Belfast on April 24th. Hundreds were in attendance at her funeral, both inside the church and gathered outside as well. On Tuesday night, her family issued a statement regarding her death: "On Thursday April 18th, our beautiful Lyra was taken from us. A daughter, a sister, an aunt, a great-aunt, a partner, a niece, a cousin, and above all, a best friend and confidante to so many of us..." Some attendees of note at her services were Irish President Michael D. Higgins and Premier Leo Varadkar, and British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and PM Theresa May, the last of whom spoke with the late McKee's mother, Joan, and her partner, Sara. McKee died of a gunshot wound sustained while observing political rioting, by then on its fourth night. On April 18th, police raided nationalist areas connected with New IRA activity, hoping to seize firearms, ammunition, and explosives. Rioting broke out on the Creggan Estate and quickly escalated. Shots were fired, and McKee was struck by a stray bullet. The New IRA, who have claimed responsibility for the murder, is described as a "dissident Irish republican paramilitary group". Their tactics have become increasingly violent in recent years. Along with apologizing via a letter sent to the *The Irish News* on April 22nd, they made a point of laying some of the blame for her death on the Police themselves, accusing them of triggering New IRA response: "The IRA offer our full and sincere apologies to the partner, family and friends of Lyra McKee for her death...On Thursday night, following an incursion on the Creggan by heavily armed British Crown Forces which provoked rioting, the IRA deployed our volunteers to engage." For the record, there were no British Crown Forces in Creggan that night; They were Irish Police. So far, police have arrested 3 people in connection with McKee's murder; However, all have been released unconditionally. The family of the slain journalist hope, "that Lyra's life and her personal philosophy are used as an example to us all as we face this tragedy together. Lyra's answer would have been simple, the only way to overcome hatred and intolerance is with love, understanding and kindness."

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Several senior members of the Scottish National Party have signed a public letter urging the government to consider more carefully proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act that would allow people to self-identify their biological sex. Current law in Scotland requires certain benchmarks in order to legally change one's sex: the person must be 18; They must be diagnosed with gender dysphoria or Gender Identity Disorder; They must have already been living as their "acquired gender" for at least 2 years; And lastly, they must testify that they intend to live as their "acquired gender" for the remainder of their life. In November of last year, the Scottish government conducted a public consultation that included nearly 15,700 people, 49% of whom were Scottish residents, in which 60% of the respondents, "agreed with the proposal to introduce a self-declaratory system for legal gender recognition." Of those opposed, the argument was made that such a change would erode women's rights and protections. As Scotland quickly moves toward a self-ID model, 15 SNP politicians have spoken out via a public letter published in *The Scotsman* on April 24th. "...it is important that all parliamentarians, and the wider public, can discuss questions of law, policy and practice in

relation to definitions of sex and gender in good faith, and without being subject to abuse of any kind. It has become clear that many people, including policy makers, are only now developing an understanding of the implications of the self identification of sex, particularly on women. Conflating sex with gender identification affects a wide range of policy and service delivery, including data collection, education, health and social care, justice, and sport. We should now have that debate without accusations of intolerance. We respect and uphold everyone's human rights, particularly the most vulnerable people in our communities. Changing the definition of male and female is a matter of profound significance. It is not something we should rush." The letter comes a week after Equalities Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville, in an attempt to mediate what can mildly be described as a hot-button issue, made a statement in the Scottish magazine *Holyrood*, saying, "I have no hesitation in calling myself a trans ally – and I hope trans women and men see me that way too. But I am also a woman and a lifelong, passionate feminist – and I know that while the battle for women's rights and equality has made great strides in recent years, there is still much more to do." Referring to SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon's recent statements at the UN this past February, Secretary Somerville said, "Just as the First Minister has herself said in the past, I personally don't feel conflict between my support for trans rights and my support for women's rights; But I know that some do feel that conflict – and that the issues they are raising are not motivated by transphobia but by a concern, sincerely felt, that space hard won by women down the generations will be compromised...the problem...is one of how we protect and safeguard women against potentially abusive men." Despite knowing that there is "still much more to do" in the struggle for women's equality, Secretary Somerville closed her statement with the hope that, "whatever views any of us may hold on the relationship between trans rights and women's rights – we will all unite against transphobia, just as we do against homophobia and any other form of prejudice and discrimination." It is unclear whether or not Secretary Somerville considers misogyny a form of discrimination. Since the letter in *The Scotsman* was published, 4 Members of the Scottish Parliament have published a response, saying the letter had been, "received with concern by stakeholders in the LGBTI community and that has the potential to undermine their confidence in the wider work of our committee...We would suggest such language is misleading, given that proposals for reform of gender recognition legislation do not propose to change the meaning of the terms male or female." In plain terms this isn't untrue...except that if you allow those of one sex to legally identify as the opposite sex, what implications does that have for the meaning of words?

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The all-woman editorial board of the Vatican magazine *Women, Church, World* has unanimously resigned from the publication, citing an increase in editorial interference. In December, Andrea Monda was appointed as new editor of the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, which features *Women, Church, World* as a monthly supplement. The resigned editors contend that, since that time, chief editor Monda has not been supportive of the publication's ethos; That there has been a, "climate of distrust and progressive de-legitimization," and that editorial interference was an attempt to bring *Women, Church,*

