

## Edition 36: The Left, The Right, and Feminist Strategy

Transcribed by Jenna Di Quarto and Danielle Whitaker

*: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:*

Sekhmet SHE OWL: Greetings! and welcome to the 36th edition podcast of Women's Liberation Radio News for this Thursday, April 4th, 2019. This is our third anniversary edition!

*:Kazoo fanfare:*

*:Woman exclaims, 'yeah!'*

*:Fireworks:*

That's right, the collective at WLRN has been working together for three whole years to bring you the news and information no other news source brings you in the unique, collaborative, and community-based way that we do.

*:soft arpeggiated piano, pulsing bass:*

I'm Sekhmet SheOwl, WLRN's resident female separatist, desert dweller, and unapologetic man hater.

In this April 2019 edition, we focus on feminists working with the left and the right to achieve our feminist goal of liberation for girls and women from male tyranny. We'll hear WLRN's Danielle Whitaker facilitate a conversation between Kara Dansky, board member of the Women's Liberation Front (otherwise known as 'WoLF'), and Ann Menasche, founding member of FIST, Feminists in Struggle. Both of these women are lawyers and prominent feminists who dedicate much of their time to developing strategies for winning rights and protections for women and girls.

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, April 4th, 2019.

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

*:mellow lo-fi beat fades in:*

**DAMAYANTI:** On March 14th, the City of Vancouver voted to discontinue their annual grant to the Vancouver Rape Relief Center and Women's Shelter. Trans-identified male activist, Morgane Oger, was behind the effort to get city officials to defund the rape crisis center. Morgane Oger has been the subject of numerous complaints from citizens, due to accusations of defamation and harassment of feminists online. WLRN's Thistle Pettersen got this statement from Laurel McBride, current member of the Vancouver Rape Relief Collective:

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**Laurel MCBRIDE:** On March 14, 2019, Vancouver City Council voted to terminate a yearly grant that was given to Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter in support of our public education work. This grant is 34,000 [dollars] and it's something that we've been receiving yearly for over 10 years, and this

money goes towards our public education work. We hold a memorial every year for the women who were killed in the Montreal Massacre of 1989. That's one of our biggest public education events. It's a full day conference that has roundtable conversations, lectures, and invite members of the public to learn more about ending violence against women.

Thistle PETERSEN: On what grounds did they refuse the future funding?

MCBRIDE: Well, the grounds that we lost the funding were on the basis that we maintain a female-only women's collective—that our membership is women who were born female, socialized as girls into their current womanhood... And the accusation levelled at us was that we were not compliant with their policy to be accommodating, welcome, and open to all people.

PETERSEN: So if some people who have hearing were to go into a deaf organization and take funding for their purposes because they identify as deaf, even though they're not deaf, wouldn't there be an uproar? Why is this acceptable?

MCBRIDE: Well, that's completely our point. The policy actually makes note of an exception to this, wherein the exclusion of some groups is required for another group to be effectively targeted. And you can see in those who received the the funding this year as well, that there are targeted programs for Aboriginal youth or Chinese seniors, Deaf persons and migrant workers—that they have the right to limit who they serve to a particular group in order to concentrate on that group.

PETERSEN: And who stated that? Was that the city of Vancouver?

MCBRIDE: Yes, these are other groups who have been receiving the grant as well as us. It's a community group grant.

PETERSEN: Wow. What do you plan to do? I mean, \$34,000, you lose that... Aren't you trying to replace it? And if so, what are you going to replace it with and how can WLRN listeners support your efforts?

MCBRIDE: You're right, it—it is a significant amount of money. And it's not only the amount of money that we're losing with the termination of this funding, it's the the ripple effects that will happen as a result of that. That there are other

pockets of money to be targeted, and that the win at City Hall could be used to mount existing pressure to defend Rape Relief's organizing work as a whole.

We're still trying to sort out what our move is next, in terms of what we'll be doing to replace the funding. I can say that we have received many messages of support and donations from women locally, nationally and internationally. So we're incredibly grateful...

PETTERSEN: And how can women donate who are listening to this? How can they donate if they want to donate?

MCBRIDE: They can donate by going to our website and there's a donate tab there. Our website is RapeReliefShelter.bc.ca.

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DAMAYANTI: Saudi Arabia has temporarily released three of the women's rights activists held in custody for almost a year, state media has said, following a court hearing in which the detainees alleged torture and sexual harassment during interrogation. More than 11 activists, who had long campaigned for the right to drive and abolish the male guardianship system, had been arrested last May just before the historic lifting of a decades-long ban on female motorists. The three women, blogger Eman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Youssef, a retired lecturer at King Saud University, and academic Rokaya al-Mohareb, offered their defence at the hearing, alleging torture and sexual harassment during interrogation, according to reports citing courtroom sources. They accused interrogators of subjecting them to electric shocks, as well as flogging and groping them in detention. One of them had attempted to commit suicide after the mistreatment. According to Amnesty International, the women had only two hours to prepare for the defense with their state-appointed lawyers.

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In a Walmart in Clarksville, Southern Indiana, an employee was sexually assaulted by a man in the women's washroom. She was washing her hands, when the man came up from a stall behind her, and started grabbing her inappropriately. She was able to elbow him in the chest and got away, and ran to find a manager. She described the man to the other employees, who found him in the store. He then began to ask store managers why there wasn't a transgender bathroom in the store. When the police

arrived, they found him on a computer in the electronics department, looking up transgender bathroom policies. Police said that they found meth, and a syringe on him, and he was already out on bond. To the police, the accused claimed that he had just “bumped” into the woman. He is facing charges of sexual battery, possession of meth and a syringe, with a habitual offender enhancement.

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Last week, the #MeToo movement erupted in Mexico as hundreds of journalists, academics, writers, and filmmakers turned to social networks to share incidents of sexual harassment and abuse. Female writers took to the social network Twitter to share incidents of sexual harassment, physical attacks, and psychological bullying in workplaces including newsrooms, publishing houses, literary fairs, and debates. The outpouring soon spread to allied professions and by Tuesday hundreds of reporters, photographers, camerawomen, and university researchers had shared incidents of sexual harassment and abuse perpetrated by colleagues and bosses using hashtags like #MeTooCine, which translates to #MeTooCinema, #MeTooAcademicosMexicanos, which translates to #MeTooMexicanAcademics, and #YoTeCreo, which translates to #IBelieveYou. Gender violence is widespread and extreme in Mexico with nine women murdered each day, and one in five subjected to sexual violence, according to the UN. According to a recent survey of almost 400 reporters, editors, designers, photographers, illustrators, and administrators who currently or previously worked in the media, 73% of female workers have faced sexual harassment.

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In other news, the organisers of a planned debate about race, gender and identity, due to take place at the Civic Suite in Catford, London, claim the event has been blocked by Lewisham Council because of fears of protests by trans activists. The event, a panel discussion organised by the We Need To Talk group, was called We Need To Talk About Race and Gender, and would have featured three black woman activists: Linda Bellos, the former leader of Lambeth Council; Sara Myers, a writer; And Danielle McDonald, a local anti-racism campaigner. The group has attracted protests from trans activists at previous meetings. A spokesperson of the Council said, “The likelihood of harm to people attending the proposed event appears to be very real. We are aware of earlier violent incidents during previous events hosted elsewhere. Because of this, the Council cannot support the request to hire Council premises for this proposed event.” In a petition started to protest against this decision, WNTT wrote, “The violent incident that he refers to was the assault of a 60-year-old female attendee by a 23-year-old

male trans activist protesting against a meeting to discuss the Government consultation on changes to the Gender Recognition Act in September 2017.” One of the panellists, Sara Myers, told The East London Lines, “I think the issue for the uproar is this is a conversation that isn’t centred around trans-women and because it’s not centred around trans-women, we are labelled as ‘terfs’.”

