

## WLRN Edition 6: Black Lives Matter and Black Feminism

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Transcribed by Jenna Di Quarto and Teja Kukar

*: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:*

Nile PIERCE: Greetings and welcome to the 6th Edition of Women's Liberation Radio News. 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 and ideas we see in all sectors of society, be they conservative, liberal, mainstream, progressive or radical. The thread that runs through all of American politics and most politics around the world is male dominance and entitlement in all spheres. My name is Nile Pierce. I'm a writer, an artist, and proud single mother by choice. Today's program will focus on the Black Lives Matter movement, Black feminisms, and giving voice to silenced black women's voices.

Catina HYMAN: Greetings to all our WLRN listeners out there. My name is Catina Hyman. I'm a black, lesbian feminist who is very excited to share this program with you. We work as a collective here at WLRN. What you hear is the result of hours of discussion we hold behind the scenes to get ourselves on the same page about an issue or topic. This process has taught me a lot about civil discussion, fleshing out ideas, and coming to an agreement as a cohesive group. Today's topic - the Black

Lives Matter movement and black feminisms - really put us to the test as far as teasing out what our collective radical feminist point of view is in light of all the factors involved in the unique oppression black girls and women face in our society. I hope you enjoy it, and as always, please be in touch with us with your comments and inquiries. There are some great interview clips in this edition from conversations with 3 black radical feminists raised in the UK; Pippa Flemming, another black, lesbian feminist; Maya Dillard-Smith, and others.

PIERCE: To get us started, WLRN's arts and culture editor asked Michfest women for recommendations of music and spoken-word to go with today's topics - the BLM movement, black feminisms, and giving voice to silenced black women. Of the many suggestions made, the song *Four Women* by Nina Simone stood out as one of the best to describe the particular herstory of black women in America born of slavery. We play it in full here today on WLRN's 6th edition.

*:Song interlude - Four Women by Nina Simone:*

*:quiet, steady jazz piano, bass and percussion:*

*"My skin is black....  
My arms are long...  
My hair is woolly...  
My back is strong...  
Strong enough to take the pain  
Inflicted again and again  
What do they call me?  
My name is Aunt Sarah  
My name is Aunt Sarah  
Aunt Sarah*

*My skin is yellow...  
My hair is long...  
Between two worlds....  
I do belong...  
My father was rich and white  
He forced my mother late one night  
What do they call me?  
My name is Saffronia  
My name is Saffronia*

*:piano playing:*

*My skin is tan...  
My hair is fine....  
My hips invite you....  
My mouth like wine...  
Whose little girl am I?  
Anyone who has money to buy  
What do they call me  
My name is Sweet Thing  
My name is Sweet Thing*

*:piano playing:*

*My skin is brown...  
My manner is tough...  
I'll kill the first mother I see!  
My life has been rough  
I'm awfully bitter these days  
Because my parents were slaves  
What do they call me?  
My name is Peaches!!" :crescendo:*

PIERCE: That was Nina Simone and her song *Four Women*. And here are WLRN's headlines for October 6th, 2016, as written and read by Sekhmet Sheowl:

Sekhmet SHEOWL: This is Sekhmet Sheowl with the headlines for WLRN's 6th edition.

Purvi Patel has been released from an Indiana prison after her 2015 feticide and child neglect convictions were overturned. Patel was convicted and sentenced to 20 years for her self-induced abortion. The judge who overturned her conviction re-sentenced her to 18 months in prison for felony child neglect which she has already served.

American author, Elizabeth Gilbert, best known for her 2006 best selling memoir, *Eat, Pray, Love*, went public about the reason for her divorce from Brazilian husband Jose Nunez. She has fallen in love with her female best friend of more than 15 years, Rayya

Elias. Elias was recently diagnosed with pancreatic and liver cancer, news which led Gilbert to realize the changed nature of her love for the other woman.

Carla Hayden was sworn in as the 14th Librarian of Congress, the first woman and the first African American to be appointed to the office. Dr. Paula Johnson was inaugurated as President of Wellesley College in Wellesley, MA, the first African American woman to occupy the position since the women's college was founded in 1870.

African American singer and entertainer, Alecia Keys, came under fire on social media after attending the VMAs with a bare face. Keys publicly decided earlier this year to stop wearing make-up and has since upheld this decision even after many women criticized and condemned her on Twitter following the VMAs.

15-year-old African American girl, Bresha Meadows is being charged with aggravated murder for shooting and killing her own father, John Meadows, on July 28th. Bresha was 14 at the time. If tried and convicted in adult court, she could face life in prison. According to her mother, Brandi Meadows, and her maternal Aunt, Martina Latessa, John Meadows was violently abusive toward his wife and children, beating his wife repeatedly, and abusing his children verbally and emotionally. Thousands of people have signed a petition asking Trumbull County prosecutors to drop all charges against Bresha, who is currently being held in juvenile detention center in Warren, OH.