World, "under the direct control of men." In February, magazine founder Lucetta Scaraffina, published an op-ed openly referencing the history of scandal involving rapist priests and the fallout of their actions. The piece is titled *Without Any Touching* and it begins by talking about touch - how important it is, and how the loss of touch between priests and parishioners is a, "real mutilation of relational life and of the apostolate in the Christian community." The piece goes on to recount, "towards the end of the 1990s, two religious, Sr Maura O'Donohue and Sr Marie McDonald, had the courage to present precise and substantiated reports, in-depth investigations and analyses of the situations most exposed to this type of bullying arrogance. Their denunciations were met with silence and it is well known that silence de facto contributes to giving security to rapists, who become ever surer of their own impunity. During the past year...many women religious...have begun to speak out and make denunciations; ...they know that to bring about this transformation, it is not enough to appoint a few women to serve on commissions. If eyes continue to be closed to this scandal – rendered even more serious by the fact that the abuse of women entails procreation and is thus at the root of the scandal of imposed abortions and of the children not recognized by priests – the condition of oppression of women in the Church will never change." 4 days after the piece was published, Pope Francis was questioned on it while en route back to Rome from the UAE, and forced, for the first time in the history of the Vatican, to publicly acknowledge this known history of abuse against nuns. The resignation of all 11 members of *Women, Church, World's* editorial board was published as an open letter in April's edition, along with another op-ed from Scaraffina, stating that the new *L'Osservatore Romano* editor, Monda, wanted to bring in, "collaborators who guarantee obedience, and who renounce every possibility of opening up a true, free and courageous dialogue...It is a return to clerical self-referentiality and renounces the *parrhesia*," a Greek term for speaking without fear, "so often called for by Pope Francis...Consequently, we can only declare our work concluded, interrupted abruptly even though there are still ongoing projects."

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Filmmaker Nina Paley, an artist & intellectual who has been blacklisted due to defaming attacks by trans activists, has booked the historic Virginia Theater in downtown Champaign, Illinois to screen her new film *Seder Masochism* on Wednesday May 8th. WLRN's Thistle Pettersen called her up on the phone and captured this short interview to learn more about what to expect at this screening.

Thistle PETTERSEN: So can you tell us how it came about that you were able to secure this showing of your film?

Nina PALEY: Yeah, well, I'm working with an anti-war activist named Robert Nieman of Just Foreign Policy, and he originally approached the Art Theatre in Champaign, but they blacklisted me. And then we were looking, you know, there's only one other theater in downtown Champaign. That's the Virginia, and it's a much larger, much higher profile theater and holds almost 1,500 people, and it hosts large acts. So it costs

more, but we decided to go for it, we decided to spend the money and go for it. They are owned and operated by the Champaign County Park District. So they are run by the government basically. And that means they have to protect the First Amendment, so they cannot arbitrarily censor me.

PETTERSEN: And I understand so far that the people who work for the theater support you, they're fans of yours, but there's also been some trans activist response to you booking this theater.

PALEY: Yeah, the response is just starting. It's inevitable. I mean, I posted about it online yesterday and by the end of the day, there was someone complaining to the Virginia on Twitter. And I expect that will grow.

PETTERSEN: Do you think that trans activists will actually show up to the theater?

PALEY: It is entirely possible they will show up, but the theater is not going to shut me down. I mean, what the activists do is they try to intimidate the venues so that the venues shut you down before, you know, anything worse can happen. But the Virginia is, you know - it's run by the government, they can't cave to that.

PETTERSEN: Right. And there's going to be added security that night, right?

PALEY: Yes, I believe so.

PETTERSEN: My understanding is that the theater has dealt with problems like this in the past and that they feel confident being able to host your film, right?

PALEY: Oh, absolutely. I mean, this is like a major venue and they're very experienced with security and, sort of, all possible...

PETTERSEN: ...scenarios.

PALEY: ...the scenarios, yes. *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: Wonderful. So when is the showing happening and how much does it cost to get in?

PALEY: The screening is May 8th, at 7pm. That's a Wednesday, May 8th; The doors open at 6pm. I think we're going to have some sort of VIP thing at 5pm for donors to the GoFundMe. The cost of admission is free. It is absolutely free, free and open to the public. And we want to get as many people in there as we can.

PETTERSEN: And if women want to donate to the GoFundMe, how do they do that?

PALEY: Probably the easiest way is to go to NinaPaley.com. I've been blogging about it, and there are links to it.

PETTERSEN: Okay, great. Well, let's get lots of women from the Midwest out to see your film Wednesday, May 8th.

PALEY: Yes! And plus we'll get to meet each other and talk to each other which is always so great.

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DIQUARTO: Thanks to everyone who has signed the petition and sent letters to the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center in Madison to stand up for democracy and stop the blacklisting of feminist Thistle Pettersen. If you have yet to sign the petition, donate, or send a letter, please visit DefendFeminists.net and have a look around at what this committee is doing to stand up for free speech and women's rights. So far, Thistle is still banned from performing at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center due to accusations of "hatred, bigotry and discrimination" coming from Wil-Mar staff, Beatrice Hadidian. No evidence for this accusation has been presented and no invitation to speak in person with the board of directors has been extended even though Thistle requested being able to talk about it at their April board meeting. The board of directors' president, Bob Hemauer, sent a letter to Thistle on April 15th stating that the board unanimously supports Ms. Hadidian's interpretation of their policies so the ban remains. With enough pressure from letters, signatures and noise from Thistle's supporters, we can get the ban lifted and stop the harassment she has endured for years in Madison by trans activists and Madison institutions that have buckled under their pressure. To learn more and to support the campaign, please visit DefendFeminists.net.