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Police in South Korea have arrested 2 men for secretly filming 1,600 hotel guests and streaming the footage live online. The suspects set up secret cameras in 42 rooms at 30 hotels in 10 South Korean cities between November last year and the start of this month, going to extraordinary lengths to install the cameras. Mini-cameras with 1mm lenses were found in digital boxes, hair dryer holders, and wall sockets. More than 800 illegally filmed videos were live-streamed via a server based overseas. 97 people paid a monthly fee to access the material, the Korea Herald said. The arrests come a week after singer and TV celebrity, Jung Joon-Young, admitted he had secretly filmed himself having sex with women and sharing the footage in a group chatroom whose members allegedly included Seungri, a K-pop star who is facing allegations that he ran an illegal prostitution ring out of Seoul nightclubs. South Korea is battling an epidemic of *molka*, which is secretly filmed videos of a sexual nature that target women in public places such as toilets and changing rooms, but also in their own homes. The rise in such cases had sparked off feminist protests of tens of thousands of women in Seoul last summer to demand longer sentences for perpetrators. The authorities responded by increasing patrols of the city’s public toilets—a measure that is ineffective according to the campaigners.

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A recent report published by the Human Rights Watch revealed that a shortage of women in China is a leading cause of the trafficking of women from Myanmar across the border. The report’s author says that China’s now abolished one-child policy, which began in 1979, is a major cause of the current trafficking crisis because it created a gender imbalance in China. Forced to have only one child, Chinese parents often abandoned female babies or had sex-selective abortions in favor of males, leading to a shortfall in the female population of an estimated 30 to 40 million. At the same time, years of conflict between Myanmar’s government and those fighting for independence for the mostly Christian Kachin ethnic minority have left over 100,000 people internally displaced and financially desperate in Myanmar’s northernmost states. The 112-page report, titled *Give Us a Baby and We’ll Let You Go: Trafficking of Kachin ‘Brides’ from*

*Myanmar to China*, documents anecdotal evidence from 37 victims of the trafficking trade who later escaped, and several families of trafficking victims. The women, originating from Myanmar's northern Shan and Kachin States, were typically sold for between \$3,000 to \$13,000 after being lured across the border by the promise of good jobs.

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In 2017, Chechnya, a region in Russia, came under the radar globally for rounding up, detaining, torturing, and executing men because of their real or perceived sexual identity. In 2018, the Russian LGBT Network began to receive reports that the authorities further started to round up lesbian women. A lesbian woman who escaped recently told her story to the news agency Current Time. According to her, her ex-girlfriend outed her to her family. Even though she ran away from home twice, one of her brothers tracked her down. She said, "One of my brothers came for me, and we went home. My mother was unhappy with this. She told my brother, 'Why did you bring her home? You should have shot her somewhere in the forest, as we agreed,'" the woman said, "But my brother did not do it—my father forbade him to do it." Her parents tried to send her to a psychiatric hospital for treatment and told her the demon, Jinn, had possessed her. So they sent her to a local mosque to undergo an exorcism to expel it. She said, "We all understood that there was no Jinn in me, but I had to pretend that it actually existed... I pretended, my parents believed me, but after a few months I ran away again. And then I turned for help to the Russian LGBT Network to help me and hide me. It was 2017." Six months after her second escape to Russia, the woman managed to leave the country altogether; but she said not so many women in Chechnya are as lucky as her. She said, "There are those who are still in Chechnya and for various reasons cannot leave there... This is especially true for girls. It is much harder for them to do this, because they are controlled. They cannot quietly leave the house, so that someone does not accompany them. Therefore, their evacuation is quite difficult to arrange." She said she wanted to talk about the issues of lesbians in the country because, while gay men had received a lot of global attention, no one notices women and no one had written about the lesbians who had been killed. "A woman [can] be taken out to the forest, killed, her family can come home and pretend that there was nothing. And not a single neighbor, not a single relative will ask," she said.

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In the UK, the Ministry of Justice confirmed that inmates at Britain's first trans prison wing at Downview, near Sutton, Surrey, who are understood to include sex offenders,

join biological women for activities including fitness sessions, library and chapel visits. They are supervised by prison officers but the arrangement worries staff and biologically female prisoners. The vast majority of biologically female prisoners at Downview are low-risk and non-violent.

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In 2000, Khaled Farhan was found guilty of the second-degree murder of his live-in girlfriend Karina Janveau, who was 24 at the time. In her lifetime, Janveau had faced a series of hardships before she met Farhan. Her parents divorced when she was nine, her mother killed herself at Christmas, and she had a partially paralyzed leg, a crippled arm, and a drug habit. She was with Farhan for a year, during which he often physically abused and threatened to kill her. Finally, in a cocaine-fuelled rage, he attacked her and killed her. He kept her dead body in the basement for days, before neighbours started complaining about the smell. After that, according to his court testimony, he cut up her body so that it would be easier to dispose off. He discarded part of the body in a nearby dumpster and he put the rest in a duffel bag and dumped it a few hundred metres away in a field by railway tracks. After the killing, Farhan presented himself for local television stations as a worried husband pleading for the public's help to find his missing common-law spouse. Farhan lied a lot in those days, telling newspaper and TV reporters that he last saw Janveau leaving for a camping trip with a so-called dangerous drug dealer. The police arrested him right after a building superintendent discovered some of the discarded body parts in a dumpster, and the press dubbed him the The Butcher of Gatineau. While in prison, he was put in solitary confinement for sending sexually inappropriate letters to the guards. Later, however, he requested to be put in solitary confinement out of "fear for his own life" after he started identifying as a transgender woman. He was then shifted to a women's prison. He has now been granted parole, legally changed his name to Zahra Farhan, and plans to live as a transgender woman, devoting his life to "helping the blind and transgender community."

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Nasrin Sotoudeh, an internationally renowned human rights lawyer jailed in Iran, has been handed a new sentence that her husband said was 38 years in prison and 148 lashes. Sotoudeh, who has represented opposition activists including women prosecuted for removing their mandatory headscarf, was arrested in June and charged with spying, spreading propaganda, and insulting Iran's supreme leader. She had previously been jailed in 2010 for spreading propaganda and conspiring to harm state



security—charges she denied—and was released after serving half of her 6-year term. Sotoudeh’s husband, Reza Khandan, wrote on Facebook that the sentence was decades in jail and 148 lashes, unusually harsh even for Iran, which cracks down hard on dissent and regularly imposes death sentences for some crimes. The news comes days after Iran appointed a hardline new head of the judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi, who is a protege of Ali Khamenei. The appointment is seen as weakening the political influence of the Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate.

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In Tamil Nadu, India police officials have arrested a man who was found to have raped over 50 women. The incident came to light when he was stopped by the traffic police and his motorcycle's official papers could not match his identity proof. Meanwhile, the police began questioning him but he could not properly answer to them. The police suspected foul play and took his phone for further investigation. It was then that cops discovered 50 videos of him raping different women in his phone. In further investigation, the cops found he used to barge into women's house when they were alone, and then he would rape them, shoot the whole incident on his phone. He later used the same videos to threaten the survivors of dire consequences if they approached the police for help. In the past, a case had been registered against him but he had been granted bail as the case was not strong enough.

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In Chattisgarh, India, national security forces stormed a village in Bastar in February, on the pretence of capturing Maoists. Popular news media reported that 10 Maoists had been killed in a “police encounter,” and presented it as a victory for the security forces in preserving national security. Earlier this month, tribal and women’s rights activist Soni Sori released a statement saying that no encounter took place on that day and the incident was a part of the continuing onslaught of violence against the indigenous Adivasi population. Most of the people killed that day were children from the village who had gathered to participate in a village sports event. The police fired indiscriminately, and then went on to rape two young girls. One of them, who was 12 years old, had her nose and private parts mutilated by the security forces. According to her, when such crimes are brought to light, the security forces give casteist defences, saying that Adivasi women have a foul smell, and none of these men would even touch them. In India, Bastar is one of the many conflict areas where the Army is able to rape women with impunity under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

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On April 2nd, Former Law and Policy Co-Chair for Baltimore City's LGBTQ Commission and WLRN lesbian feminist member, Julia Beck, testified before the US House Judiciary Committee about the harms of the Equality Act as currently written. Ms. Beck's testimony is important for furthering the US-based leftist conversation about how to protect the rights of gays, lesbians and gender non-conforming individuals and also the rights and safety of girls and women. Until the advent of the concepts of "gender identity" and "sex self-identification," the rights and protections of gays and lesbians were congruent (and remain congruent) with the rights and protections of girls and women. According to lawyers in feminist organizations WoLF and FIST, among other feminist politicians and lawyers, to include "gender identity" in the Equality Act is to enshrine sexist stereotypes into law. These sexist stereotypes harm girls and women the most, but ultimately harm all members of society.