An Italian woman named Tisiana committed suicide due to relentless public shaming that followed her after four men uploaded a sex video she sent to one of them, her ex-boyfriend. The video went viral online and, despite winning her court case, with a right-to-be-forgotten ruling ordering the removal of the video from various websites, people continued to ridicule and shame her online and off. Tisiana was ordered to pay 20,000 Euros in legal fees after the conclusion of her court case. Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said of Tisiana's story, "As a government, there's not a lot that we can do; It's mainly a cultural battle, also a social and political battle. Our commitment is to try to do everything we can. Violence against women is not an ineradicable phenomenon."

Student-led protest demonstrations were staged on campus at Pretoria High School For Girls in Pretoria, South Africa, in reaction to the school's restrictions on natural, black hair. Black students charge the school and its faculty members with racism for having and enforcing student appearance guidelines that targeted black, natural hairstyles. Some current and former students at Pretoria High reported having been told by faculty to straighten their hair, and were also reminded to keep their braids,

cornrows, and locks to a centimeter or less in diameter. Following the protests, an online petition, and a meeting with the student protesters, Gauteng Province's education department ordered a suspension of the hair guidelines. Pretoria High School For Girls was an all-white school under South African apartheid and admitted its first black student in 1991.

Women in Poland are protesting their government's consideration of an amendment that would effectively outlaw abortion without exception, and make illegal abortions, including self-administered ones, punishable by up to five years in prison. Abortion is only legally permissible in Poland if the pregnancy is the result of a rape or if the fetus threatens the mother's life. A government committee is now considering the outlawing of even these exceptions. Poland is an overwhelmingly Catholic nation, with 87% of the population listing Catholicism as their religious affiliation, and the Catholic Church has significant political influence there. Polish women opposed to the abortion ban are striking during this first week of October, refusing to go to work, and wearing all black when they attend protest demonstrations in the street. Several businesses and corporations in Poland have agreed to close their doors in solidarity with the women during the strike.

Artemis Singers, Chicago's lesbian, feminist chorus, presents *Wanting The Music*, a choral musical of the Michigan [Women's Music] Festival, playing in Chicago on January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are available online at [www.artemiswantingthemusic.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.artemiswantingthemusic.brownpapertickets.com). *Wanting The Music* is a new musical based on the Michigan Women's Music Festival. This herstoric festival took place in the woods of Michigan from 1976 to 2015. The musical follows the lives of two lesbians who see each other at the festival over the course of many years. The chorus will sing songs that were sung at Michigan while the actors will sing original songs and live through some midwest lesbian herstory. Thistle Pettersen spoke recently to Lorraine Edwalds, Artemis Singer and the musical's playwright. She asked Edwalds what motivated her writing.

Lorraine EDWALDS: The thing that I'd like to say is that, you know, we're very committed here to making sure that lesbians don't disappear, and this is part of that initiative. It's like, we're a lesbian feminist chorus and we're very aware that lesbians are being disappeared, and so this is a way of reminding the world that we still exist! Here we are!...you know... :laughs: So...

SHEOWL: The musical focuses on the highlights, celebrations, and development of lesbian relationships at Michfest, but Edwalds was sure to include dialogue between characters that reveals the backlash from trans activists that eventually worked towards the demise of Michfest. Tickets are available online at [www.artemiswantingthemusic.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.artemiswantingthemusic.brownpapertickets.com). *Wanting The Music* will be performed at the Irish-American Heritage Center in Chicago on January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

*:Spoken word piece – Feminist or Womanist by Stacyanne Chin*

*Am I a feminist or a womanist?*

*The student needs to know if I do men occasionally and primarily - am I a lesbian?*

*Tongue tied up in my cheek, I attempt to respond with some honesty.*

*"Well, this business of Dykes and Dykery", I tell her, "is often messy.*

*With social tensions as they are, you never quite know what you're getting.*

*Girls who are only straight at night,*

*Hardcore butches be sporting dresses between 9 & 6 everyday.*

*Sometimes she is a he, trapped by the limitations of our imaginations.*

*Primarily," I tell her, "I am concerned about young women who are raped on college campuses,*

*in bars,*

*after poetry readings like this one,*

*in bars.*

*Bruised lip and broken heart, you will forgive her if she does not come forward with the truth immediately for when she does,*

*it is she who will stand trial as damaged goods.*

*Everyone will say she asked for it, dressed as she was, she must have wanted it.*

*The words will knock about in her head:*

*'Harlot,' 'slut,' 'tease,' 'loose-woman' -*

*- some people cannot handle a woman on the loose.*

*You know those women in pinstriped shirts and silk ties -*

*You know those women in blood-red stiletto heels and short pink skirts.*

*These women make New York City the most interesting place.*

*And while we're on the subject of diversity, Asia is not one big race,*

*and there's no such country called 'The Islands', and no, I am not from there.*

*There are a hundred ways to slip between the cracks of our not-so-credible cultural assumptions about race and religion.*

*Most people are surprised that my father is Chinese, like there's some kind of preconditioned look for the half-Chinese, lesbian poet who used to be Catholic, but now believes in dreams.*