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A UN-backed resolution regarding rape in conflict has passed absent addressing any issues of reproductive health, thanks to ardent opposition from the Trump administration. The resolution, put forth by Germany in April, was originally a more robust document, calling for a working group to actively work toward ending sexual violence in conflict, and addressing not only victims of sexual violence in conflict and their reproductive health, but also LGBT victims, as it is understood those persons can be specific targets of sexual violence. The final document included none of these points. US allies backing the resolution expressed frustration with the Trump Administration's veto threat and the ultimate dilution of the resolution. "We are dismayed by the fact that one state has demanded the removal of the reference to sexual and reproductive health ... going against 25 years of gains for women's rights in situations of armed conflict," said Francois Delattre, French permanent representative to the UN. In March, 10

German NGOs published a statement urging Germany to abandon issuing the resolution at all, concerned that it would unintentionally weaken previous resolutions; "Given the further hardening of antidemocratic and decidedly misogynistic stances in the UN security council, we believe there is a danger of a weak resolution text ultimately being negotiated and adopted...Some powerful members of the security council, such as Russia, China and the USA, are undermining women's rights and once again questioning, for example, women's and girls' right to self-determination. Through such actions, the achievements that have already been made could be shattered and the 'women, peace and security' agenda overall decisively weakened." The resolution does call for the further support of children born of rape and their mothers, which is a first in this 9th resolution on women, peace, and security since 2000. Notably, China and Russia abstained from voting.

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A hearing in the trial of detained women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia has been postponed by the judge with little explanation. The women have been imprisoned for a year, the first six months of which charges weren't even disclosed. The brother of one of the activists, Loujain al-Hathloul, has spoken out against their obscure imprisonment and reprehensible treatment, saying that his sister was taken to a covert detention center and tortured under the supervision of Saud al-Qahtani, a close associate of the Saudi Crown Prince. Ultimately, al-Hathloul and the other activists were accused of spying, which is yet to be substantiated, and for, "applying for a job at the UN and being in contact with human rights organizations." Saudi officials deny any wrong-doing in the activists's detainment and treatment, but back in February, a group of British Members of Parliament, supported by a number of international human rights organizations, investigated al-Hathloul's allegations of mistreatment and concluded that they were credible. Following that investigation, the UN's Human Rights Council called for the activists's release and more than 30 countries signed a statement condemning their prolonged detention. At the end of March, 3 of the activists were temporarily released on bail; 10 still remain in custody, al-Hathloul included. Currently, the activists and their families are waiting for the judge to respond to their defenses, submitted on March 27th.

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A new documentary film focused on prostitution court in Queens, NY, opened in select theaters last month. *Blowin Up*, from director Stephanie Wang-Breal, is named after a term referring to a prostituted woman escaping her pimp. The film documents this court's approach to convicting and sentencing women arrested on prostitution charges, mainly seeing the arrest as an opportunity to rehabilitate women out of prostitution. The all-female court is led by NY State acting Supreme Court Justice, Judge Toko Serita, who explains:

Toko SERITA: We have been very very successful in that, we have seen 6,000 women over the course of these years and we have been able to provide services for them...All of the arrests in Queens County that involve prostitution or loitering are sent to my court...It operates as an

alternative to an incarceration type program...We take into account the fact that many of the individuals are, in fact, victimized in some way by the commercial sex industry.

For screening information, visit BlowinUpFilm.com

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WLRN just learned that Thistle Pettersen will be appearing on the news program On Contact with host Chris Hedges later this month to discuss the defamation and harassment she's faced in Madison. Learn more under the updates tab of the defendfeminists.net web site and please consider a donation to help cover Thistle's travel expenses to and from New York City. Know someone in NYC? Help spread the word!

:papers shuffle:

That concludes WLRN's world news segment for Thursday, May 2nd, 2019. 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 - Ode to a Gym Teacher by Meg Christian:

:slow starting solo acoustic guitar playing turnaround of Take Me Out the The Ballgame:

:live recording - audience laughs audible:

:guitar picks up energy into a strum:

*She was a big tough woman, the first to come along
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong
And though graduation meant that we had to part
She'll always be a player on the ballfield of my heart*

:chord strumming into quieter finger picking:

*I wrote her name on my note-pad
And inked it on my dress
And I etched it on my locker
And I carved it on my desk*

*And I painted big red hearts
With her initials on the books
And I never knew till later*

Why I got those funny looks

:picks up energy into a strum:

*She was a big tough woman, the first to come along :crowd starts clapping along:
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong
And though graduation meant that we had to part
She'll always be a player on the ballfield of my heart*

:chord strumming into quieter finger picking:

*Well, in gym class while the others
Talked of boys that they loved
I'd be thinking of new aches and pains
The teacher had to rub*

*And while other girls went to the prom
I languished by the phone
Calling up and hanging up
If I found out she was home*

:picks up energy into a strum:

*She was a big tough woman, the first to come along :crowd starts clapping along:
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong
And though graduation meant that we had to part
She'll always be a player on the ballfield of my heart*

:chord strumming into quieter finger picking:

*I sang her songs by Johnny Mathis
I gave her everything -
A new chain for her whistle
And some daisies in the spring*

*Some suggestive poems for Christmas
By Miss Edna Millay
And a lacy, lacy, lacy card
For Valentine's Day
...(unsigned of course!)*

:picks up energy into a strum:

*She was a big tough woman, the first to come along :crowd starts clapping along:
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong
And though graduation meant that we had to part
She'll always be a player on the ballfield of my heart*

Mmm...here comes the moral of the song...

:chord strumming into quieter finger picking:

*So you just go to any gym class
And you'll be sure to see
One girl who sticks to teacher
Like a leaf sticks to a tree*

*One girl who runs the errands
And who chases all the balls
One girl who may grow up
To be the gayest of all!*

:audience cheers and laughs ; Starts clapping on the downbeat:

:picks up energy into a strum:

*She was a big tough woman, the first to come along
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong
And though graduation meant that we had to part
She'll always be a player on the ballfieeeeld of my heaaaaaaaart*

:finishes with strong strumming to cheering audience:

Thank you...

DIQUARTO: That was *Ode to a Gym Teacher* by Meg Christian.

:piano, minor chord arpeggiated quickly resolving to major chord:

Now we turn to a Skype interview Robin Long did with Coach Linda Blade, and founder of Save Women's Sports, Beth Stelzer.