Julia BECK: If the act passes in its current form as HR 5, then every right that women have fought for will cease to exist. HR 5 is a human rights violation. Every person in this country will lose their right to single sex sports, shelters, grants, and loans; The law will forbid ever distinguishing between women and men. To be clear, I do support the general goal of the Equality Act to protect people on the basis of sex, a physical and immutable biological reality; To protect sexual orientation, which is based on biological sex; I object to the inclusion of gender identity. People who call themselves transgender, non-binary, and everything in between still deserve the same basic human rights that we all do, but treating someone as if they are a member of the opposite sex is not a civil right. In fact, this violates the rights of others...Sex is a vital characteristic - gender identity is not. This bill defines gender identity as actual or perceived gender related characteristics. This is a circular definition, a logical fallacy. There is no way to protect the person on the basis of their gender identity without a legitimate definition. Lawmakers across the country will have to consider which mannerisms, hairstyles, occupations, and clothing choices make up one gender identity or another. How is this any different from the sex stereotypes women have been fighting to break free from? How is this not regressive?

DAMAYANTI: Of note was testimony from Professor Doriane Lambelet Coleman, Professor of Law and the Duke Law School, who defended women's sports.

Doriane Lambelet COLEMAN: As chairman Nadler noted, the legal history of our country is in part a chronology of efforts designed to give meaning and effect to the original commitment in 1776 - all men are created equal. The work is ongoing for those of us who weren't originally matched to be its beneficiaries. As the milestones reflect the lesson is that different groups experience inequality for different reasons at the hands of different people, and in different ways, so that tailoring an effective remedy requires attention to those differences. Although the nation benefits as equality expands, in fact, only some of us needed the Emancipation Proclamation and Brown vs Board of Education. Only some of us need Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act. Approaches to equality that elide relevant differences are not only ineffective, they actually serve as cover for ongoing inequality. I've recently encountered advocacy that exemplifies this problem. The argument is that because some males identify women, some women have testes; From this, it follows that sex and sex linked traits can't be the grounds for distinctions on the basis of sex, because this excludes women with testes. This leaves gender identity as the only legitimate basis for classifying someone into, for example, girls and women's only spaces and opportunities. I support equality including for the LGBTQ community, but I don't support the current version of HR 5 because, and I say this with enormous respect for everyone who's working on the bill, it elides sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It's all sex discrimination and at least impliedly, we're all the same. And opting for what is in effect a sex blind approach to sex discrimination law, the legislation would serve as cover for disparities on the basis of sex. Sex is not just a concept. Females have and continue to be treated differently precisely because of our reproductive biology and stereotypes about that biology. The legal fiction that females and women with testes are the same for all purposes, will take us backward not forward. I was asked to testify today because I've long worked in the one area where this is most clear - Title IX and opportunities for girls and women in sport. Title IX, which requires schools to invest in male and female athletes equally, undoubtedly powers invaluable outcomes, not only for the many individuals who are benefited by its terms, but also for society in general. Those of us who are athletes know that separation on the basis of sex is necessary to achieve equality in this space. The very best women in the world would lose to literally thousands of boys and men including to thousands who would be considered second-tier in the men's category; And because it only takes three male bodied athletes to preclude the best females from the medal stand, it doesn't matter if only a handful turn out to be gender non-conforming. If US law changes so that we can no longer distinguish females from women with testes for any purpose, we risk not knowing the next Sanya Richards Ross, or the

next Allyson Felix; We risk losing the extraordinary value that comes from having women like Serena Williams, Aly Raisman, and Ibtihaj Muhammad in our lives and on the medal stand. If they bother to compete, they would be relegated to participants in the game. One prominent trans activist who said that we shouldn't be concerned that the victories would belong to trans-girls and women going forward, because what matters is their liberty to self-identify and their right to be treated equally throughout society. Others including some in the Title IX advocacy community have embraced this evolution, arguing that what we should care about is participation. These advocates are right to seek avenues for transgender inclusion, but listen carefully to the particular bargain they are willing to strike: In effect, it's that we don't need parity of competitive opportunity; They're wrong about this. Participation contributes to equality for females but the real power of sport isn't in gym class; It's in teams, competitions, and victories; It's in the same numbers of athletic scholarships and of spots and finals and on podiums; It's in the fact that Brandi Chastain can win worlds, celebrate like the guys, and get a whole generation of little girls to play soccer because she did. It's in the fact that Simone Manuel can win Olympic Gold in the 100 Meter Free with millions watching on primetime television, and from there can lead a generation of African-American kids to the pool who didn't believe that swimming was for them. I encourage you to consider revisions - revisions - to HR 5 that provide protections for sexual orientation and gender identity that don't risk invaluable goods, and that are otherwise thoughtful about the circumstances in which sex still matters.

DAMAYANTI: The full hearing can be viewed on the "House Judiciary Committee Hearings" YouTube page, under "Full Committee Hearing on HR 5".

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March 8th, International Women's Day, marked the launch of a new U.S.-based, grassroots, radical feminist network called *Feminists in Struggle*. *Feminists in Struggle*, which uses the acronym FIST, brings together a diverse group of radical and revolutionary feminists based on 13 principles. The principles include a call for the abolition of the gender roles; the abolition of prostitution; an end to all forms of male violence and sex-based discrimination; for free childcare; for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment; for free, unimpeded access to abortion and birth control; for an end to white supremacy; And support for lesbian rights. FIST defends women's fundamental right to female only spaces, programs, and organizations that exclude males, regardless of gender identity. FIST rejects any alliances with the religious Right

or the white supremacist Right describing the far Right as posing “an extreme danger to feminists.” FIST has a democratic structure, which it calls the “Feminist Assembly” that places decision making in the hands of its active membership. It has also established a dues-paying structure so feminists can maintain their independence. “We are building a movement from the ground up to fight back against the attacks against women’s rights from multiple quarters,” said Ann Menasche, one of the group’s founders. “We believe that women have the collective power to end our oppression, if we only would join hands and organize.” *Feminists in Struggle* is actively seeking new members. Women can apply to join on FIST’s website, [feministstruggle.org](http://feministstruggle.org). That’s “feminist” “struggle” dot o-r-g.

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A new website called [defendfeminists.org](http://defendfeminists.org) was launched this March by the Defend Feminists Committee, an ad hoc grouping of volunteers from *Feminists in Struggle* and others, including male allies, who wish to defend women from trans activist attacks on their livelihood, reputations, and ability to be safely seen and to participate in public life. WLRN’s Thistle Pettersen is the first feminist to step forward to accept this group’s offer of help, but the committee hopes to defend other women in the future. If you would like to get in touch with the committee to volunteer, make suggestions, or to sign the petition, write a letter, or donate to the campaign, please visit [www.defendfeminists.org](http://www.defendfeminists.org). That’s [www dot “defend” “feminists” dot o-r-g](http://www.defendfeminists.org).

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Nina Paley, producer of the films *Sita Sings the Blues* and *Seder Masochism*, recently held a panel discussion at the Urbana Free Public Library in Illinois called “Does Sex Matter? Gender Identity versus Material Reality”. Speakers on the panel included Ms. Paley herself, resident of Urbana, Illinois; Corinna Cohn, adult transsexual from Indianapolis; and Carey Callahan, detransitioned woman and family therapist from Ohio. WLRN live-streamed the panel discussion to our Facebook Page and it is now available for viewing there and on WLRN’s YouTube channel. The public discussion took place with no incidents of attacks on the speakers nor the audience. About 50 trans activists gathered at the same library in a different room to share cake and hold a children’s gender story hour at the same time as Ms. Paley’s event.

*:paper shuffling:*

That concludes WLRN's world news segment for Friday, April 5th, 2019. I'm Damayanti. Share your news stories and tips with us by emailing [wlrnewscontact@gmail.com](mailto:wlrnewscontact@gmail.com) and letting us know what's going on in your world!