*Let's keep it Rrreal sister-boy in the double-x hooded sweatshirt - That blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jesus in the Vatican ain't right.*

*That motherfucker was Jewish, not white...*

PIERCE: That was an excerpt from Stacyanne Chin's spoken-word piece, *Feminist or Womanist?*

Isabella Baumfree, an African American woman from New York who was born into slavery in 1797, was a women's rights activist and slavery abolitionist who later changed her name to Sojourner Truth and is considered one of Smithsonian Magazine's 100 most significant Americans of all time. Truth took great risks in 1826 when she fled to freedom with her then infant daughter. 2 years later she courageously went against her former slave-master in a court of law in order to win back custody of her son who had been illegally sold to and abused by another slave owner. Truth won this case, and it marks the first time in US history that a black woman was victorious against a white man in a court of law. In 1851, Truth gave a speech to the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in which she demanded equality and human rights recognition for all women and black people. This speech circulated widely in various iterations over the years later becoming commonly known as *Ain't I a Woman*. Here is that speech, as adapted by Erlene Stetson and delivered by Chante Holsey.

Chante HOLSEY: Ain't I a Woman? That man over there say a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted up over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me a best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most of all sold into slavery, and when I cried out in mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

That little man in black there say a woman can't have as much rights as a man, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, together women ought to be able to turn it right side up again!

*:theme music – Real Voice by Thistle Pettersen:*

*:slow strumming:*

*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*

*Vooice~~*

*Your real*

*Vooice~~*

*Your*

*Real voice....*

PIERCE: Maya Dillard-Smith, former chief executive of Georgia's ACLU and founder of [findingmiddleground.org](http://findingmiddleground.org), recently penned an op-ed championing the federal government's injunction against the Obama administration's transgender bathroom mandate. As a result of using her voice to publicly espouse radical feminist perspectives on this issue, she was labeled a 'transphobe' and was subsequently asked to step down from her position at Georgia's ACLU. WLRN's Catina Hyman recently spoke with Dillard-Smith about the controversy surrounding her departure from the ACLU after voicing these opinions around transgender bathroom legislation HB2, civil rights, and her new organization, Finding Common Ground\*. You can listen to the full interview under the 'interviews' tab on our website. Here's a portion of that interview:

HYMAN: Talk a little bit about your background and what led you to take the job that you had at the ACLU in Georgia.

Maya DILLARD-SMITH: I'm the great-great-great-granddaughter of a slave that migrated to California, bought his freedom, and he initiated the landmark school desegregation case in California, *Wysinger vs Crookshank*, in 1888, and that was decided before *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and it was a precedent in *Brown vs. The Board of Education*. And so this work of civil and human rights is not just a personal passion, it is the legacy of those that have come before me. And the, you know, acknowledgement of the debt owed to those who toiled in these fields and who really sought to have their children and grandchildren be part of this, what should be a great democracy, and I see my work holistically in civil and human rights as continuance of that work and



the liberation of all peoples in this country from economic oppression, racial oppression, and all forms of oppression. We were all truly created equal and how do we have a law system that reflects that.

I've long been a civil and human rights activist. I have long seen myself as being a voice for the voiceless. I am not yet 40; I'm a millennial. I had my first daughter when I was 16-years-old. I did my undergraduate at Berkeley. Finished in 4 years and went straight to Harvard's Kennedy School; I was the youngest person in my class and finished at age 23. I went to work in the executive office programs at the administrative offices of the court in the largest judiciary in the world. That being said, I transitioned from the administrative office of the court and went to work for then governor Gavin Newsom right after the city had issued the ordinance allowing for the issuing of gay marriage licenses. In my role at the Mayor's office, I oversaw violence prevention and public safety for the city and county of San Francisco, orchestrating strategies of law enforcement on community policing and effective behavioral probation and aligning the resources of 14 city agencies to effectively implement a 5-year strategy to reduce homicide in the city and county, and so I've got a varied background and I'm a Jackie-of-All-Trades, you know, I'm a generalist on public policy issues, so, I've got a wide swath; And my experiences, my lived experience as a teen mom, having raised my daughter on my own and taken her with me to these universities, I've had to navigate a lot of the public systems that I've also helped to design, and so I had both a bottom-up and top-down approach, as both a designer of systems and an end-user. And it gives me a unique perspective, and you know, I think it's from that vantage point that I approach the work on civil and human rights, of which, y'know I've been dealing with issues of gender equality, and reproductive rights of women, and LGBT equality, and immigration reform, and criminal justice reform, and voting rights, and privacy and technology, and free speech and those are all issues that fell under my [indecipherable, possibly 'bandwidth'] at the ACLU of Georgia, so I was really delighted to be asked to take over what had been a fledgling organization which was bankrupt and without staff when I arrived. Within 6 months, we relocated without a budget; We were in the center of all of the legal – the law practices in Georgia and close to the capital and really moving an agenda to really have impact in a state that is a critical battleground state as it relates to civil and human rights.