Dr. Linda Blade lives and works in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada as a Sport Performance Professional and Track & Field Coach, currently serving as President of the Board at Athletics Alberta, the Provincial Track & Field Association.

:muted hand drums come in with beat:

Beth Stelzer is a small-town mom and housewife. She's a health coach, amateur powerlifter, unscripted activist, and founder of Save Women's Sports. Here now, are excerpts of their interview with WLRN's Robin Long.

LONG: I wanted to get started with Linda; Tell us a little bit about your history in sports - what sport do you coach?

Linda BLADE: Yeah, well, I am - my history is steeped in track and field athletics, I was a long time combined events off the women - men do decathlon, women do heptathlon - and I'm sure most of your listeners might remember, if they're old enough, Jackie Joyner Kersey from the US so there's been many others, great athletes, and actually during the 80s when I was at the University of Maryland on a full athletic scholarship, thanks to Title IX, I did do the heptathlon and competed with some of those great athletes, and it was great and then I came back to Canada and I was Canadian champion I competed internationally for a while, then got my PhD in kinesiology/sport sciences so then I kind of transitioned into coaching - basically delivering the many track and field foundational skill - speed, power, explosiveness, jumping higher, increasing people's vertical and stuff - so I work with athletes in about 17 different sports and just sort of... whatever they need, so if it's a hockey player and they need to run faster, or they need to move faster on the ice, we get them off the ice, they run fast. It just pretty much developing athletes' athleticism in athletes in different sports and, like with figure skaters they always want to jump higher so you know, that's track and field training, but we just take them off the ice and they do that. So that's been my business, my private consulting business for 30 years now.

LONG: Wow. And Beth, How about you? Tell us a little bit about your background as an athlete.

Beth STELZER: My passion for sports came a little later in life, almost an early midlife crisis. I realized the importance of physical health on my mental health and started with what was like running a 5K and started to go to classes like CrossFit and kickboxing and that's where I learned to unleash my beast with the barbell and found powerlifting, and now I can lift over 300 pounds off the ground.

LONG: Wow, that's amazing. Well, I wanted to ask you both and you can decide who answers first, but - how have trans-inclusive policies and culture impacted your careers in sports?

BLADE: Beth needs to go first because she's the one who was actually experienced it as an athlete. I'm too old for it to have, you know, impacted me as an athlete.

LONG: Sure.

STELZER: Um...I had been powerlifting and training for a couple of years before I had the nerve to enter into the sanctioned meet. And when I finally did it was protested by gender rights activists because men were not allowed to compete as women. And so that's kind of what prompted me to be where I am today.

LONG: Wow, and this is the protest we've heard about where they basically... 'took over' kind of? With signs and things? Were you able to continue to compete?

STELZER: We were able to compete but it was not a friendly or sportsman like environment. There was ruckus, chanting and clapping that carried on all through the events.

LONG: Did that really affect your performance?

STELZER: It affected a lot of people's performance, and it certainly was not the event that we were expecting to have. And with powerlifting you train very hard for just a few events a year so it was really disheartening - I can't just go to the next game the next day.

LONG: Mm-hm. Ugh, that is so frustrating.

BLADE: ...well, and I - Beth, if you can let me step in - Is my understanding correct that some of the female athletes didn't even show up because they just got discouraged and scared.

STELZER: Yeah, like 120 people originally signed up for this and after seeing rumors of protests on social media - When I got there there was only 82 women that were competing and 14 of those women chose to focus.

LONG: Wow.

BLADE: Yeah, this is interesting.

STELZER: With the popularity of our sport where people even drop out is pretty unheard of, so to have that low of an attendance rate was pretty sad.

LONG: Sure you've all been intensively training for months and months and months for this event, and it just kind of blew it all up, didn't it?

STELZER: Yeah, it kind of took a lot of people's glory away just for one person to make a point.

LONG: Mm-hm. Wow...And do you think that the league is going to become inclusive of trans athletes, and how do you think that'll affect it?

STELZER: Well that's, that's not really for me to say. The President has made comments recently that they are going to stand firm with their policy, so I believe that they will not allow men who identify as women to lift with women. Whether they let them into the men's category or create an open category... I mean, that's always open to them. But I'm firm that they will preserve women's rights to their sports.

LONG: Oh, that's great. Well, Linda you're an expert on the whole physiology of sport. How is this fair to women? I mean...

BLADE: Well, you know what, the fact is, it's antithetical - this inclusion of male bodies in female sport - it is absolutely antithetical to anything you've ever learned in biology. And, you know, I'm a human biologist fundamentally, and it just took me by storm I guess in 2018. I was so shocked when I was sitting at national meetings. One of my roles in track and field, other than being a coach, is I'm currently serving as president of Athletics Alberta as you mentioned in the intro, which is actually the Association for Track and Field on the ground here in this province of Canada which is similar to a state in the United States. And so we have our national meetings where presidents from each of the provinces get together with the national sport governing bodies. And this was presented to us officially in 2018 as the strong recommendation from the bureaucracy from the central government of Canada that we should be, now we use the word, 'inclusive'... But the thing is, we all want, you know, to be fair and inclusive, for sure in society and I would be the first one to fight for anybody's right to express any way they want. When it comes to sport, 'inclusive' - if you're including a male body with all the advantages that men grow up to have over women in terms of physical advantages, you're literally working to exclude women, so, you know, the word 'inclusive' just really bothers me in this context of sport because you're really going to end up having women excluded just like what happened in Beth's competition where, even before they show up, even before they get beat by a guy, they wouldn't even want to try because they know that the deck is stacked, right? So it just effectively turns the tables on what sport is about and the meaning of a win. And so yeah, I mean, I will just say that it really shocked me last year and it's taken me a year, literally a year, to do a deep dive on what has happened. I had no idea this was a thing. I had no idea that it was even Olympic - It was a rule in the Olympic Games now, a new policy allowing this to happen...And so the whole thing, it just sort of blew my mind, literally like bewildered. I was bewildered for about six months and then really really going after the information and for the final six months to this point.