*:Song interlude - Honest by Band of Skulls:*

*:sole acoustic guitar, arpeggiating pattern:*

*:repeats, with second acoustic guitar accents:*

*You gotta be honest, you gotta be guarded*

*You sure aren't gonna say*

*Right on the inside, that is the hardest*

*The hardest game to play*

*You sorted it all out and managed to slip through*

*The night into the day*

*Life and a soul, do you ever get lonely?*

*I'm gon' take you on*

*Found ~ a ~ way ~ to understand the things ~ I'm ~ learnin'*

*Found ~ a ~ way ~ to understand the time ~ you're ~ burnin'*

*Found ~ a ~ way ~ to understand the things ~ I'm ~ learnin'*

*:music drops away:*

*Found~a~way~to understand the time~you're~burnin'*

*:single strums on jangly acoustic, 4 bars:*

*Gotta be honest, you gotta be guarded  
You sure aren't gonna say*

*Right on the inside, that is the hardest  
The hardest game to play*

*You sorted it all out, managed to slip through  
The night into the day*

*Life and a soul, do you ever get lonely?  
I'm gon' take you on*

*Found ~ a ~ way ~ to understand the things ~ I'm ~ learnin'...  
:music fades out:*

Jenna DIQUARTO: That was Band of Skulls with their song *Honest*.

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

*:muted hand drums come in with beat:*

Next up we'll hear a round table discussion facilitated by Danielle Whitaker between two prominent feminist activists and lawyers, Kara Dansky of WoLF and Ann Menasche of FIST. Ann Menasche is a lesbian radical feminist, a socialist, a civil rights lawyer, and a published author who has been organizing for the cause of female liberation for many decades. She co-founded a lesbian-feminist organization in the 1980's in San Francisco called Lesbian Uprising, and on March 8th, International Women's Day, helped launch a new grassroots radical feminist organization, *Feminists in Struggle*, or FIST.

Kara Dansky is a radical feminist and lawyer who serves on the board of the Women's Liberation Front, or WoLF, where she helps coordinate the organization's legal

strategies. She has served as Senior Counsel at the ACLU and Executive Director of the Stanford Criminal Justice Center, and recently appeared as a panelist at an event titled, "The Inequality of the Equality Act: Concerns from the Left," hosted by right-wing organization The Heritage Foundation, to discuss the impact of gender identity ideology and legislation.

Danielle WHITAKER: Could we just start by telling us a little bit about yourselves, your careers, how you got involved with feminist activism and some background on your respective organizations, Wolf and FIST. Ann, would you like to start?

Ann MENASCHE: Sure, you got my name right, it's Ann MENASCHE. I probably was born a feminist, if I was born anything I was born a feminist. I've been active for like, 40 or 50 years in the women's liberation movement and also in all kinds of progressive and left-wing causes, and I've also been very active as a lesbian feminist. I founded a lesbian organization in San Francisco in the 80s, and that lasted for several years and I've been doing the same thing organizing ever since. I work as a civil rights lawyer, so we have two lawyers here, at least two lawyers, on the phone. I spent my whole life as a civil rights lawyer doing all kinds of civil rights—the last few, bunch of years—disability rights in particular for the homeless people, and am a big believer in women only spaces, women only organizations; Our right to self-organize and our ability to change society; And I'm part of a new organization called *Feminists is Struggle*, the acronym being FIST, and we are united around 13 principles of unity basically covering every area of feminist demands and vision, and we're just getting off the ground, welcoming new members to join, and one of our principles is that we do believe it's a mistake to make alliances with the far right.

WHITAKER: Great, thank you. Kara, can you tell us a little bit about your background?

Kara DANSKY: Sure, so I'm on the board of WoLF, the Women's Liberation Front, and I have been for the last couple of years. WoLF was founded in 2014, and we are an unapologetically radical feminist organization, all volunteer run, and I've been a feminist for several decades. I've always been a feminist and I got particularly active in radical feminist study and advocacy in college several decades ago and have been fairly active ever since, and when I'm not working with WoLF, I do criminal and immigration justice policy work.

WHITAKER: Awesome. Okay. So yes we do have two lawyers, not one.

MENASCHE: *:laughs:*



WHITAKER: I'm just a writer... so it's great to have you both here. So, as I mentioned, one of the big controversies that we're discussing at this point is whether or not and to what degree we should be engaging or allying with—however you define that—with conservatives when it comes to certain issues where we share common ground like gender identity, trans activism, prostitution. So could you each—could you each share your stance on this, kind of expand on where you're coming from and what your reasoning is? Kara, do you want to start?

DANSKY: Sure! So from my perspective, gender identity ideology presents an urgent and existential threat to the lives, privacy, and safety of women and girls, and that it would be actually irresponsible of us not to work on all fronts and, for better or worse, that occasionally requires working with conservatives, and I also think that in order to ultimately be able to liberate women and girls, we need to be able to affect the laws that govern us in the legislative, judicial, and administrative branches of government and that to do that, we have to be able to talk to the people who make those laws. And again, for better or worse, that includes a lot of conservatives. So, just as an example, I know that you both know that some WoLF members recently presented on a panel at the Heritage Foundation, which ended up being quite controversial, but the fact of the matter is that our presentation at the Heritage Foundation literally got Julia Beck, a WoLF member, an opportunity to testify about the dangers of including gender identity in the Violence Against Women Act—that was a direct result of our presentation on that panel.

WHITAKER: Mm-hm, right. So, could you could you also talk a little bit about the funding that WoLF received, I think it was a few years ago, from the Alliance Defending Freedom, which was a conservative organization?

DANSKY: Sure, so we filed a lawsuit in New Mexico challenging the then Obama Administration's quote-unquote guidance on the—essentially redefinition of sex to mean gender identity in Title IX. So we sued the Obama Administration, and that was not inexpensive—we had some really serious legal fees that we had to pay. And after a lot of very difficult deliberation and discussion, we made the decision to accept some money from the Alliance Defending Freedom—it was a one time grant that we received in 2016.

WHITAKER: Okay. So, Ann, what is your take on this? How would you respond to that and how does this tie in with the principles of *Feminists in Struggle*?

MENASCHE: It's a big, big question. First of all, gender identity ideology is not something in itself; it's connected with gender. It interacts with gender, with issues regarding the freedom to be gay or lesbian, the freedom to be gender non-conforming, and the reality is the far right—the Christian Right—which is the Christian Taliban basically here in the United States—want to eliminate all freedom for women, all independence for women; control our bodies, control our sexuality. They have a completely opposite position on gender than the feminists do. They support gender, they like gender, they want to enforce gender. They create the conditions that allow for transgender ideology, and people falling for that and transitioning quote-unquote, to grow. They create those conditions, so they hurt us in that way. And it's not like any kind of single issue kind of alliance, because the single issue is gender—it's not gender identity by itself, it's gender. So we have to fight gender as a whole, interconnected. And if we're dealing with the Equality Act or anything like that we have to take a position that's clearly feminist that deals with gender as a whole. The right has no principled opposition to gender ideology at all, because as I said they support gender. I have personal knowledge from having sued a fundamentalist shelter that they actually supported transgender ideology completely even though they were horrible at every single thing. They did that on their own without any coercion whatsoever; they didn't follow any laws, it has nothing to do with laws—they did that. So just like in Iran, there's no fundamental, principled, opposition they have. What they want to do is take advantage of the situation to basically push back gay rights—gay and lesbian rights, and push back a woman's rights. So they are a Trojan horse in our ranks, and we should not see them as any kind of hope for stopping, what I agree with Kara, is a very dangerous ideology that is threatening woman's rights. There are other alternatives, this is the thing. You know when you make decisions based on desperation, you don't necessarily make the best choices, and I understand the feeling of desperation and the feeling of isolation, I completely sympathize with that, but there are other options. We have not started to try last grassroots organizing. We really have not started to do that, not since the second wave, and we need to do major grassroots organizing. That's how we won Roe v Wade; that's what how we won suffrage; all the things that women have won, we're done by grassroots organizing in the streets. That was our power, and that's what I think is our power now, to change a very difficult situation that we have, because we have two enemies not one, and we have to be real about that. The problem with these alliances that they—first of all, discredit the movement. They cut us off from potential allies. And it's not impossible to win over liberal women—it's not, I've won a bunch of liberal woman over to a gender-critical position—but it helps reinforce the lie that being a radical feminist is a reactionary, bigoted thing to be. It undermines our credibility and it disarms and disorients feminists to think that the far right, that the Christian Taliban, is not so bad for us. It

weakens pro-choice opinion, you could see it all over the internet; there's a real weakening of understanding how important abortion rights is; there's a real weakening of supporting lesbian gay rights, because they're—just like, the right—lumping it—and the mainstream gay organizations—lumping LGBT together, and not separating it out, and meaning you see lots of people writing on the internet supporting the homophobic baker in the masterpiece cake shop case. People opposing all sex education, which, *:chuckles:* which is a really bad thing. Not wanting gay and lesbian lives to be discussed in schools, which is a really bad thing that we've been fighting and I've been fighting as—because I've also been a lesbian and gay rights activists meant for many decades—I've been fighting that for decades, and I fought against the Briggs Initiative in the late 70s in San Francisco. I know the right really well. I've sued them. I was involved in a lawsuit against a fake clinic, an anti-abortion clinic, and one of the people we sued, James Cobb, went on to kill an abortion doctor, I found out several years later. These are the people we're talking about, they may be very friendly and nice to us, but we are in a very dangerous hornet's nest when we go in there. And I think that that really has been a disarming of our awareness of that and and a failure to have confidence and the ability to really build an independent women's liberation movement.

WHITAKER: Okay, thank you. So when we talk about engaging with or allying with—I wonder if maybe some of the controversy could stem from the fact that these terms can be vague. They don't necessarily clearly state what specific actions would be involved, you know, there's a big difference between engaging in dialogue versus accepting funding versus, you know, engaging in some organized partnership so I'm wondering, Kara, how would you define these terms and where do you feel that we should draw lines in terms of involvement?

DANSKY: Well, you know, I totally agree that \_\_\_ itself are combined and WoLF explicitly calls for the total abolition of gender in all of its forms. So I would agree with that. You know, I guess I'd say that there is \_\_\_ not a single conservative I have ever spoken with, in any context, who has even once suggested that I personally or WoLF generally compromise our commitment to women's—or any of our other \_\_\_. I don't expect that they will and if they did, we just wouldn't do that. We'll never compromise our commitment to women's reproductive sovereignty or any other of our principles. We've never been asked to, so if your question, Dani, is where would you draw the line, I would say that that's a clear line in the sand that we would never even contemplate crossing.

WHITAKER: Mm-hm. So, Ann, what actions do you think would be effective for our movement to grow, you know, for our voices to be heard, for us to effect change and attack legislation, and who do you think we should be partnering with to make that happen?

MENASCHE: Okay, well I think that grassroots organizing means building organizations on the ground, and *Feminists in Struggle* have just started doing that. I'm having a, in about an hour I'm having about a dozen women coming to see an abortion film at my house. I've been having forums, salons for the last two or three years. Having that kind of consciousness raising and political discussions is really helpful. We have to start getting visible and I know that's hard because we've been under attack, but FIST has also been involved in the organization to defend feminists—defendfeminists.net—which is taking on the case of Thistle Pettersen. We're part of a coalition, we're not doing this by ourselves, but that's really important. We're trying to—we're getting some leftists, including males, to support that on the basis of democracy, so breaking through that silencing is really important and really getting back in the streets with a clear message. I mean, I was at the women's marches and it's very watered down feminism. There's no clear demands and their policies of course are really bad on a number of issues, including gender politics, but we really need to be in the streets with a clear message, with the kind of demands of—start really organizing and creating real organizations on the ground, and I think that changes the politics of the country. It's done it before and it can do it again.

WHITAKER: So, Kara, when we talk about engaging with conservatives, what are some of—you mentioned a few earlier but, what are some of the long-term benefits do you see happening from this and how do you think we can mitigate the risks in terms of, you know, the negative optics it could have for our movement?

DANSKY: So I mean, just to be clear, there's no formal partnership that exists, right? Like, it happened to be that several WoLF women went on that Heritage panel, but that was just a one-off panel, and it also is the case that Heritage presented a panel before the UN Commission on the Status of Women which presented an opportunity to get a radical feminist analysis before the UN Commission on the Status of Women and that's really important. So, and I also just want to say that, I think grassroots organizing is great; I think that that's essential. Doesn't happen to be my skill set but I'm really happy to hear that other people are doing that, I think that's wonderful. I also think that it's very likely that the Equality Act is going to come before a hearing on the House Judiciary Committee and I am interested in getting a radical feminist present to testify before the House Judiciary Committee, and that's going to happen soon. You know,

Nancy Pelosi has committed to doing that and I take her at her word, so like, we need to be out there, before the legislature, in front of the courts in case the Supreme Court decides to take up the question of what the word sex means. I want us to be there presenting a radical feminist argument to the United States Supreme Court, so I just really think that we have to be fighting on all fronts and I don't want to miss an opportunity to get before the legislative and the judicial branches and, if having conversations with conservatives can facilitate that I'm willing to have those conversations.

MENASCHE: So let me just be—can I just clarify that I'm—

WHITAKER: Yeah.

MENASCHE: Yeah, thanks. I'm not saying that we shouldn't be at the legislature and try to testify, that we shouldn't do legal work—I do legal work all the time; that's what I do for a living. I'm also a grassroots organizer. I think the the most powerful thing is when those two things that are combined. But I think we have to have a clear feminist message when we go before Congress, for example, and that feminist message cannot be—will not be the same as a message from the right. They may oppose the bill, but that they do so for different reasons and I think our best bet, and I'm just thinking this stuff through right now so I don't have a completely worked out position about how to approach this, but I think we should call for basically amending the bill to fix it so it doesn't undermine sex-based protections, and that still it protects gays and lesbians, and gender non-conforming people from discrimination. So I think that's something we need to do and we cannot do that in alliance with the right because they don't support that. So I think we need our own message, we need our own funding, we need to be a dues—we are becoming a dues-paying organization. We want to raise our own money, we want to have our own independent voice, and want to be able to speak everywhere—in the streets, in the legislature, and in the courts.

DANSKY: So, I mean, if I can just respond to that—there is no alliance. There's literally no alliance of which to speak. Julia Beck was invited to testify before the House Judiciary Committee, and she did so, and she presented an explicitly radical feminist argument to the House Judiciary Committee, so I just am not really clear on what's being suggested here and I think it's insulting to suggest that Julia's message was in any way watered down. It was an explicitly radical feminist critique of including gender identity in the Violence Against Women Act.

MENASCHE: Yeah, I didn't say—yeah, I didn't say that her message was watered down. I'm saying if we approach the Equality Act, we cannot do that in lockstep with the right or an alliance with the right because they—their position and ours should be quite different. So that's what I'm saying, and I'm not, I'm not disagreeing with the things she said, which I think are great. I think that the the negatives of appearing before the Heritage Foundation are far stronger than the positives, and I do think there has been a tendency within WoLF, which caused several women to resign, including me, actually—way back, I was just in for a little while but—to resign because there was an orientation toward the right. It wasn't just a one-time thing, it was an orientation toward the right. And that was where we were going to get recruits, that's where we have to talk to them because we don't have time to reach out to liberal women or leftist women or anything like that, that they're more hopeless, they're not—we can't win those people over, and so I fundamentally disagree with that. It's gotten too close for my comfort. And I think we need to be very clear that they are our enemy. They are extreme—they're not conservatives, they're far-right extremists. They're the people that bomb abortion clinics, they're the people that want women to be imprisoned for miscarriages, they're the people who supported sodomy laws, they're people I've fought my whole life against as a feminist, because as soon as Roe v Wade happened they were out there trying to take away women's rights. And so the idea that these are the people where we should be focusing and that's who's going to help us win our fight against these laws that erode sex-based protections I think is a mistake. And it's a mistake born from—I mean I have tremendous respect for the intent of people and the sincerity, and we're on the same side so I'm saying this in a spirit of sisterhood, but I think it's a strategic error to be going in this direction. It just feeds the smears against us by trans activists and doesn't help build our movement, and we have to build our movement, and our best opportunity is not among the right, but it's among people who are liberals and leftists and progressives. We have—even despite all the barriers and believe me, I know what they are. I've been attacked and I had people go after my job, so I know, but I also know that people can be won over, and, in terms of allies, we already have allies in the defense campaign for Thistle Pettersen; We already have people on the left and the progressive movements, including men who are supporting at least her right for democracy and the right of speaking is really, really important. And there's—so there's a beginning. But our main—we need to rely mostly on ourselves, and form an independent woman's movement on that, and we rely on ourselves in our own power—we're potentially half the human race—and we can organize and we can make change.

DANSKY: So, I just need to say for the record that there's zero basis whatsoever for the accusation that WoLF had ever tried to recruit right-wing women for membership. And

I will also just say for the record that I completely respect Ann's right to come at this with with her perspective. And, you know, we understood when she decided to quit the organization. We're not trying to convince any—

MENASCHE: —I didn't say for membership, necessarily. I—let me just clarify again, I don't want to mistate anything—I'm not saying for membership, I don't think that—but it was idea that those are the people we should reach out to for support, at least on the issue of gender.

DANSKY: I mean that's just not true, you know, we have conversations with conservatives when it's strategic to do so. I think that—Ann, I think you have the impression that—I think that you are mistaken in your impression of what is actually going on.

MENASCHE: I hope I am! If we can agree that that's a bad idea then that's terrific, that's really great. If we agree that's not the way forward—to focus on those alliances and focus on those working relationships, that's great. Then we are closer than I thought when I came on this show, so that's great because what we need to do - and we have a lot in common here so, I have all this complete respect for you and your work, and you've done great work—is we need to build a grassroots women's liberation movement. And of course there is always a legal—speaking in the legislature completely consistent with that, but that should be where our power base is.

WHITAKER: So when we talk about this, you know, right versus left, conservative versus liberal—when we look at it holistically, all political systems were created by men originally to benefit men and are still really under male rule today and we've sort of had to build up feminism within those constraints, so I'm wondering from your political and legal backgrounds, where do you both think that this dichotomy between the right and the left originated and where can we go from here in terms of strategy to sort of rise above this patriarchal two-party system?

DANSKY: WoLF participated in a panel at a library at the end of January, and a reporter was there, and she asked, "If the left can't solve this issue, can the right?" And Lierre's answer was, it's not going to be—I'm sorry, Lierre Keith, one of the founders of WoLF—her answer was it's not right to even think about this as being the right versus the left; *women* are going to solve this problem. And I appreciated that answer.

MENASCHE: I consider myself part of the left and a radical feminist, my whole life actually, and I have a different concept of what the left is. To me, the left is any time a

woman fights for affordable housing, any time a woman organizes for a living wage, every time someone finds peace and justice—real peace and justice—they are part of her left. The left—the men who dominate the tiny little groups on the left, which are pretty marginal at this point, they think they own the left but they don't, they don't own the left at all. Left means any anyone who's really fighting for social justice—the movements. So in that sense, the feminist movement has always been part of the left; It's been independent so wasn't subordinate to anybody and had to fight the male domination of the left and form our own independent movement, which we absolutely need, but they were always part of the broad progressive movements that were going on in this country. The second wave very much was. It was, from its inception, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-war, anti-imperialist... so it's roots—the roots did not—or we say, the acorn didn't fall far from the tree. However, we are rooted in the best of the left. The left has principles; the problem is they've betrayed them. That's the problem. They have principles of democracy—they've betrayed them. They have principles of supporting women's rights and it took a took a struggling of the second wave to get them to recognize that women were oppressed at all, and now they're backtracking tremendously. They've betrayed those principles. The right doesn't have any principles worthy of respect that they've betrayed; their principles are horrible. They are for “women's place is in the home,” and they are—their principles are for everyone to be on their own, and if you're on the streets, “too bad; It's your fault.” They support an unfettered capitalism that, you know, really hurts women because we're the poorest of the poor in the world. They're pro-war, they're anti—they support—deny climate change. So they have no principles worthy of respect. Now when I talk about left again, I'm not talking about the democratic—the corporate Democratic Party is not the left, never has been the left. A lot of the supporters may consider themselves left but the corporate Democratic Party, Nancy Pelosi, is not the left. I'm talking about the grassroots movements, I'm talking about some—you know, the Green Party, which I am a part of, and I've had big fights in the Green Party about gender, but I haven't been kicked out yet. That's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about grassroots movements; I'm talking about the teachers that are on strike; I'm talking about the work—I work in the community on affordable housing and homelessness. That is what I consider the left and the men do not own that. They never have and they never will, and the male domination needs to end, and feminists need to be in the leadership of all those movements, and we need our own independent movement, not beholden or subordinate to anybody else.

WHITAKER: Kara, did you want to add anything to that?



DANSKY: I guess I would just say I also consider myself a lifelong leftist and I would agree with Ann's characterization of the left's principles and priorities and also that the left has thoroughly abandoned them. I do you just want to say that when I occasionally have conversations with—strategic conversations with conservatives, to the best of my knowledge, none of these people have ever bombed an abortion clinic; none of these people actually want women to stay at home. I think that there's just some mischaracterizing going on. I definitely think that that is true of the right of the past. I think that there have been changes. I'm not saying that I'm joining the right wing organization or, you know—I would never even contemplate doing that. And just to reiterate that none of the people that I've ever spoken to have ever asked me to compromise my personal commitment or WoLF's commitment to women's sovereignty.

MENASCHE: Yeah, can I just answer that? The right of now, the current far right, is working right now to completely undermine abortion rights on all the state levels, and they're trying to challenge and end Roe v Wade. They're doing that and that would be horrific. They would support a 12-year-old girl, like happened in—I'm trying to remember what what country it was, Latin America somewhere—who was denied an abortion. You know, a 12-year-old girl had been raped. So, they would be for imprisoning women for miscarriages who—"suspicious" miscarriages. So, they are extreme. They've gotten more polite about it. They don't need—right now, there—though there are people who are—there is a threat of abortion—bombing abortion clinics, et cetera. Still, that's not gone away at all. But, it's not the style the Heritage Foundation; they don't need to do that. They get to nominate the Supreme Court Justice like Kavanaugh. They're responsible for that guy who's about as woman-hating as you can get. So I think there has been, just from what you're saying, Kara, there has been a disarming of feminists. When we start thinking "they're not so bad," they are. They're horrendous. And they're taking away our rights right now. They're trying to push back gay lesbian rights, horrible effect on lesbians and and they're pushing back women's reproductive rights they don't want they don't believe in birth control they don't believe in abortion, they are against separation of church and state. They really want a theocracy, which is Taliban-y, it is it's the same thing. So there's a polite version of the same thing.

DANSKY: I don't disagree with you on abortion or gay rights, I just simply wanted to make the point, because you had thrown an allegation about abortion clinic bombing that. To the best of my knowledge, none of the people that I have ever spoken to had ever bombed an abortion clinic, and they are not trying to keep women at home. That was my only point.

MENASCHE: Yeah, but if they what their policies that they promote will keep women at home, whatever they say, because those women will not be independent, because the their policies will mean that the greater impoverishment of women is that no, not having an increase in the minimum wage, not having medical care, all that stuff makes women more dependent on men, not having social services, not having a safety net, all those things will make women more dependent on men, including abusive men, make prostitution more likely because of poverty, all those things make the situation worse, so it doesn't matter if they say they want women to stay in the home, or not, it's not what they say; the policies that they promote would make it so that women are much more dependent on men.

DANSKY: And no one that I know agrees with them on any of those things.

MENASCHE: Well I know of course, so we wouldn't be having this conversation. Absolutely right but what we're, we're disagreeing on is whether those, those alliances are productive and I say they're not.

DANSKY: Right and I think that you misunderstand what's actually going on when you say alliance.

MENASCHE: Well the Hands Across the Aisle idea, the idea that we should focus our efforts of persuasion, I wouldn't say recruitment into a feminist group, but of persuasion on the right, that those people can help us to defeat the Equality Act, I think that that's a mistake.

DANSKY: Okay, so if you're talking about Hands Across the Aisle, that is, you know, it's not formally organized, but that is a coalition, a non-partisan coalition of women; I thought you were referring to some sort of formal alliance between WoLF and Heritage or ADF or something.

MENASCHE: I'm talking about the relationships that have been made, including taking money, including appearing at the Heritage Foundation, including supporting that and creating and being a part in some fashion of Hands Across the Aisle. I'm talking about a perspective about talking to—prioritizing talking to right-wing women, even though we're really talking to male-dominated right-wing organizations, but right-wing women versus reaching out to liberal and progressive women. I think that is a mistake too because I think—think of that case, years ago I don't know if you—you may remember about Sonia Johnson, she was a member of the Mormon church. And she became a

radical feminist; she fasted for the ERA, she almost died because she—we had to convince her to eat, we wanted her alive—but she fought for the ERA, she's an incredible woman. But she was not won over because we started talking to the Mormon Church, feminists, that's not why. She was won over because she saw women all around her, all around in the world, visible, protesting and fighting for women's rights, and so she started fighting in the Mormon church, and then realized that—well, she got kicked out, that's what happened. So I think that's how we're going to win individual women who are maybe right-wing now—by having our own movement and by, but not by, you know, having conversations and alliances with these right-wing organizations.

DANSKY: And I think that's fine and I think in the meantime, you know, I'm just willing to use connections that I have to get radical feminist analysis before the House Judiciary Committee and the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

MENASCHE: I'm for getting our views in front of the House Judiciary Committee, and in the UN, and I'm not—if you're talking about it, I think legislative bodies are a little bit different. If you're in the legislature it's a completely different thing than if you're—you have a right to talk to your representative, whoever they are, but I think you need to be clear that you're not building an on-the-ground kind of working relationship, call it alliance or something else, with the far right, they are not the way we're gonna win—we can get in, I believe we can, if we have to have sit-ins over there. You know, it might take something like that. We might have to do some civil disobedience, we need to get in the press. We need to be able to propose a feminist amendment to the Equality Act. We need to be out there, and so that they will bring us in there. I mean, I actually did testify one time myself on it—the congressional subcommittee on anti-abortion centers actually because of my litigation. So I mean, this can happen—as many ways you can get in there to speak, you know, you don't have to speak with the Heritage Foundation in order to do that, you don't have to have Hands Across the Aisle, you don't have to take money from the right, in order to do that. There are other ways to be able to get into the legislature to speak, and to the UN.

DANSKY: I hope that you are successful in doing that.

WHITAKER: So, when we when we speak about, you know, gender, trans activism, all of our radical feminists priorities, our ultimate goal obviously is not just to change wording in the Equality Act or adopt the Nordic Model or, you know, these piece by piece things but to dismantle the whole patriarchal structure, which is a goal that, you know, it kind of conflicts with all existing sociopolitical structures. So with that in mind, I

mean, do you think our movement needs to be presented holistically in all spheres in order to inspire revolution, or do you think we can gain traction by addressing these issues separately, piece by piece?

DANSKY: I would love to be able to discuss these issues holistically. Part of the problem and what happens is, for us at least, WoLF is an all volunteer organization; no one's paid. So, you know, we would love to be much more active in the fight to abolish pornography and prostitution in order to take action consistent with our principles, supporting complete reproductive sovereignty for women; we would love to be doing all of that, and yes I think that you're absolutely right that this whole, you know, horrific destructive structure that extracts resources from women as a class needs to be taken down. And we would love to be doing as much as we can to support that.

MENASCHE: I think we can do both. I think we can, you know, focus, depending on what's going on, right now the gender identity businesses is a real serious problem and obviously needs a lot of focus. There's nothing wrong with focusing on particular issues as long as we present and have a radical feminist revolutionary position on women's oppression, because it is going to take changing society from top to bottom to free women. And we need to realize that and put that out there. That's what radical feminism was always about, it was about changing the whole society, and not just about, you know, somebody getting into office or somebody getting, you know, on a corporate board, that's never what it's been; it's been about changing society for everybody—for the most oppressed women, for women of color, for lesbians, for everybody. And so yeah, we have to keep that in mind all the time, but there's not a problem with, I don't think, you know, focusing at particular times on specific issues.

WHITAKER: So, do either of you think that this current debate within our movement could offer benefits, you know for instance, could these different approaches by your different organizations make us more likely to discover strategies that work, and, you know, how can we maintain solidarity and prevent division amongst radical feminists over this issue?

DANSKY: Well, if I could take a stab at that, I fully respect anyone who has the position that we should never talk to conservatives. I don't have to agree with that, but I respect it. What I will say, though, is that for the last couple of years when this issue has come up, what I have experienced personally, and what WoLF has experienced as an organization goes way beyond civil disagreement into what I would characterize as actual abuse, particularly online. It's been extremely painful because as we all know, we are subjected to near constant abuse from trans activists, many of whom are men, who

threaten to punch us in the face and kill us and tell us to go commit suicide. So it has actually been very painful for me personally to experience similar types of behaviors within the movement.

**MENASCHE:** I want to say that I'm completely opposed to any kind of trashing or anything less than respectful debate among feminists, I believe in solidarity and recognizing everything we have in common. So yeah, the Internet's a really bad place. And there's a lot of trashing going on, it's, I mean I've been trashed by other feminists, not just trans activists, so—the feminists haven't gone after my job, but I have definitely experienced that kind of trashing and I think that's really terrible. We have principles of operation in FIST against that and hopefully we will follow it, and not only within FIST itself, but we should have that same perspective toward any feminists, however much we may agree on anything, that we recognize the things we have in common in that respect. We all can learn from debate, none of us have all the answers, it's not simple, and respectful debate is really the way to go, and I'm hoping that we can continue that type of discussion and debate, and continue to work in solidarity when we have common ground between the two organizations, and we have probably a ton of common ground. We should be able to utilize that common ground and be able to work together, based on, you know, that common principle. So I'm not—I hate sectarianism, I had so much experience in my life with that, I hate it. And I hate trashing, and we have to learn to have respect, but I think it's we also really, I think it's also kind of building those muscles for democracy, because we're not used to what real democracy is within the movement, certainly a lot of the left has forgotten what democracy is, and we have to kind of model that, and that means that if we have different political perspectives or wings in the movement, that we can have a debate without burning our bridges, in terms of being able to collaborate and work together.

**WHITAKER:** Yes, I agree. Thank you. Those those are pretty much all the questions that I had, but do either of you have any final thoughts you'd like to share?

**MENASCHE:** Hmm. I just think we're in this really opportune time here. It's really hard in many ways. But we are beginning to be able to revive a woman's liberation movement; to me that's the goal. I want a real, real new wave of feminism, not the fake third wave but a real new wave of radical feminism that seeks nothing less than the overhaul of our society from top to bottom. To get rid of the patriarchal capitalist system that oppresses, you know, half the human race. And so I'm hoping that, you know, it's starting small, there's no get rich quick way of doing it, it's a lot of hard work, it's a lot of hit and miss and learning from our mistakes as we move forward, but I think we have an opportunity to fight this backlash, which is what it is, the trans ideology is a

backlash against feminism, part of the backlash, one face of it. We can fight our enemies on all sides together hand in hand. And I think we can win.

DANSKY: I think the only thing I would add is just to circle back to something Ann said earlier, which I think is absolutely right, which is that the way that conservatives tend to frame gender and gender identity is ultimately really harmful. And they, a lot of them don't know that, like they don't feel that the way that they are framing gender identity in this discussion is actually going to, it's—there's going to be backlash, and they're going to lose, and I don't think they, for the most part, are very clear on that, and so one of the things that we have succeeded in doing is helping understand that leading with their religious freedom, for example, leading with religious freedom is a mistake. We've gotten them to, you know, stop going after trans-identified people, and instead present a critique of the ideology, and I think that that has been productive. So, just to say, I think we've made some inroads on that front. And I want to take down the system, you know, however, using any means necessary.

MENASCHE: Well, I do too. But I think that when these people talk about religious freedom, they talk about a theocracy where there's elimination of separation of church and state, which really scares the living daylights out of me. I don't want them to win, I don't want them to get more subtle and more effective in their rhetoric, because their goals are completely opposite of what our goals as feminists are.

*: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:*

*:Song interlude - Woman's Work by Tracy Chapman:*

*:fingerpicked acoustic guitar:*

*:4 bar intro:*

*Early in the morning she rises  
The woman's work is never done  
And it's not because she doesn't try  
She's fighting a battle with no one on her side*

*:repeat fingerpicked intro:*

*Oh she rises up in the morning  
And she works till way past dusk  
The woman better slow down  
Or she's gonna come down hard*

*:interlude, intro repeated:*

*:12 bar break:*

*Early in the morning she rises  
The woman's work is never done*

*: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 fading up to a stuttered drum fill of kick, snare, hi-hat:*

*:solo handpan drum music, continuing through the commentary:*

SHEOWL: There's dissent in the gender critical and radical feminist spheres lately about the acceptability of working with Right Wingers to fight the spread of trans cult dogma, and I want to offer my take on it. I don't speak for all of WLRN here, just myself.

The criticism of gender critical and radical feminist women who collaborate with Right Wing individuals and organizations amounts to the following: by associating with the Right Wing, we indicate our support for their overall politics and activities, we ruin feminism's reputation, we allow ourselves to be used by the Right for their own misogynistic and lesbian-hating purposes, and we ultimately contribute to their institutional power. There is very little faith in feminist and gender critical women's ability to stay true to their own politics in this narrative. There's also no equivalent concerns about feminist and gender critical women who work with liberals and Leftists on specific issues, despite the fact that these are the people legislatively and financially feeding the trans cult, the porn industry, and prostitution, not to mention promoting misogyny and lesbian-hating in secular pop culture.

It is perfectly understandable that some women want to avoid the Right, the Left, or both and do what they can to accomplish feminist goals independently. None of us should feel obligated to work with anyone we don't feel comfortable with. Yet to criticize or condemn other feminists or feminist sympathizers for taking whatever steps they can to fight the multi-front war on women and girls doesn't strike me as productive or even fair. We feminists are a very small minority of the human population. We're doing the best we can to help girls and women survive in this world and recover from the damage men and misogynistic women do to them. We do this despite the terrible odds that almost guarantee our loss in the big picture. It makes sense that many feminists would feel like any action we can take is better than nothing. Relying only on ourselves to get things done is the harder way of going about direct action feminism when anti-feminists are working toward some of the same goals we have.

Many feminists and feminist-adjacent women have decided that it's morally acceptable to work with Left Wing misogynists but not with Right Wing misogynists. I chalk this up to the image liberals and Leftists in the U.S. and other countries have cultivated for



themselves over time, of being the pro-woman side in a two-sided system. The Right Wing is evil, woman-hating, and dangerous to women, while the Left is pro-woman and the only force standing between us and a dystopian Right Wing nightmare where the male state owns every female body. That's the narrative liberals have fed the public for decades, couching the story in the abortion debate more than anything else. But how is the liberal vision of society any better for women and girls? Why doesn't it chill more of us to the bone, the possibility of living in a world where biological sex is unspeakable, where female-only spaces are illegal, where lesbians are medically mutilated into invisibility or else hounded back into hiding by people who want to see them all raped and murdered, and where more and more women and girls are trafficked into legal prostitution while others are conned or forced by economic necessity into porn?

Why is it unacceptable for feminists to collaborate with anti-abortion, anti-homosexual, racist Right Wingers but it is acceptable for feminists to collaborate with prostitution defending, lesbian-hating, trans cult devotees on the Left? Why is one style of misogyny, anti-lesbian persecution, and rape culture forgivable while another is not? Who benefits from women believing that liberal and Leftist men are better than Right Wing men?

Let's get clear on the fact that the Right Wing and the Left have more in common at the end of the day than not. Both sides hate women. Both sides hate lesbians. Both sides in the U.S. generally support the imperialist war machine that functions as a giant meat grinder women and girls get fed into all over the world. Both sides are full of rapists and pedophiles and the men and women who protect and support them. Both sides are pro-heterosexuality, pro-nuclear family, and pro-gender. Both sides are full of men who will send women death and rape threats online. Both sides are trying their best, albeit in different ways, to strip women and girls of all legal sex-based protection. Both sides are full of men who abuse and murder women and girls. Both sides endorse and protect at least a few of the world's major patriarchal religions that men use as tools of mind control to keep women and girls in line. White people on both sides are racist. Class privileged people on both sides are classist and invested in perpetuating the capitalist system.

So if you ask me, no one can argue that liberals and Leftists are less misogynistic and anti-feminist than the Right. The Left is woman-hating and lesbian-hating in different ways than the Right, and many feminists have decided that the Left Wing style of misogyny and lesbian-hating isn't that bad, at least not bad enough to earn the same level of blacklisting as the Right. If you work with the Right Wing on fighting the trans

cult or the porn industry, you're a bad feminist and a sell-out, but if you work with the Left on abortion and birth control access, you're a-okay, even though those same Leftists and liberals are fanning the flames of the trans cult and the global sex trafficking industry. It doesn't make any sense.

I'm not trying to excuse the Right Wing and encourage radical feminists to work with them or for them. I'm asking radical feminists why they're willing to get into bed with liberal and Left Wing misogynists or even just give them some kind of a political and moral pass.

I can only speak for myself, as a childfree female separatist and a woman who chooses to love only other women. Abortion and birth control are not central issues of my feminism, so I'm not impressed by liberal and Leftist woman-haters who support universal access to abortion and birth control, any more than I'm impressed by Right Wing misogynists who are stopping the trans cult from taking over the United States the way it's taken over the U.K. and Canada. I can be grateful to both sides for their single-issue alignment with feminist goals and values, while recognizing that I as a feminist do not have any true allies on either side. All of these people hate women and lesbians. They are, at the end of the day, obstacles to female and lesbian liberation. They are all the enemy.

So ultimately, I don't see feminists who choose to work with certain liberals and Leftists on specific issues—such as abortion and birth control access—as any better or different than feminists who choose to work with the Right Wing on fighting the trans cult or crusading against the porn industry. In both cases, the strategy and the justification are the same: use the power and resources these anti-feminists have in order to make some progress toward a feminist goal we happen to share with them. A Left Wing atheist man who supports trans cult males raping lesbians is not any better or less of a threat to the feminist cause than a Right Wing religious man who wants to take away abortion and heterosexual women's birth control. I don't care how a rapist votes. I don't care how a woman-hating, lesbian-hating man expresses that hatred. There is no acceptable expression of misogyny or lesbian-hating.

If working with anti-feminists on the Left sits well on your conscience, fine. If working with anti-feminists on the Right feels like a politically savvy move, fine. What really matters is your ability to stay focused and true to your feminist politics and values on a day to day to basis, to not allow the anti-feminists you associate with to corrupt you. There is always some risk in being used by the enemy when you choose to work with them, which means you have to be careful and aware. I would avoid giving money to

anyone outside the radical feminist population because inevitably that money will fund anti-woman or anti-lesbian activity, no matter who you're giving it to. Think twice before you take anti-feminist money too. Don't become dependent on any group of anti-feminists, whether personally or politically.

I think it's all right for different feminists to take different strategic approaches to direct and indirect action for the cause - for some to use the Right Wing against the trans cult and paid rape; For others to use the Left and the center to protect abortion and birth control access; And for others to reject both sides and attempt to make progress on our own. I prefer to work alone or with other feminists who have proven themselves trustworthy in their politics, and I am well aware of the limitations that preference imposes on me. I don't care how other feminists work. All I really care about are results.

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

DIQUARTO: That song featured before the commentary was Tracy Chapman's "Woman's Work." That concludes WLRN's program for this Friday, April 5th, 2019. Thanks for listening to our show on The Left, The Right, and Feminist Strategy, with our guests Kara Dansky of WoLF and Ann Menasche of FIST. We'd like to thank both of our guests for agreeing to speak with us on this important topic. It's hard to believe it's been three years already, but yep, WLRN is celebrating three years of co-creating feminist radio together as a collective. If you'd like to join us a volunteer member of our collective, please check out our WordPress site and click on the Volunteer for WLRN tab. We are always interested in meeting more women and helping each other to create a community-based media center online. Thanks for tuning in. This is Jenna DiQuarto, WLRN's sound engineer and producer.

SHE-OWL: And I'm Sekhmet She-Owl. I second what Jenna said. It is hard to believe we have been doing this for three whole years, but we have. And we are very honored and excited by what this work has meant, not only to us as members of the WLRN collective, but to all of our listeners and guests on our show. Thank you for tuning in and supporting feminist community radio. Until next time, stay the course.

PETTERSEN: 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. There is also the option of becoming a listener sponsor. You do this by checking the monthly donation box that will have a monthly amount automatically donated from

your account. Even five dollars per month makes a huge difference in what we can offer the community as a media outlet. Thanks for considering it! I am Thistle Pettersen, signing off for now.

DAMAYANTI: And I am Damayanti. Thanks for tuning in. Next month, we will focus our program on women's sports. Our handcrafted podcasts always come out the first Thursday of the month, so look for it on Thursday, May 2nd. If you'd like to receive our newsletter that notifies you when each podcast, music show, and interview is released, please sign up for our newsletter on the WLRN WordPress site. Stay strong in the struggle and thanks for listening. You can also find us on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Soundcloud, 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:*