**HYMAN:** We saw you recently on The View, a talk show on ABC, and I wanted to know – what was that like for you?

**DILLARD-SMITH:** The View actually called to hear the perspective of women and girls, right? And I found early on, upon my separation from the ACLU, that – and it was very

conspicuous – that mainstream news outlets and traditional progressive news outlets simply were not wanting to cover this issue of women's and girls' safety in the context of transgender bathrooms, or bathrooms in particular. I appeared on the Megyn Kelly Show, which is what really catapulted this conversation on a national level, and it's interesting because, I'm a progressive woman; I am a democrat and I very seldom watch Fox [News]...

HYMAN: *:laughs:*

DILLARD-SMITH: ...so how interesting it is that the people who are willing to have the honest conversation are the people on the right. I have been completely floored by that reality and fascinated by the experience; That I've been shut out of communicating with a base that I thought I was a part of, and in fact, I consider myself a part of; But, I think because of the strength of the LGBT lobby, they are unwilling to have conversations on this issue, and if you speak up and speak out - and not in opposition, because I've said nothing in opposition to transgender rights, finding accommodation in bathrooms for transgender people, I've simply been asking, what about the privacy and safety rights of women and girls *too*. That means, 'and', 'both'; It does not mean mutually exclusive or zero-sum game.

HYMAN: Tell us a little bit about your organization Finding Middle Ground.

DILLARD-SMITH: Finding Middle Ground was launched in response to my experiences working on the left and the right and coming to terms over the last year as I've been leading the ACLU of Georgia, that the lobbies on the left and the right are advancing agendas that are so binary that they don't allow for robust dialogue on the critical public policy issues that we're tackling in our country. In fact, there are attempts to force the conversations to be so binary that if you have a difference of opinion, you are very quickly labeled 'anti,' or 'against;' 'You have some type of phobia,' you know? There's just not robust opportunity to agree to disagree civilly, and there are fewer and fewer opportunities for the electorate to engage in dialogue about public policy issues that affect all of our lives. And so Finding Middle Ground was initiated out of that as a safe place and digital community where people can engage on contemporary, cutting edge, civil and human rights issues that are effecting us of the day. It is a place to exchange ideas and solutions and, our only expectation is that those folks that engage in our site and in our platform do so with an err toward respectability and civility; We can agree to disagree without being disagreeable; People are welcome to have counter opinions and differences of opinion; We seek to avoid personal attacks on people for the opinions that they give, or if they're sharing personal experiences, we

ask that people don't respond directly to those, but talk more broadly about the experiences on the issue.

HYMAN: Who makes up this trans-lobby that you speak of?

DILLARD-SMITH: The trans-lobby includes organizations - national organizations - and funders, philanthropists, individuals who finance the campaign to advance transgender rights, and there is a network which many people don't understand has a very progressive and liberal face but is also financed by Republicans and conservatives and so there is bipartisan support on these things and on this issue and not a lot of people understand that tricky dynamic. And so what's been interesting – let's say in Georgia, for instance – last legislative session we dealt with a religious refusal bill there, and the bill was largely couched as being anti-LGBT. But the reality is Georgia doesn't have any civil rights protections for any category of people. It's one of 5 states that still does not have comprehensive state civil rights protections. The birthplace of Martin [Luther King] has not given the people of Georgia civil rights protections, okay? And so I was a part of the strategic group that was moving forward LGBT equality agenda in the state of Georgia. Well I'd sit at this table and I'd say, 'Well, why would we do a reactive strategy that makes it look like they're beating up on us and we are constantly having to explain why these issues matter?' And it's a tactic, because it *does* make it look like people are beating up on LGBT folks. Or, you know, the right, or the religious right, would schedule a rally on a Thursday, and the group that I'd sit with would say, 'Well we're gonna schedule ours on Tuesday so it'll make it look like they're beating up on us,' right? And I very quickly realized I was sitting at a table that was engineering communications and images to give people a particular view of what was going on in the world around the issues they care about that was not in fact true, and what I was not willing to do is to partake in the strategies I abhor on the right which are being done on the left. Because at the end of the day this is all about who has money and who can move an agenda. And the people that have the money, the lobbyists on the left and the right, are the people that move agenda, and that means that most of us who aren't wealthy enough to influence the outcome of elections or the outcome of legislative campaigns - we lose a voice. We lose voices in this thing.