LONG: Well sure, a lot of the people in the trans community, they claim that trans women have no physical advantage over women in sporting events, and they would claim that you're - you

know, that having an objection is transphobic. How do you respond to that? How do you - and this is for both of you - how would you address that?

BLADE: Beth, do you want to take that first or should I do it?

STELZER: I can take it. Um, I think that transphobia is basically a made-up term to just scare women out of defending their rights. I don't think that defending biology is deserving of such a label. I mean, this 'transphobia' - this whole transgender "ism" is almost like an agreed-upon lie in our media and politics.

LONG: Mm-hm.

STELZER: I don't feel like there's much to defend. It's biology.

LONG: Mm-hm.

STELZER: And then, we have scientists stating things like in a recent article on NBC News that there's no simple or even complex biological testing to apply that tells you who's a man and a woman. Are we serious here?

LONG: *:laughs:* Yeah.

BLADE: Every pregnant woman can get a test that tells you that - what sex the baby is. I mean, it's unbelievable the lies that are being sort of bandied about, in the interest of somebody trying to, you know, tip the scales in favor of a really tiny minority of people. If you think about how few people there have been, maybe it's going to be more in the future because a lot of children are transitioning but, like, until now, there really haven't been that many transgender - or, people who identify as transgender, in sport. And, you know, it really does actually make me wonder whether some of them - and I'm not saying all, because I think everybody has their own unique path through life and everybody has their own unique motivations for what they do

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but I actually have got - when I see these people who win a woman's competition with a male body, and then they're parading about on social media and, you know, bragging about it... like part of it, to me, just seems like there's sort of different motivations here, like, maybe that just somebody wants attention? I don't - you know, some of them might be true - you know, truly have dysphoria, but there's a lot of speculation lately that there's a lot of others that are just - it's just a fetish and they're just going after the next sort of boost in terms of their image, and I worry about that.

LONG: Well yeah, you also have situations where, you know, 45-year-old men, male body people, are competing against 20-year-old women who have been training their heart outs and the 44-year-old wins. How does that make sense?

BLADE: It doesn't.

LONG: Tell us a little bit about how Title IX is being used to allow men to compete as women.

BLADE: Beth, you should take that, being the American in the group here, a strong American.
:laughs:

STELZER: Well, Title IX was started in the '70s as we all know to cement our rights to even have
-

BLADE: - and I was a - Yeah, I'm sorry, go ahead.

STELZER: Go ahead, Linda.

BLADE: I said, I was about, I just want to insert that I'm a beneficiary of it because - Thank goodness for Title IX. I got my university education, and I had a wonderful experience competing in the US. And it really made a difference in my life, I can say, and, you know, it's just, it's just heartbreaking for me to see that maybe there's this other sector of society that has commandeered that timeline idea to benefit men again. So go ahead, Beth.

STELZER: I basically believe that they're using Title IX and their clever wordplay to add gender identity into it just like they are with the Equality Act - with sex - so then they can abuse it. And we fought hard for these spots from men and boys, and now we're having men and boys threatening to take those spots away from us.

LONG: And we're not just talking about spots on a team, we're talking about scholarships, and sponsorships, and things like that as well, aren't we?

STELZER: Right, this goes deep. It's only the athletes and their sponsors that are at risk. This is just everyday people are afraid to speak up because of what the media is showing them for being villainized for defending women's rights.

LONG: Mm-hm.

BLADE: Yeah. Yeah, and, you know, it's going to go deep into American law because - Beth and I were talking about this the other day - I don't know if you've seen the movie *On The Basis of Sex* with Ruth Bader Ginsburg, or the story about Ruth, the Justice of the Supreme Court, but back in the '70s when they, you know, when they won the right to the recognition of sex and equal rights for women, the secretary in that movie was the one that proposed the word 'gender' to soften the word 'sex'. So they literally meant biological sex, but they use the word 'gender' and probably in some of the laws the word 'gender' is buried in there as a replacement for the term for biological sex, and it was used sort of as the same meaning, the same thing. But now, that makes it so easy for somebody to come along and say 'yeah, well,

just instead of gender, just say gender identity.' And all of a sudden the whole thing changes, right? Like the whole meaning of it changes. And I was saying to Beth, yesterday, going, like, man, I really, we would - it would be really good for Ruth Bader Ginsburg to actually put out a statement of what was the true meaning of the word 'gender' back when they used it in law in the '70s.

LONG: Mm-hm.

BLADE: Because you can't just sort of change it from meaning biological sex to just anything you imagine yourself to be.

LONG: True.

BLADE: So, yeah-

LONG: -I mean, when I see women trying to do team contact sports like roller derby, and you see a six and a half foot, 250 pound guy competing with them, it's just, it's disheartening.

BLADE: Yeah, well, and for me, as - and you asked about the impact, so - Beth shared the impact in terms of being an athlete and having to deal with people shouting and putting flags out there and demonstrating while you're trying to just focus on your performance; But my concern, because I'm president of a sport in a certain province, and you know, I'm responsible for - my board and I are responsible to make sure the sport happens fairly on the ground - my concern is actually threefold. Firstly, and our policies have to be carefully vetted to make sure that you're not going to get - you know, there's going to be boys racing girls. Are we going to enable that - allow that? Or what are we going to do about that? And then, if we *do* allow male bodies to go into female events, then there's nothing, then, to stop the male bodies going into the women's washroom or the bathroom because we let them - we already acknowledged them in the race, so then they'll - those guys go, then, into the bathroom and the locker room, so that all the girls aren't safe in locker room, so that's kind of the second area. But then, think about it, if young male athletes are in a female locker room, what's there to stop anybody as a spectator or any of the people surrounding that competition who are just hanging around to go also into that space, right? Because once you let that start happening anybody can do it. And then finally, in the context of Canada - the Canadian law - we open up our officials to possible hate speech if they see an anomaly in a race and think 'well, I don't know if that person is the right age or sex to be in this race.' And if they asked the question, they might open themselves up to hate speech allegations. So we have, our whole sport is run by volunteer officials and a lot of these officials are retired people and a lot of retired female officials. And if anybody thinks that by simply doing their job they're going to be, you know, accused of hate, it won't be very long before many of our officials will be too bashful and just like the athletes that didn't show up to Beth's event, then we would have officials who don't show up to our competitions. And that's not just going to hurt the girls, it's going to hurt everybody, it's going to hurt - it's going to make sure - like, we could have a real challenge on

our hands just hosting competitions for the grassroots sports for the little kids. And so, once we can't host the competitions anymore because officials are too confused or afraid to deal with this issue, we don't have - we're not really, then, creating any kind of, you know, preparation for high-performance sport. There won't be any athletes being developed actually.

LONG: Mm-hm. Yeah.

BLADE: And so really, we could say initially the first stages, it would kill women's sport but the long term would be it just kills sport in general because it does affect everybody. So I would say the long term implications and really sort of the deep, deep functioning of the sport in terms of the bureaucracy of sport it really threatens everything, right? Not just the female athletes.

LONG: Sure. Well, Beth. Um, all of this has really impacted you, and you took your experience and channeled it into starting an organization called Save Women's Sports. How did it get started and what are your goals?

STELZER: Basically, around the time that I had this happen to me, there - I didn't find many resources that highlighted my values and made me feel safe so I started my own. And it's that organization that started as a website compiling tools and articles, and now we've grown to a team just trying to hold on to what we have. And with the Equality Act looming overhead here in the United States and transgender participation on the rise, I realized the importance of speaking up, and thankfully we have people like Martina Navratilova, and Sharon Davies, and Paula Radcliffe that are kind of opening up a space for me to feel comfortable to speak.

LONG: Have you had a lot of backlash?

STELZER: Oh, of course. It's a daily occurrence and sometimes it's scary. It's, you know, saddening to get death threats, over such a simple thing as fighting for the difference of men and women.

LONG: Yeah.

STELZER: Yeah, we get general labels like 'TERF' and 'transphobe', but when it gets to calling us racist over this, that's where I just quit understanding.

LONG: *:laughs:* Wow.

BLADE: How can it be racist?

STELZER: That's what I would like to know, but they really like to feel like their movement is very similar to that of segregation.

LONG: Wow. Well, Beth, if people want to get involved in Save Women's Sports, where would they go to find out more information or to join your organization?

STELZER:

I would love for them to hop on to savewomenssports.com. You can read about the men that have recently invaded women's sports and catch up on the latest articles and videos and can even share your stories, send us tips, or donate to our movement. We're on all social media, look us up and join our team.

LONG: Oh, that's great. Thank you. Well, we're all aware that we have the Olympics coming up, and they've changed the rules about who can compete in women's sports. Are you expecting some major upsets as far as women being shut out of metals?

BLADE: Well, let me, let me, uh, dive in on this one because I have been watching carefully since I was, you know, made aware of the transgender issue, and I sort of went back and looked it up. And around 2003-2004 they - the IOC - did have a ruling about transsexuals so like, people that had the surgery and then if they would self ID, they would have to prove that they had the surgery and that they had been on the hormonal treatment for a few years and that sort of thing so there was a really, really strict sort of brackets put around that. And of course, very few, there might have been a couple involved that nobody knew about. They were so well integrated, and maybe we just never were aware that there were a couple of transgendered [people] in the women's events in the 2000s, but then in 2013, they dispensed with the need for surgery - surgical conversion or transition - and all they said was you self-ID and you have to be, declare yourself to be a wo- if you're a man wanting to compete in the women's event or male athlete wanting to compete with the women, then you would self-declare then you'd have to be on hormonal treatment and reduce the testosterone for a year only, and that's the one that has made it a lot easier, let's face it, you got literally less skin in the game if you don't have to undergo surgery. And all you have to do is to self-declare and then have some hormonal - and hormonal treatment, but the fact is that the hormone levels required aren't even as restrictive as with women for doping, right?

LONG: Wow.

BLADE: ...So, and then the other thing is, we all know the truth, that if a man/male body has reduced testosterone that doesn't change the fact that your heart - that their heart grew to be bigger, through puberty, their lung's capacity is greater, their blood supply - like, everything is different in that body. It's a different body, so just because you happen to be on hormones for a year does not erase the advantage you have. And, um, it's really hard to believe that the International Olympic Committee, IOC, would have agreed to let that rule be changed in that way. And a lot of the transgender people who are really promoting it and their activists say 'well, if it's as bad as we [radical feminists] are saying, why were there more guys in - like, male bodies in the female events in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Because of, you know, the rule changed in two thousand and - actually that was 2015. And, but then they couldn't because one of the

requirements was you had to be in that status for a year. So, there were - there wasn't enough time for transgender people to qualify for the past - the Olympics in Rio, but they have had the time to do it for 2020. So, the thing is, if nothing happens to that rule, then you probably very well will see male bodies and female events in Tokyo 2020. But what we're all waiting for is the IOC to give that final sort of statement that they're going to stick to their policy, or whether they're going to suspend the policy. And we have only a few months to get their attention to say 'you haven't consulted with the women, you haven't done enough research. You should suspend your policy because it's going to be a disaster, not only for women in sport, but it's going to be a disaster for the IOC brand.'