*:Song interlude – Rise Up by Andra Day :*

*:slow progression of piano chords with reverb, vocals immediately:*

*You're broken down and tired  
Of living life on a merry go round*

*And you can't find the fighter  
But I see it in you so we gon' walk it out*

*And moooooove mountains  
We gon' walk it out  
And moooooove mountains*

*And I'll rise up  
I'll rise like the day  
I'll rise up  
I'll rise unafraid  
I'll rise up!!  
And I'll do it a thousand times again*

*And I'll rise up  
High like the waves  
I'll rise up  
In spite of the ache  
I'll rise up!!  
And I'll do it a thousands times again*

*For you~hoo~hoo~hoo  
For you~hoo~hoo~hoo  
For yooou  
For yooou~~~*

*When the silence isn't quiet  
And it feels like it's gettin' hard to breathe  
And I know you feel like dyin'  
But I promise we'll take the world to its feet*

*Moooooove mountains  
Bring it to its feet  
Moooooove mountains...  
:fade:*

**PIERCE:** WLRN's Elizabeth's McKeown interviewed 3 radical, black, feminist women based in the UK – Ydette Campbell, a conceptual artist, anarchist, and radio broadcaster of the Circle A show; Bee Brown, who's been involved with activist groups including Reclaim the Night, and currently works at a domestic violence agency; and Amanda, whose feminism has evolved into consciousness-raising radical activism through her work on Reclaim the Night and Object. Here now are a few excerpts from those interviews.

**Elizabeth MCKEOWN:** Please tell our listeners about yourselves and your work and how it relates to your political beliefs about race, class, and sex.

**AMANDA:** Hi, this is Amanda. I'm not actually working at the moment but I've been a radical feminist for a number of years now and it's basically started from a grab-your-consciousness meeting and important radical feminist texts which really honed in my consciousness. I was involved with a few groups – the London Feminist Network and Object and, basically my position as a radical feminist – I think that the issue is something that is a class issue in terms of males and females.

**Ydette CAMPBELL:** And I myself, Ydette speaking, I became involved in radical feminist theory and when I began to accept and see that women's subjugation was right in front of my eyes, it resonated with me. I'm an artist as well, so I'm starting to use my art to highlight some of this, I'm expressing the things that I'm going through and have gone through.

**Bee BROWN:** Bee speaking, I've been involved in activist groups including feminist groups that hold radical feminist positions, from a while back, from a very young age. I've also been one of the organizers for Reclaim the Night, and I've been involved in Object as well, and currently I work at a DV agency that primarily focuses on women of color...And also through personal experience and also working with other women of color I've come to see that most of the anti-racist, or feminist organizations are very limited in terms of they don't actually talk about black women's experiences. I also believe that's one of the primary reasons they keep failing in achieving their goals.

**MCKEOWN:** How do you feel about the notion sometimes expressed within the black community with certain members saying that black men who are murdered by police were criminals who deserved this as their karma and that black men cannot blame the white man for their station in life?

**BROWN:** Bee speaking here, I would say that I disagree with how the question was worded. I feel that those who say, you know, black men who are being killed by the police are criminals anyway, although there might be a few isolated black people saying those things, I think the vast majority of people saying those things are white people, they're white supremacists, and to paint a picture of the black people actually not believing that they're being – that they're hated by the police is...I don't think it's a fair picture. I think that most black people live and understand that they are being treated like a prey by the police and nothing is happening, and the whole movement about trying to paint black men as violent and deserving of this treatment - I think it's primarily promoted by white people and white racists, #AllLivesMatter suggests that. When it comes to actually talking about individual black men, I feel like we've seen so many examples of black men who have never committed a crime being killed by the police when they did nothing wrong, and of those who were actually criminals, to me it doesn't say much. So what? It doesn't excuse the way police officers are treating black men, black women, or black children.

**AMANDA:** This is Amanda. To be honest, I've not actually heard this kind of attitude or perspective within the black community. Thing about the black community to me is, I always perceive them as being a patriarchal group, I don't think they're really aligned with feminism in any way. But I do agree with Bee when she says that, you know, it doesn't detract from the fact that, you know, black people or black men are victimized on the grounds of them being black, I think a lot of times that black men are victimized on the fact that they are both male and black at the same time, so I don't think that there's anything that can possibly justify any kind of racial victimization, so the notion that they, you know, get what they deserve, I completely disagree with that.

**MCKEOWN:** What issues of race do you think feminist, anti-racist, white women should focus on to act in solidarity?

**CAMPBELL:** I think it's very important that white women are not silent when it comes to racism. If I'm on the receiving end of racist abuse, I would appreciate backup, of course, from anyone including white women. Now we have 3<sup>rd</sup> wave feminism...even fourth wave, and some people would not class that as feminism at all. I personally, regardless of my race, I would be seen as the enemy by so-called queer theory business, which is quite ironic, isn't it? Not just because I'm a black woman, I'm gonna be – right, I could be, like, a staunch capitalist black woman and that would make me [indecipherable] just 'cause I'm black, so it's quite a balance to, you know, quite a thought out balance to strike here.

**BROWN:** One of the most basic things white women can do or white feminists can do is to - say for example they organize an event - is to ensure that the panel speakers at least are, you know, some of them are black and, the amount of times I see white feminists fail at this very basic thing tells me that they are part of the problem when it comes to black women's fight against racism, and sexism. Or sometimes they would include one black person and they think, 'Oh now we've ticked that box and now we're ok,' and you know, that's - I'm setting the bar very low here, like, basic thing, like, ensuring that the panel speakers are black. I don't think it should be difficult but, you know, they don't want to put any effort to actually ensure that what they're talking about is actually about women in general; They want to just focus on white women and then call it 'women's issues,' and I think that's really unfair to black women. Not only unfair; It's racist.

**MCKEOWN:** Do you see anything needing critique within the Black Lives Matter Movement as you see it unfolding, and what within the movement do you feel is going well?

**CAMPBELL:** Black Lives Matter is a new organization from what I understand, which attracts all sorts of individuals, if that's the case. There is no way you can control who speaks under its bandwagon.

**BROWN:** I would say – I will start with the positive thing about Black Lives Matter is that it's put on the political agenda police brutality against black men. I don't think they've highlighted police brutality against black women but they're definitely highlighting police brutality against black men. If I'm going to critique Black Lives Matter it's just that I don't think they focus on black women's issues at all. The fact of the matter is that Black Lives Matter – the hashtag Black-Lives-Matter – has been created by 2 black women and now it's completely taken over by black men, and that just shows how they just push out black women from the picture, even though black women are – have been at the forefront of the entire movement, and black women had to resort – creating another hashtag, Say Her Name, to just put black women facing problems from the police into the political agenda again.

**AMANDA:** I have limited knowledge of Black Lives Matter but I will say that, from my perspective, they don't acknowledge the specific issues of black women as black women because I think that their perspectives and priorities are patriarchal in nature.

**MCKEOWN:** Next, our guests were asked some questions mostly revolving around what they felt a liberation movement's goals should look like, and specifically women's

liberation, as well as mentioning some words that they had for our listeners here, knowing that our listeners are largely radical feminists. Here are some of those responses.

**CAMPBELL:** I think we need to look at ourselves and our interactions with one another and build up another, whilst being empowered by historical knowledge, I think that's crucial. There are so many factors to consider when planning for a better world. For example, how can we protect the community effectively without the institution of the police. We need to ask serious questions about the failings of democracy... with women in power, in this system, we need to do it better. I think the goal could be to maintain the legal rights that we've achieved as women, to keep them in place and explore ways we can be self-sufficient, expose abuses everywhere, and organize to push agendas forward that matter to us.

**AMANDA:** I think that there is a lot of propaganda out there with regards to this position, and I think there is a lot of anti feminism going on that hasn't really been addressed within the feminist community. I think that there are a lot of things that are not being addressed by the feminist community. I think that there has been far too much assimilation into power structures. The fact that women are conditioned to see themselves as liberated because of the way that the form works to actually activate that. And there's no set cost analysis, it's all to do with lifestyle choices. I think that there's too much emphasis on reform. Reform doesn't change the system. It just makes it nicer, particularly for people who have certain positions of privilege.

**BROWN:** I think there should be a lot of self analysis. The negative shows itself, in many different ways. For example, off the top of my head, how conflict is resolved and arises. And for example, letting just anyone into the group as a member. I think, um, being more thought out is important. Obviously, any political movement wants to grow, but I think it's important to be selective. I want to be quite hard on this and say, we can be inclusive, that's important, but not let go of the theory. Theory is what binds us together as radical feminists. It's so far more - radical, I suppose - than the other feminist theory that I've come across.

So we need to look at ourselves, whatever ethnicity we are, and how we interact with each other. I think that we need personal growth. We need to be kind to each other. Audrey Lord has already talked about that, it's very important to take care of each other, because we're very neglected, especially as women, you know, with all the many things we have to do, we can't relax. Women, we have a lot in common amongst ourselves. What men have in common amongst themselves is oppression. [We need] to



be kind to each other, we need to organize; If there is conflict we need to address it, and we need to look at who is the real - the people or the entity that deserves our animosity. It's a system that organizes against people for profit.

PIERCE: Pippa Fleming is a butch lesbian performance artist, poet, writer, spiritualist, and motivational speaker living and working in the Bay Area. Catina Hyman recently interviewed Pippa to get her perspective on the specific experience of black lesbians within the women's liberation movement and civil rights struggles. Pippa provided commentary on the current Black Lives Matter movement, her forthcoming book, and explained how we as women can successfully continue the struggle against patriarchy. You can listen to the full interview under the 'interviews tab' of the WLRN's website. Here's a clip from that interview.

HYMAN: Pippa Fleming, thank you for granting WLRN this interview today. Welcome.

Pippa FLEMING: Thank you for having me.

HYMAN: If you could just please tell us a little bit about yourself and your work and how it relates to your political beliefs.

FLEMING: I call myself a civil rights baby because I was born in 1963. The Civil Rights Act hadn't been passed yet, the Voting Rights Act people were fighting for, I believe Kennedy was assassinated two weeks after I was born. My mother was a phys ed major. My dad was at the University of Chicago, during the height of a lot - what a lot of people fantasize about, my parents were that generation of people. My dad was that activist. My grandmother was the activist on - both my grandparents were activists, she was president of her chapter of The Negro Council of Women in the 40s; She worked with Mary McLeod Bethune, Ida B Wells. She was a writer.

So, I come from my awareness of my blackness during that time with my parents who lived in segregation. My mother was born on the sun porch because her preacher, my grandfather, her father, was like, 'I'm not gonna let my child be born in the basement of a segregated hospital', so they found their own doctor, and both my parents were born in Kentucky. So I am the offspring of the people who, uh, from people within that time period who were more active than others. There's also the illusion that there was a great monolithic time period and everybody had the same consciousness. *:laughs:* Oh, hell no.

So I went to school, elementary school, in the 60s, and school in the 70s. I graduated from high school in 1981. So we were that integration baby that people fought for, so I always say that I'd love to do a film about that, I'd call it the civil rights babies. So I'm the generation that the people fought to actually put in the schools, so we were the first big groups of kids going to school with white kids and dealing with being called nigger, and Michael Jackson wasn't cool back then, and Prince wasn't either :laughs: you know, things were segregated. I remember being a little girl and we'd walk to the school and there'd be this huge spray-painted graffiti that said 'free Angela Davis', and I remember going, Mama, who's Angela Davis? And she was like, We don't have time for all that, we've got to go shopping!

HYMAN: :laughs:

FLEMING: You know, 'I'm a single black woman with three kids, I don't have time for Angela Davis right now!' Y'know, but that was the time. Angela was in jail. They already - they had her in solitary confinement, I mean, she was fighting for her life when I was a child, and so that's where I'm coming from.

So I came out in the era of those women who came of age, as lesbians, as women, as feminists, as writers, so those were the women that were finding their voice in writing, in theaters. Ntozake [Shange], Angela, Assata [Shakur], Audre Lorde. There's a wonderful book called *Black Women Writers at Work* published in 1983, and when you look at the list they have women who are heterosexual, bisexual, lesbians, openly talking about being writers. And Ntozake's in it, Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, June Joyler, Alice Walker - y'know, we have a rich history. So those are my mentors and my teachers, they're not imaginary people.

It was a great period of Renaissance that I was fed, so this is the game, this lesbian's a spit, so of course I'm gonna be an outspoken critical thinking dyke. Okay, that's the generation of lesbianism I come from. So that's the context with which I'm speaking from.

HYMAN: What does black female liberation look like to you?

FLEMING: I think that it is an ongoing journey and an ongoing unfolding story through the generations, y'know, what did female liberation look like as soon as the patriarchy started hitting, and they started witch hunting? Y'know, what did it look like in Kali's time? What did it look like in Harriett Tubman's time? What does it look like in Audre Lorde's time, y'know, so female liberation has always evolved as time has evolved, and

as long as patriarchy's been. So here we are in 2016, and given the context, as well as my education and as well as my spiritual beliefs, you know, I think that we're in another battle of reckoning, a global reckoning of women, and liberation is our ability to live freely, to be who we are as human beings, let alone women. So liberation implies that there's something wrong that one must be freed from. And so part of liberation is saying well, what it is that we need to be free from? Do we even have a consensus around, What do we think we need to be freed from? So liberation is an active process. It's not a passive process. It's hand to mouth, tongue, food, ritual; It's sharing stories. It's changing things; It's demolishing things. It's like, the police force needs to be obliterated.

HYMAN: Could you tell us a little bit about your new book, and what inspires you to write?

FLEMING: I will be published twice this year. I'm going to first put a shout out to the - there's a new lesbian anthology coming out called *Dispatches*, it's being typeset now, it comes out December first, it is a new lesbian anthology. It's got a range of stories about lesbians, the erasure, the culture, the history, what to do to sustain it. You have stories around detransitioning, stories about Michigan shut down, you have stories around the culture and what you all are missing, stories about what we need to do, it's sexual, it's political, it's funny. So I co-wrote the introduction to that, and so look out for that, and then my book is called *Stepping Between Storms* which I'm self publishing and working with my editor and hopefully it'll be out sometime between October 31, and my birthday November 10. *Stepping Between Storms* is a memoir, a coming-of-age lesbian memoir about my life, from when I came out in 1984 in the military, and it's broken down by decades, so it's the 80s, 90s, and the 2000s. So all the poetry, journal, memoir notes and prose and stuff from the 80s, 90s, and 2000s there. Then there's a current narrative that I talk about, you know, from this perspective of my lifespan. Then there's an appendix where people - a resource guide - where people can, y'know, look at books and kind of find out what was there also and what's there now, and curriculums for people to take to schools to talk about sexuality and gender non-conformity outside of the boundaries of sexuality, but more in the bounds of sex. And let's just talk about sex-based oppression. All this other stuff is malarkey to me. So the book is all the poetry, it has original journal notes on my poetry, photographs, a timeline. So it's my autobiography, my autobiographical memoir, and self published because as a lesbian, as a butch, as one who's always had to make her own economy - and one of the things I want black women - and it's a global movement, it's the global female economy. How are we going to sustain ourselves as patriarchy collapses, and even under the society that we live under now. Look at the status as black women:

we're making the least amount of money, we're being pushed out. So how *do* we buy land together? We need to use our collective intelligence.

HYMAN: Tell me a little bit about Black Lives Matter movement as you see it unfolding, and what's right about it and what do you think is wrong.

FLEMING: As a mentor and a mother, how beautiful is them, you know, thank you Jesus. That's old school me talkin'. The radical dyke is like, yeah, raise the roof; The feminist in me is like mhm, ain't it always a sister? Ain't it always. Ain't it always. The political woman in me is like okay, we need to sit down, can I consult with you? I'm so proud of them. I like many things and many things I'm like mmm, you need some spiritual counseling, you need a little advisor, I think you need some advisors. Where they had nothing to do with politics and this, but just like, hey, there's some things you're missing honey, and you need to stop using certain language. You need to stop it. You're being played a little bit against yourself, and I challenge you to push a little further, but nothing's about condemnation.

This is what it means to them. How beautiful that the next generation is picking up the torch and willing to keep the continuity going. There's a few things, you know, that they need to be challenged on. I'm very disappointed that they use the term 'cis' in their documentation; Very disappointing to see that they never would put the word gay, lesbian or bisexual in print, that the only people that they named were queer and trans, y'know, stop doing that. Stop grief-whoring. Stop doing that, that's what kills movements. If you say black lives matter then why are you saying queer and trans? You've already said we all matter. And so when you put one agenda over another, that's when you know, look, they're poppin' and lockin', they're going to the White House, they present at the UN, but I would have cautioned them because they have a great role, that their ancestors are really watching them, but I would really ask them to come talk to me. I really would, as a lesbian, you know. I'm very proud of them. I want them to, you know, take a greater hold as women. We have a national agenda. I mean, coalition building, really learn more about coalition building, really get out of the narrative of - okay you've named who we are, we're Black Lives Matter, that's great, but you've got to hold hands with the Native Americans in a much better way. Their numbers are worse than everybody's but because they're considered federal tribes, we don't get their numbers, so their numbers are separate. They can't even try. They could - they just passed - Obama, that's one of the few things he did do in office - he finally made that women and cases can be tried in a normal court, and on reservations, so you're not even getting their numbers. They're of course the worst off. It's Native American and black, it's not black then Native American. People need to know what

time it is, it's like no no no. Black people and Native Americans need to be walking hand in hand, 'cause our histories are linked. In order for us to get the land to enslave and to farm and all that shit, to industrialize, you had to get rid of the people that were here first. So quit making us the biggest and baddest. We need to stop grief-whoring. Stop doing that. That's all I would say. Be willing to do the dirty work; Be willing to cry; Be willing to do more ritual; Be willing to tell the truth about black rage; Be willing to talk about the healing, the rape, the incest; Be willing to set up places to actually heal. How *are* we going to process this grief? How do we, y'know, shit - where *are* the basketball courts, where are the recreation centers? Where are we decompressing? That is what I would advise them to be doing. Where are the structures; Where are our film schools; Where are our schools; Where our food programs; Where are our things? Don't recreate the wheel, we just have to figure out how to not be infiltrated, and not let difference divide us, and homophobia divided us and sexism divided us.

HYMAN: Is there anything else you want our listeners to know before we go?

FLEMING: Yes - live, love, laugh, look beyond the matrix. This is a beautiful planet. Our lowest common denominator in all of our work and coalition building should be our humanity, not our ethnicity, not our sexuality, but our humanity. We're all different, we're all freaks to somebody. Read Judy Grahn's *Another Mother Tongue*, read Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*, read *Black Women Writers at Work*. Enjoy your sexuality, speak about sexuality, speak about beauty, work with the children, they're our most important people. Pay attention to the children, we're not loving them, helping them, we need to create places for our children to be loved and - patriarchy's dead, bitches.

HYMAN: And that concludes our sixth edition of Women's Liberation Radio News for October 6th, 2016. We're always interested in comments and questions from our listeners; Email us at [wlrnewscontact@gmail.com](mailto:wlrnewscontact@gmail.com). Thanks for listening. I'm Catina Hyman, your co-host and producer of today's show.

Thistle PETERSEN: And I am Thistle Pettersen. Thanks to your donations, we've been able to bring you this one hour long edition. Please donate on our website so we can continue to bring you more quality programming from the lesser heard radical feminist perspective. We are volunteer powered radio. Thank you for tuning in to WLRN.

PIERCE: And this is Nile Pierce, signing off for now. Stay tuned next month for edition seven, focused on the 2016 US presidential election, hosted by your team at Women's Liberation Radio News. That program will be released on November 3. We welcome

listeners' questions and feedback so feel free to send an email to our address at W L R NewsContact@gmail.com.

SHEOWL: This is Sekmet SheOwl, signing off for now.

*: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:*

*\*Maya Dillard-Smith's organization was referred to incorrectly as Finding Common Ground; It is called Finding Middle Ground.*