LONG: Sure. Is there is a contact information available that perhaps we can put up on our website for women who would like to contact the IOC?

BLADE: Well, yeah, I mean, well, I guess I could send it to you because it's just the IOC, they said 'contact us through the International Olympic Committee website.'

LONG: Sure. Right, okay.

BLADE: But we've had athletes write letters. We have had, you know, Fair Play for Women in the UK that has been really strongly lobbying on behalf of all of the women in sport across the world, and they've been very powerful, a very powerful voice, so Fair Play for Women. And, um, what astonishes me is that we have had zero, *zero* feedback from the IOC. Zero.

LONG: Not even an acknowledgement?

BLADE: Nope. Nope, nothing.

LONG: Wow.

BLADE: And so, like, for me, I spend my little days between training sessions just putting out little chirps and tweets and Twitter things saying 'please IOC, look at this.', 'Will you consider this?' Like, I keep trying to use the hashtag 'IOC' and 'save Tokyo 2020' just to keep the drumbeat going so they don't ignore it because it's easy for them to just procrastinate into disaster. Unless they're going to outright suspend their policy and they're going to say - and I think the last possible moment for them to say anything about suspending the policy might be December 2019, this coming December - or maybe the first month, January 2020, because after that, the policy has to be established, like, you can't just change the policy at the last minute for an Olympic Games, so usually, these things come out in the December or the January, you know, of the year leading up to the Olympics.

LONG: Sure.

BLADE: So we don't have a lot of time.

LONG: Okay, well, we'll try to put the information up, so that's available to everyone. And it looks like we're just starting to run a little short on time. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about in the next-

STELZER: -I would like to elaborate on, just that this is only the beginning of transgender men in women sport. And we, you can't remove the Y chromosome and that programs how men's bodies work. And we need to draw a bright line before we open the floodgate because it's going to be too hard to take back. And we're seeing men taking women's trophies away this weekend, even, a man won and set women's world records in a powerlifting federation.

LONG: Wow. That's incredible. And does this person have a history of competing well as a man or did they just sort of show up out of nowhere and sweep the field?

STELZER: It's kind of a typical, they do mediocre as a man and transition and, of course, have a leg up on women.

LONG: Mm-hm

BLADE: Yeah. Yeah, again, I mean there's thousands of athletes that, you know, being male, like, guy who won't even make a final in track and field and they could totally beat the best woman in the world on any given event.

LONG: Mm-hm

STELZER: We just need fans to be heard.

LONG: Yeah.

BLADE: Yeah. Yeah.

LONG: Absolutely. Well-

BLADE: -And it's important. Can I just add one last thing?

LONG: Yeah.

BLADE: If the IOC would suspended - like everything stems from this because if the IOC would suspend their policy, there would be a cascading effect that it would help people like me on the ground to have a lot stronger voice to resist this because then we would say 'well, the IOC suspended it, we're not going to implement here.' But if the IOC lets it go ahead, then I would still be careful with my own people and our own policies of the ground, but it would be a lot harder to say 'look, let them do what they want to do internationally, but we got to be fair to

our girls and our boys in these clubs.' Right? So they are the preeminent sport governing body in the world, and it does really matter what they do.

LONG: Well, that's a challenge to every woman who's listening here today to jump on the internet and to contact them and let them know how you feel.

BLADE: Yeah, please do.

LONG: Because it is important.

BLADE: Yeah. Yeah, it is really important.

STELZER: Together we can do so much, right?

LONG: Mm-hm.

BLADE: Exactly.

LONG: Absolutely.

BLADE: Yeah.

:theme music - Real Voice by Thistle Pettersen:

:acoustic guitar:

*"So speak out, speak over, speak under
Speak through the noise
Speak loud so I can hear you, I wanna know you,
I wanna hear your real voice.
I wanna hear your real voice.
Your real voice, your real voice, your real voice..."*

:music fades out:

:Station tag - single strum downward, acoustic guitar:

You are listening to...

:sung with angelic harmonies:

*~~*WLRN*~~*

...brought to you by the totally excellent radical feminists at

Women's (women's) (women's) (women's)
Liberation (...ration) (...ration) (...ration)
Radio (radio) (radio) (radio)
News (news) (news) (news)

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

:the sound of a bicycle being peddled in the open air fades up:

:peddle, coast, peddle, coast:

PETTERSEN: Now that it's Spring and the weather is nicer, I've been riding my bike to work taking the Lake Shore bike path that goes through the University of Wisconsin campus.

:bike chain working, spokes turning, slight squeaking, birds chirping:

On a couple of occasions, the Women's rowing team has been getting boats out of the boathouse and onto the lake as I bike by.

:metal door mechanisms rumble as the boathouse doors glide open:

:10, maybe 15 women are talking, some laughter, as boats are dropped with a splash into the water:

I've enjoyed hearing only women's voices at that point in my ride, including the voice of the coach in the megaphone shouting out words of encouragement and direction to the synchronized rowers in the boats on the lake.

:sound of a woman calling, in a very cadenced way, through a megaphone to rowers...it's almost a song:

*"...Six!!...In the waterrr...
...Seven!! Get 'em anchorrred...
...Eight!! Right with 'em!!....*

:clear, bright notes from an acoustic guitar begin:

:birds continue to sing:

What a wonderful thing to have women working together as a team, using their bodies, to propel a watercraft gracefully and swiftly across the water. What would this world be like without women's sports? Are women's sports still women's sports when men are allowed to be

on women's teams or are allowed to compete with women? How do policies of trans inclusion harm the rights and protections of girls and women involved in sports?

:sounds of synchronizing rowing through the water, and, faintly, the coach through the megaphone:

I am struck by the physical nature of the feeling I get when I see all of those young women working together in the boat on the lake. I can feel the workings of muscles in my own legs and arms as I watch them propel themselves together as a team.

There is something we hold in common in our women's bodies. Femaleness is not just about our reproductive capabilities; It is in the size of our hands, the extra layer of fat just beneath our skin, our bone structure and in our voices.

We have the right to group ourselves together based on this physical reality for the purpose of engaging our bodies in competition or team sports.

Why do we have this right? Because we have the right to bond with, like, bodied athletes in order to fully feel ourselves as female, and to achieve our potential in sports. There is something beautiful about grouping ourselves together to form an all-female team or all-female sports competition. It is not just about fairness – it is about bonding and pride in our bodies as ourselves.

Men have the chance to do male-bonding things all of the time in public, not just in sports, but in daily life. There have been so many times I have seen men bonding with each other in their maleness at bars as they talk to women or among themselves, on sports teams such as football teams and in soccer, in business meetings, at church, on the movie screen and basically, in every part of public life.

If men are afforded this right to bond as a sex, frequently in ways that subordinate and render women “inferior”, then why is the bonding of girls and women together as a sex under fire as we see in this new attack on women's sports?

I did a little research for this piece and it turns out, girls did not even hardly have sports teams in the public schools until after Title IX was passed in 1972. Even with the passage of Title IX, which guarantees equal opportunities for sports participation for girls, a 2017 study by the US Government Accountability Office found that girls' participation had not reached parity with boys'.

What this means is that even with Title IX in place, female teenage athletes in the public schools are not participating at the same rate in sports as male athletes. Now that the laws and policies are changing again, even before parity is achieved, how will this new era of trans-inclusion, ie of males in female sports, impact progress in parity?

The answer can be found in the experiences cropping up in public schools this year in a variety of sports events. In Connecticut, there is now the well-publicized advent of boys winning a girls' track event and being rewarded with "courage awards" for their participation.

According to the site Transathlete.com, 17 states including Colorado, New Jersey, Florida and Minnesota, have transgender-inclusion policies that do not require surgeries or hormone treatments for boys to be counted as girls in girls' sports. Not that puberty blockers, synthetic hormones or surgeries can or will ever add up to making someone the opposite sex, but at least requiring a certain amount of those actions makes it more difficult for boys to be counted as girls and vice versa.

With this kind of policy becoming predominant in 2019, it is likely we will see more cases like the case of the two boys in Connecticut who just won first and second place in track events in February at a state indoor track meet. Both Andraya Yearwood and Terry Miller, the first and second place winners of the event, are trans-identified males.

How does this make the girls competing against Yearwood and Miller feel? What sort of implications for sports scholarships onto college and university teams does this new phenomenon of trans-inclusion in girls' sports create? Will boys be taking away opportunities for female athletes by virtue of these new policies? All indicators point to "yes" and that means not only do we need to fight to keep Title IX protections in place, but we need to fight against these new policies that count boys as girls using the vague concept of "gender identity", a new term that means that you can be counted as the opposite sex if you say that you feel you are the opposite sex, even though you have no sex characteristics of the sex you are claiming to be.

Women are amazing. When we get together in our all-female music ensembles, the music is qualitatively different than all-male ensembles. This does not mean that women's music is better or worse than men's music – just that it is different and that it has the right to be – the right to exist without male intervention. The same holds true for girls' and women's sports. I am not interested in arguing that girls' and women's anatomy and physical makeup is "weaker" than male anatomy and physicality. I am interested in arguing that it is different which means we need to have different guideposts and challenges for our female athletes than we do for our male athletes. We need to keep girls' and women's sports separate from boys' and men's sports in order to see the true quality of our athletes and what they are capable of doing when given the opportunity.

There is a big difference between the words "segregation" and "separatism" when looking at the social implications of those terms. Segregation is often used to point out the unfair treatment of blacks under Jim Crow laws and was the idea of whites and enforced by whites to keep blacks out of whites-only spaces. Separatism is when members of the oppressed class, decide to remove themselves from spaces where the oppressor class has power over them.

Employing separatism to women's sports, women's cultural events or women's facilities such as changing rooms, locker rooms, prisons and homeless shelters, is not an act of discrimination against men. It is an act of separation because the world is male-dominated, and women need our own institutions and spaces to recover from male-domination. This applies as much to sports as it does to any aspect of women's organizing, safety and culture.

:soft and bright acoustic guitar continues playing melody and fades out:

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

LONG: Thanks for listening to WLRN's 37 edition podcast on women's sports. We'd like to thank our guests Coach Linda Blade and Beth Stelzer for granting us interviews. Next month, we will explore the erosion of abortion rights and access as it is playing out in the US and around the world. That program will be available on Thursday, June 6th. I'm Robin Long, thanks for staying tuned to WLRN!

PETTERSEN: Thanks for all of your support! We could not do this collective radio work without you. We are you and you are us! If you'd like to join our team of volunteer journalists, we need help with interviews, editing, writing and delivering the world news, or any number of tasks that keep us airborne. Just go to the WLRN wordpress site and click on the "Volunteer for WLRN" tab. While you're there, consider becoming a listener sponsor. It's easy, just click on the donate button and then check the box that says you'd like a monthly donation withdrawn automatically from your account. If everyone listening to this right now donated just \$5/month, pretty soon we'll be as big as Democracy Now or NPR! But in all seriousness, your donations help us to travel to festivals and events to table and to reach more and more listeners. I am Thistle Pettersen signing off for now. Thanks for staying tuned to WLRN.

DIQUARTO: Thanks for tuning in to WLRN's 37th edition on women's sports. I'm Jenna DiQuarto, WLRN's sound engineer and producer. Today's podcast was produced by yours truly with tender loving care and in solidarity with women worldwide. Until next time, stay strong!

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

: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: