

## WLRN Edition 9: The Women of Standing Rock

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Transcribed by Teja Kukar and Jenna Di Quarto

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

*:sauntering acoustic guitar fades in:*

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

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

Sarah Barr FRAAS: Greetings and welcome to the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of Women's Liberation Radio News for this Saturday, January 7th, 2017. 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 is male dominance and entitlement in all spheres. My name is Sarah Fraas. Today's program will focus on the women of Standing Rock, their status and the roles they play in the fight to stop Big Oil & Gas interests from further destroying the earth's life support systems. "Standing Rock" currently references a large protest/campout in North Dakota on indigenous land that has drawn thousands of water protector activists to the region standing in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe as they fight the Dakota Access pipeline. We interviewed Christa Bruhn, Shannon Kring and CJ about their experiences at the camps and actions at Standing Rock. WLRN asks the following questions in this program: "What kinds of conflicts between men and women, and women and women, under patriarchy keep the movement from being unified and effective? How are women

leaders and women in general being treated by each other and the men at the camp? How are women able to be both water protector activists at standing rock *and* stand up for the rights and compassionate treatment of women? What should women's role be in the fight at Standing Rock, all things considered? How can white women be helpful to the movement without being a colonizing force? To what extent are all women colonized by all men by virtue of living in patriarchy and how does that translate to on-the-ground earth activism on the frontlines? These questions and more will be explored in today's edition of WLRN's 9<sup>th</sup> podcast. Stay tuned!

*:xylophone plays root-third-fifth to indicate news segment:*

FRAAS: And now for our WLRN headlines as read by Nile Pierce.

Nile PIERCE: Late last month, police forces in Norway held a press conference and announced the successful investigation, crackdown and seizure of what is being called the largest pedophilia ring in world history. Dubbed "Operation Darkroom", the seizure included over 150 Terabites of data including films and photos of children as young as one month old being raped and violently tortured. Only 20 people have thus far been arrested but police have confirmed that all of the perpetrators are in fact adult men - many of whom are highly educated, some involved in politics at the highest levels, are fluent in IT skills, and are in many cases biological fathers of some of the victims.

The United Nations officially withdrew its appointment of Wonder Woman, a pornified fictional superhero character from DC comics, as its official ambassador for the 'empowerment' of women. The decision came under heavy scrutiny and criticism by women within and outside of the UN who started an online petition to reverse the appointment. The petitioners stated: "It is alarming that the United Nations would consider using a character with an overtly sexualised image at a time when the headline news in the United States and the world is the objectification of women and girls."

*Last Tango in Paris* director Bernardo Bertolucci revealed that the infamous rape scene included in the iconic film was in fact real - an untimely confession to what many women around the world already knew - that he and celebrated actor Marlon Brando were in fact violent manipulative rapists who personally profited off the suffering of their victim. Before her death, Maria Schneider, the lead actress in the movie and subsequent victim of rape that was filmed, mentioned on several occasions during interviews over the years that the rape scene shown in the movie was in fact real, and that its filming and worldwide distribution were actually the reasons behind her

depression and subsequent suicide attempts over the years. When asked if he regretted the decision to rape Schneider and film it as it was happening, Bertolucci said, stoically, in front of a large studio audience, simply, "No, I do not."

Kim Dadou, a woman who served 17 years in prison for killing her abusive partner in self-defense, was released from prison in 2008 and has been actively fighting the system that unjustly imprisoned her and other women like her. Thanks to the work Kim has done with Domestic Violence organizations and advocates, this month, New York State senators will cast their votes on a new bill called The Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act, which presses for the reformation of oppressive, misogynist laws in place within the criminal justice system, in recognition of the uniqueness of circumstances for abused women. The New York State District Attorney's Association has criticized the bill, claiming that it denies jurisdiction to prosecutors and disrupts "well-established criminal procedures". However, the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence disagrees, noting that it would actually improve the outcomes for abused women involved in criminal cases and would also save the State of New York hundreds of thousands of dollars per year.

Artemis Singers presents *Wanting the Music*, a musical theater production featuring the story of two lesbians who meet at the herstoric Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and return year after year to see changes to the festival and to themselves. Artemis Singers is a lesbian feminist choir based out of Chicago. The chorus will sing choral arrangements of songs that were sung at Michigan, while the actors will live through some of our Midwest lesbian herstory. Original songs by Loraine Edwalds and Allison Downing. *Wanting the Music* will be performed on January 28th and 29th at the Irish American Heritage Center on the northwest side of Chicago. Tickets are available at: <https://artemiswantingthemusic.brownpapertickets.com>.

WoLF's complaint in the case of the Women's Liberation Front v. the United States, a landmark case that argues for the rights of girls and women to bodily privacy, has been stayed, pending the Supreme Court's consideration of the Gloucester v. G.G. case. WoLF's complaint argues that the government's redefinition of sex to mean "gender identity" for Title IX purposes violates the Administrative Procedures Act and women's Constitutional rights to bodily privacy. The Supreme Court has also granted a judicial review of the Gloucester v. GG case, in which a girl who identifies as a trans boy is demanding access to the boys' restroom; Several boys have complained that her use of the boys' restroom violates their right to privacy. Women's Liberation Front is the *only* organization involved in the ongoing legal battles regarding "gender identity"; That is, specifically standing up for the rights of women and girls. To donate to the legal fund

for these historic, landmark cases, visit  
<https://womensliberationfront.nationbuilder.com/>.

On January 21st, the Women's March on Washington will take place in Washington DC, and has already been touted by many news outlets to be likely the biggest anti-Trump demonstration in the United States. Taking place only one day after the inauguration of the president, the march will be echoed by thousands of women attending sister marches the same day in different cities around the world. Radical and lesbian feminists have been voicing concern over the wording organizers are choosing when publicizing these marches. The language used consistently across the broad range of Facebook event pages places emphasis on "inclusion" of men and trans people. For example, language on the event page for the march in Madison, Wisconsin says "*...the Women's March on Madison is the collective voice of all Wisconsin advocates for equality and inclusion. We are committed to fighting for the safety, health, and success of our communities. Let no voice go unheard. Let no one live in fear. Let all of us rise up for equal opportunity.*" How is this different than replying "All lives matter" to the slogan "Black Lives Matter"? March organizers for the main event in Washington DC are chastising women who object to this wording by "calling out 'cis privilege'" and saying "there will be no tolerance for transphobia". WLRN encourages you to go the march in your area with signs that counter this language. Here are some ideas: "Transwomen are men. Stop men's rights activism"; "Cis privilege is a myth. This concept harms real women". WLRN will have representatives on the ground in Washington DC, Madison, Seattle, and at the sister march in London. We look forward to including our coverage of these important events in our future editions. Stay tuned to our facebook page and our website for photos, interviews, and video of the marches. Good luck, sisters. See you in the streets!

And that concludes WLRN's headlines for January 7th, 2017. We now turn to an interview Thistle Pettersen did with Christa Bruhn last month. Ms. Bruhn is a writer and mother of three Palestinians who lives in Madison, Wisconsin. She is working on her memoir about her experiences in Palestine and connecting them to her recent visit to Standing Rock in support of the Water Protectors where she volunteered in one of the camp kitchens and prepared Palestinian food. The highlight of her trip was her participation in the Silent Prayer Women's March on November 27th at Standing Rock, where non-Native women created a protective wall around Native women to pray for the Missouri River at the frontlines. Here is a portion of that interview.

**Christa BRUHN:** I'm Christa Bruhn, and I'm a writer, I'm working on a memoir about my experiences in Palestine - over the last thirty years, believe it or not - and it was a week

before Thanksgiving that I attended a rally in Madison for the Water Protectors, and that was actually the first rally that I attended relating to Standing Rock. I was really just so moved by the coming together of really a very diverse group of people around an issue that is so central to all of us; Basically that water is sacred and we need to protect the water, not only for ourselves, in Native communities and non-Native alike, but for the world. Because it's really a global problem.

Yeah, so I mean, that experience, it planted a seed in me, and that seed, I would say it sprouted right away. I was on the phone that day with my brother who lives out in Colorado. We actually traveled to Palestine together thirty years ago. So he was my go-to. I was like, Come on, you want to go to Standing Rock? One of the medical volunteers that spoke at the rally said they really need people to cook! You know, they need chefs at the camp, and I used to have a restaurant in Madison, the Shish Cafe, and decided that I could go to Standing Rock and could cook, and that I would. Because of my connection to Palestine, I decided to bring three Palestinian dishes to prepare there, and I solicited donations from the local community and friends, and I hit the road, and my brother and I met up south of the camp and headed in together, and we brought a couple of people with us, and - and suddenly, y'know, basically - exactly a week after I had attended that rally I was driving into Standing Rock.

Thistle PETTERSEN: Wow. And this whole movement has kind of been like that. I mean, thousands of people have had experiences like yours. They've felt drawn and pulled to go to Standing Rock.

BRUHN: That is totally true. It's been true for the native tribes that are there. There are over three hundred native tribes that just felt called to stand with the Standing Rock tribe, with the Lakota nation at Standing Rock, and then I met so many people there who also felt called, from all over the world. There were people from New Zealand, even. It was amazing. And there were people who came there and then didn't know how to leave. They were just still there.

PETTERSEN: Mhmm.

BRUHN: And other people who went home and then came back kind of with a one-way ticket. They wanted to stay until the end, which is 'til the black snake - which is the Lakota reference to their prophecy that a black snake will come and threaten the sustainability of life, and that's what they're calling the pipeline. And so people are committed to stay at that camp 'til the end, or at least continue to support the cause from outside of the camp.

PETTERSEN: Can you talk about what happened when you first got to the camp and you asked a native man if it was okay for you to set up your tent in a certain area?

BRUHN: Yeah! It was - you know - it was amazing. We arrived at the camp, we were welcomed by a woman, actually at the gate where you enter, and she's burning sage and says follow along the flag road, where all the flags from the different tribes and organizations that have come to support Standing Rock are located. And then we kind of wandered through the camp. And, actually, the first person we talked to was a guy named Vic, who's the one who walks through the camp and - *Good morning, water protectors! It's a beautiful day and you're here for a reason!* - so he walks through the camp every morning at six am to wake everybody up. His brother was coming into town, and a couple other relatives, so the first area we asked to set up he said, y'know, that's gonna be taken, this is my brother's fire right here. And so he brought us to the next camp, because they're kinda like neighborhoods where different tribes and, y'know, people just kinda try to find a place to set up. So we asked a guy there if we could set up near their camp and he said, Just a minute, and he came back with a woman by the name of Hummingbird. I told her - I said, that's my favorite flower. And we asked about, you know, if we could set up camp with them, and she said that she was on the security team and there was an area they had to keep clear for security and so she pointed us nearby to where we could set up. But it was interesting, because when he brought her out he said, I gotta check in with her, she's the boss, we're, you know, we're matrilineal here. That was really a powerful experience, to see him defer to her. And she was not only in charge of her camp, she was a part of the security team for the whole camp. So that was - that was really educational, right there, within the first few minutes of arriving in Standing Rock.

PETTERSEN: Yeah. Definitely. So many different tribes, and some of them matrilineal. Can you talk about the march - the women's march - and how it started from the seven council fire, and the women who led it?

BRUHN: Yeah, sure. So there was a whole day - a whole morning, actually - of activities related to the women's silent prayer march that started at the very first camp, Sacred Stone Camp, and the women marched from there into the Oceti Sakowin camp, which is where I was living, so we joined the march at that point. We walked all through the camp so that other women could join in, but also to, you know, send that energy out into the camp. So we gathered at the fire of the seven nations, basically the seven Sioux tribes, that is symbolic of the whole operation of Standing Rock in the first place, that those tribes have come together for the first time in forever. And the elder woman,

native woman, addressed us and said that we would be marching in silence and in prayer. It was a native-led march so that she, obviously, was depending [on] and reaching out to all women in the camp. She said that all women around the world have that shared experience of being oppressed or violated - those are not exactly her words but that was the message, that we had that shared understanding and because of that she could trust us to walk together.

The march was organized in such a way that there were a couple rows of non-native women in the front, surrounding native women in the center, and then followed by hundreds of other women - non-native women - who for sure didn't want to be arrested, that was the criterion for being at the front, that you would be willing to be arrested if necessary. I did join the front lines, and I felt very strongly about serving in that role, of using my privilege, you know, of passing as a non-native woman, to provide protection for those native women.

When we arrived at the bridge it was very interesting, because there were veterans there that were doing their own action, and they were trying to send us back because they said, y'know, it's not safe for us, we need to turn back, there's an action already going on, but then they - we were sworn to silence, you know, so we didn't confront them or say anything. We just stood there. And then when the elder woman motioned for us to continue to move forward, we actually passed through those veterans. And the veterans were like, Oh my god, they're not going to stop! And they tried to form a line but it was hopeless. We were hundreds of women and they were probably only like twenty. The actual veterans, the thousands of veterans that would arrive the week after Thanksgiving, were not there yet, so this was a group of veterans who happened to be at the camp, probably mostly native veterans. And, um, it was amazing because we kind of just filtered through them, kind of the way that water flows, you know. If you put a barricade, the water will flow around it. And, actually, one of the native women later did refer to us as a slow-moving river. Strong, but soft. And so we were able to flow through those veterans.

And of course the police at the barricade were confused, like what is going on, but once they felt our energy and saw us coming in peace and silence and prayer, they actually called off the riot police and they backed away, and once that happened there was a quick council between one of the native women elders and one of the veteran elders, because he wanted to understand that this was a council-approved activity, and then those women went forward and did ceremony, and prayed at the barricade. It was after that - we were all kneeling, because she motioned for us to kneel down - we kneeled down and waited in silence and after that ceremony they actually opened the

barricade and let these women walk down to the river. At that point that's - I believe that's an arm of the Cannonball River, I'm not exactly sure - but they wanted to pray for the water, for the river.

This was an area that was closed off and had been closed off since October. And so these were the first people who are allowed through, and really it was because we were women, and we we came, you know, she told us after the marches - we gathered by the sacred fire at the Oceti Sakowin camp, that when women stand together they have a very different energy that balances out the testosterone of of men. And y'know one thing she said to us is, look what we have done; Y'know we need - we as women need to stop sitting quietly at the kitchen table so to speak and get up, y'know? Voice - stand together, and that we have an important role to play in change, and that we can be as effective if not more effective - in this case more effective - than a group of men coming up to that bridge, which has so far resulted in really unfortunate confrontations, you know, with even water cannons and tear gas and pepper spray and, you know, sound weapons, and all kinds of things. People have gotten hurt, you know, over 550 people have been arrested. We got back to the camp and not one woman was hurt. Not one woman was arrested. Not one woman, you know was harassed or shamed in any way. And actually when we walked back into that camp, and we walked down Flag Road which is the first - that's the way you enter into the Oceti Sakowin camp, you felt the energy of those men bow to us in honor of what we had achieved, and this is not like my mind, you know, saying this, but it was clear that there was honor and respect as we came back to that camp and walked into that camp, and then formed a circle around that sacred fire and had women leaders address us, and men stand and listen from the sidelines, to what we had achieved and, and - that we are partners in change.

**PETTERSEN:** Do you have anything else you'd like to say to our radical feminist and lesbian feminist listeners?

**BRUHN:** I just want to say that, you know, a lot of the time I was there I was helping out in the kitchen, hanging out with a lot of other native women and non-native men and women, just to sustain the effort. That was a powerful experience and certainly there was the sense of like, 'oh, here we are in the kitchen', and yet, I have to say that, y'know, food - good, healthy, nutritious food - is part of what sustains any movement. And so, y'know, the kitchens are really central to what's going on at the camp. They're taken very seriously. And it was just an honor and a privilege to be there, working in the kitchen, working side by side with the Hupa tribe, women from Northern California, who were freezing right along with us. And, and then to participate in that march, the last day I was there and that was on November 27 - such an honor - and then to see a



week later, veterans, 50% men and women coming from all over the country to stand up with Standing Rock, and and that's what led to that denial of the easement so...

There is change going on, it certainly takes a lot of thought and effort and standing together, and recognition that we're up against great odds. But it really has been an honor and I really feel like it's a privilege to be able to share my experience with you, Thistle, for this program, I really admire what you're doing. Thank you. Thank you for listening and giving me voice to this effort.

*: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:*

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

PIERCE: And here now is Sekhmet She Owl with our feature commentary.

Sekhmet SHEOWL: While the Native struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline is not exclusively female, it speaks to aspects of female struggle that are universal to women: our fight for environmental protection, global majority women's fight against white colonialism, our fight against corporate capitalism and the transformation of society into one big, free market, and even our fight against male violence. Radical feminists of all races, ethnicities, and cultures have good reason to pay attention to the #NODAPL movement: it is an opportunity for us to recognize the other areas of the oppression matrix that are inseparable from misogyny and male supremacy, and it is also a lesson in grassroots political action.

At the heart of Standing Rock's battle between Native people and the corporate state is white colonialism, a form of oppression that indigenous people have faced in North

America since the first white Europeans set foot on their land hundreds of years ago. Men have been going to war over land and natural resources since the beginning of time, but the story of white European colonialism in North America, as in other regions of the world, is different. It was racist genocide against hundreds of different indigenous nations, committed for the purpose of white empire building. This genocide and colonizing process did not take place during one early period of US history but has been interwoven with the entirety of US history and continues today. Even now, after the US federal government defined the boundaries of reservation lands given to the surviving First Nations and set aside water sources meant for them, these boundaries are violated, the land and its natural resources exploited and ruined by the obscenely rich and powerful fossil fuel industry.

While the most immediate and material issue at stake in the Dakota Access Pipeline fight is clean water, colonialism's overall violation of land rights are also part of the Standing Rock picture. Standing Rock Sioux are concerned that the pipeline, while not crossing through reservation land, would disturb sacred Sioux burial grounds that are off the reservation, and in September, Dakota Access did indeed bulldoze through an area that the tribe believes is sacred ground, seemingly out of spite. When protestors moved to occupy the area surrounding this site, the private security firm Energy Transfer Partners hired used attack dogs and pepper spray against the Native people, despite the fact that they were unarmed and peaceful. The whole incident exemplifies that at the root of colonial oppression is a fundamental disrespect for the colonized: disrespect of their culture, space, and humanity. From the colonizer's point of view, it is acceptable to treat the colonized with cruelty, violence, and disrespect because colonized people are subhuman. The racial element of this thinking cannot be ignored. White Americans have a history of othering Native people as "savages," of seeing them and thus treating them like animals instead of human beings, all because Native culture is different from white culture and Native bodies are not white. When we analyze Standing Rock, we can't stop at the actions themselves; We must consider the meaning and motive of those actions.

What we're really talking about here is male violence, executed against the environment and against Native women throughout the country. Because male violence is universal, consistent across all racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and generational categories, those of us women who are not Native should be able to immediately recognize what's happening to Native women and empathize with them, even if we don't share the same specific experiences of being colonized on our ancestral homeland. The male violence visited upon Native women, by individual men and by the male-dominated government and corporations that violate their tribal lands,

is economic, physical, sexual, spiritual, psychological, and environmental. It is the poverty on their reservations; It is the drug and alcohol abuse that follows that poverty and the psycho-spiritual wounds they've sustained as colonized women; It is the police brutality that harms and kills them at even higher rates than the ones African Americans experience; It is the rape and sex trafficking they endure—frequently at the hands of the white men who work in the fossil fuel industry and live in “man camps” adjacent to drilling and construction sites; It is the poisoned water Native people drink after oil spills and the destroyed sacred grounds they mourn.

Considering the majority of women on Earth are black, brown, or indigenous, ending white colonialism and white supremacy must be a fundamental goal of radical feminism, if it is to be worth anything at all. While white women have historically benefitted from the colonialism that white men committed against people of color, even supported it out of their own self-interest, white women do have their own experiences of male violence, and the potential is there for white women to reject their own stake in colonialism and get behind Native women who are resisting the oppressive male state. This, in fact, is necessary to a radical feminist revolution that makes a difference on a global scale. We cannot claim to want the end of patriarchy while supporting any branch of male tyranny, because to do so, is to leave some women behind.

As radical feminists, we should be outraged that peaceful Native women at Standing Rock were attacked with mace and dogs, strip searched and arrested for no reason, and kept in cages for days after being detained. We should recognize this violence and humiliation for what it is: the same male, state, and police brutality that black women experience in the streets, Latin women experience in immigration detention centers, and Middle Eastern women experience in their occupied and war-torn countries. Standing Rock is an event worthy of radical feminist attention if for no other reason than women there suffered male violence and dehumanization. But this male violence is enacted not only out of misogyny but as a tool of colonialism, of white domination, and of capitalist exploitation of the environment.

In our post-industrial, neoliberal world, heteropatriarchy is virtually inseparable from capitalism, colonialism, ecocide, and white supremacy. Males now exercise their power and domination over the environment and nature using methods that will make our planet uninhabitable, all for the sake of financial profit and the power their money can buy. If we want to be safe, free, and healthy as women and live on a planet that nurtures life, we must attack corporate capitalism, colonialism, environmental destruction, and white supremacy. Patriarchy cannot be isolated from these other forms

of male-driven oppression; they feed each other in a circuit reinforcing male power at every level of society. Globalization has unified men across national borders in their greed, violence, and destruction, and if women as a class stand any chance at liberation from patriarchal oppression, we must unify against every expression of men's necrophilic culture, not just the most obvious misogyny.

The job of nonindigenous women, particularly white women of the colonizer class, is not to talk over or for Native women in their spaces and indigenous movements, but to go after the white men oppressing indigenous communities via government, corporations, and sex trafficking. This does not require going to places like Standing Rock—in some cases, it is better for white and other non-Native people to stay out of Native resistance sites—but it does require taking steps to block and rebel against the white male state, corporations, police, and the fossil fuel industry. We can and should support Native women politically, financially, emotionally, and physically, with our vote, resources, dollars, presence, friendship, and voices—but they must lead their own movement against white supremacist capitalist colonialism and the men who oppress them in their own communities. They, along with all other colonized women, must lead, and the rest of us must follow, turning our backs on male culture and putting the welfare of colonized women first.

Standing Rock is an excellent example of collective, organized direct action, necessary to beat the oppressor classes. It shows us the realities of taking direct political action—the backlash, the personal risk, the amount of time required to see results—and proves that doing so works, despite the difficulty and waiting involved. After almost a year of water protectors standing their ground, the federal government denied Energy Transfer Partners an easement for construction of the pipeline under the Missouri River. Grassroots collective action against the oppressor achieves results that individual political action does not. The lack of collective, organized direct action against male power is arguably radical feminism's biggest weakness today, and we should take Standing Rock to heart as a call to our own 21<sup>st</sup> century mobilization.

*:Song interlude - Sing Our Own Song by Buffy Sainte-Marie:*

*:indigenous female vocalising over strong drum kit and piano chords:*

*:reggae-esque electric guitar rhythm; upbeat tempo, 4 bars:*

*:2 bars collective female vocalizing:*

*:rhythm continues 2 bars:*

*The great flood of tears that we've cried  
For our brothers and sisters who've died  
Over five hundred years has washed away our fears  
And strengthened our pride, now we turn back the tide*

*:2 bars collective female vocalizing:*

*We will no longer hear your commands  
We will slide your control from our lands  
Re-direct the flame of our anger and pain  
And pity the shame  
For what you do in God's name.*

*:2 bars collective female vocalizing:*

*:Collective vocals:  
We will stand for the right to be free  
We will grow our own society  
And we will sing, we will sing  
We will sing our own song*

*When the ancient drum rhythms ring  
The voice of our forefathers sings :buzzy electric guitar fill:  
The will to live will beat on, we will no longer be pawns  
to greed and to war  
We will be Idle No More*

*:2 bars collective female vocalizing:*

*:Collective vocals:*

*We will stand for the right to be free  
We will rebuild a just society  
And we will sing, we will sing...*

*:music fades out:*

PIERCE: Sarah Barr Fraas recently spoke to CJ, a 21-year-old Native student and radical feminist who journeyed to Standing Rock recently in support of the protests

against the Dakota Access Pipeline. While protecting the water through protest, she was maced by police. Here's a portion of that interview.

CJ: I'm from the Wakashan tribe in Montreal. My mother is Abenaki. My father is white so I'm mixed, but I had a very strong connection, especially with my family growing up, they all moved down here. We all go to powwows at least three times a year, we're all very much involved with our tribe, and my mother was on the tribal council for a long time. We just - I don't know, it was just always integrated within my life to be proud of who I was. I was very much anti feminist growing up, but I always had strong positive female role models especially within the community that I grew up in. I didn't become a feminist until I went to college and was exposed to it. I didn't become a radical feminist until about two years ago, I read a few of Andrea Dworkin's excerpts, and I actually had a college professor who was a radical feminist and was a separatist, and was very much my mentor in the sense that I didn't really know a lot about feminism and she guided me through a lot of what I believe now.

I do have a few friends who lived out in North Dakota for a long time and had access to people there just to, like, spread the word. A couple of them actually go to the college that I go to, and we were talking over it one day and she had gotten some message from family members that it was still going on, and it blew up a little bit in the media and I learned more about it from there too, but that was like my first, understanding of it. But I mean, it's very personal to me because my own tribe, the Abenaki tribe, does not have land anymore that is government sanctioned, because our land was -

*:audio here fades out:*

*note included 05/20/20:*

*In an attempt to fill in this gap in audio, WLRN offers this extremely brief history of Abenaki Tribal land and colonial government. In the United States, the Abenaki Tribe fought for decades to be a federally recognized tribe, which would entitle them to sanctioned land, according to the colonizer. In a ruling in 2007, they ultimately did not achieve this status. In Canada, their land was seized, mismanaged, and exploited; land claims later filed resulted in some monetary compensation.*

*:audio fades back in:*

- heartbreaking for me to see another tribe have to go through the, just, the pain and the anguish that it is to lose burial sites, to lose land that was promised to you.

So I was there for a week. I went with a few relatives, and I went with a couple friends. I am not opposed to white protesters coming with us. I appreciate the allyship and I think that diversity is key, especially when we need our white allies. I was there for a week and during that time I went to about four actual protest areas. The camp itself is family friendly, there are children there, there are families there; That is not where the actual protest is going on. The Standing Rock camp that I was at - there are about four of them that are along about a three mile radius right by the river.

So where the actual river itself is that we're defending, we are camped on that river and immediately on the other side - there's maybe a mile between us - were the police officers. Once a day, we would go out to the river. We would pray. And prayer is especially important to us because it is our connection with the earth. Our connection with the earth is very important to ourselves as people. We did a lot of praying, but we also did a lot of protesting, and at the request of the elders, it was peaceful. We didn't retaliate at all towards the cops, which was especially frustrating because I did get tear gassed and I got maced, and I am not one to be submissive in silence. So I definitely struggled with being peaceful but it was what had to be done. It was in all honesty very terrifying.

But when I was not protesting at the camp there were a lot of chores to do and a lot of people who came there didn't realize that that was what had to be done. Like, it was a community in a sense. So I did a lot of cooking. That's what my skill set was. A couple people that I was with were building - there's a school being built on the camp - there, yeah, it was just a variety of things just to be taken care of, we had to take out trash, we had to clean toilets, which was awesome. *:laughs:* But yeah, there was a lot of different stuff to do at the camp, it was just basically taking care of each other.

I had never experienced police brutality in the sense that I didn't understand why they hated us. The first night that I was there, 30 police officers turned in their badges, because of the violence that was being enacted against us. Like, we had no weapons on us. Upon my arrival at camp, our car was searched, and it was definitely because we were Brown, and we looked suspicious, but our car was searched for weapons for over two hours in the cold, and we were not allowed inside our cars. We had to have our hands up on the car, facing away from it. It was just absolutely ridiculous. We specified they had no right to search our car, they had no probable cause. We specified that we were protesters and we had brought with us 18 cases of water, and that we were there to help out. And we were there to bring supplies and we weren't there to be violent - especially after the elders had warned us, if you bring weapons into the camp, you will not be here. They were very specific and the police officers wanted to intimidate us,

they wanted us to be afraid. They would not let us through a road that is a public road and it was part of the entrance to the camp. There was only like two ways to go about going into the camp and it was a highway. They blocked off the road completely and wouldn't let people go through. So we had been driving for about 13 hours at that point, we needed a place to sleep, we needed to get into the camp, and the police made it, just impossible. I think they wanted to intimidate us and to just weaken us in that sense. It is important to me as someone who has a connection with my spirituality and a connection to the land, that water is essentially a part of life. This is our land, this is our water and we have a right to it, just as anyone else has a right to their own water. And it was especially important to me as a water protector, that the pipeline was originally routed through an area that was predominantly white before it was deemed unsafe, and unsafe for their water supply. My question to the people who still think that the pipeline is okay, is: why is our water supply not as valuable? Native people are not valued within society. Our lives are not treated the same as white citizens' are. We are definitely degraded and dehumanized by law enforcement, especially our native women. Native women are especially brutalized by police. Not as much as the US as it is in Canada, but definitely dehumanized and brutalized.

What I think a lot of people don't understand is that native women are subjected to sexual assault, rape, that are different, or in a way they are worse than white women's. We are subjected to sexualized violence in different ways, especially because native women are fetishized, we are definitely, as women of color, sexualized differently. I would attribute that to just how we are portrayed. Our culture is accustomed to people - and when you see native women online, they're basically just white women in headaddresses and have no respect for what our culture is, and I think that the relation is similar to that men have learned to view us, especially through pornography, as sexual objects, in a different way. We are fetishized differently than white women are.

FRAAS: How are women treated, and what is the role of women at the water protector camp?

CJ: I want to speak no ill will against my culture, but it is very patriarchal. Women are not given the same roles as men are. Men are the ones who are to take care of us, they're the ones there to set the rules.

There *were* women speaking there. The first day that I was there there was a woman speaking there and giving our basically like daily pep talk, I guess, in a sense, before prayer. But I definitely think that we are not given the same roles as men are within these communities and within these protest communities especially. My interactions



with women there were through cooking. We were basically designated in the kitchen and the men were the ones who were working on the schoolhouse and doing the heavy labor. Not that I am not able to do heavy labor, that was just the role that I was assigned while I was there.

FRAAS: I see. So, do you think that if you had asked to do, sort of what was being considered the men's work, that they would have been okay with that?

CJ: I'm sure they would have been surprised, but they would have been fine with it. It was just that I did what was expected of me. I was respectful of the fact that this is not my community, and while I am indigenous, this is a different community than my own and I need to be respectful of the elders and how they wanted things run.

FRAAS: In general, do you see women in native resistance movements being leaders?

CJ: Yes, I think that there are ways that we have been leaders and that there are ways that we are leaders. And especially during protests, we are given at least the same voice, like we are not silenced at our protests. I felt like when I was there, that as a native woman, I had a voice there.

*:Song interlude - Mother by Ulali:*

*:simple, strong hand drum begins:*

*:collective voices of women singing in indigenous language:*

PIERCE: To conclude today's podcast, we'll hear an excerpt from an interview Sekhmet She Owl did with Shannon Kring, the creator and producer of the upcoming feature documentary *End of the Line: the Women of Standing Rock*. Shannon is the Emmy award-winning producer of the reality cooking TV series *The Kitchens of Biro*, a United Nations World Tourism Organization liaison for Honduras, and Honduras' Goodwill ambassador, and the author of five books. Here is a portion of that interview.

SHEOWL: Having been at Standing Rock for - how long?

Shannon KRING: I'm starting my fifth month now, not as long as the women. But in terms of the journalists, and we were initially out there. We were one of three. So, now there are 38 crews who have checked in at Standing Rock.

SHEOWL: So having been there for several months, and having seen in person, the interactions between the water protectors and the government, the company behind the pipeline, the police et cetera, do you think that there is an element of misogyny to the treatment, and in some cases, assault of the water protectors?

KRING: Absolutely. It's absolutely repulsive what's been happening there and how that, again, just is not getting the attention. And that comes from these people who are completely clueless who run media, and are either - just have no idea like the 34 guys I met with, or they have been silenced by the people who are running ads on their various networks. But the fact is that while filming, I have had - so many things that happened to these women. So early on, one of my interviewees had been assaulted on the front line. There's actually a video of this, where a law enforcement officer actually grabbed her by her left breast and started pulling on her with her breast. She was fighting him off. He then went over to her right breast, moved his hands off and went - five times he moved his hand back and forth, and was pulling on her so forcefully, and then sprayed her with mace in the mouth and in the eyes.

Another instance that happened was actually one of the daughters of one of the leaders, she was held for two days in her cell nude. They did not give her a jumpsuit, didn't permit her any clothes, and they just kept interrogating her. All of the women who were arrested had to strip in front of officers, male officers. Many of them had to be checked, get body checks to make sure that they were not holding weapons inside themselves. They had to - they all showed me how that worked and how they had to squat down and be inspected.

I had two women during the course of this who had their children taken away for just completely bogus accusations. And I've had one of them held in a dog kennel, when they arrested so many people that they did not have the jail cells available, and so she was kind of like a dog and denied bathroom privileges for many hours. I could go on. Without a doubt there's some really horrible things happening, which again brings me back to how are these women remaining so strong? They have hope, somehow. That's what I'm exploring with this documentary.

SHEOWL: So do you think that, you know, not just in the sense of misogynistic violence and abuses but just generally, would you say that even though this is an experience that entire tribes are having together, both males and females in communities, that native women have a unique experience, not just of the Standing Rock situation but even on a larger scale of white colonialism?

KRING: Absolutely, and that's, I guess, the heart of what I'm exploring with *End of the Line*. These things are happening off Standing Rock, off reservation, they're happening in, let's say, Bismarck. There have been several instances with these man camps as they're called, whenever pipelines, or mines come into a community, they set up these camps where the men live, and it's very easy to research what happens when that contingent moves into a community. Violence goes up, sexual assaults go up and crime in general. There's actually a rule, a law, about how few of these man camps, you can have within a certain amount of miles. That's been violated in North Dakota. You see it there, you see it elsewhere. Because I'm telling a bigger story than Standing Rock, I've been interviewing in other communities in other states. I'm seeing it everywhere. This is not new to the native people, men or women. That's - one of the very first interviews I did with one of the women who is one of the original founders of the American Indian Movement and the founder of Women of All Red Nations - she is in her 70s now, a lifelong activist - and at one point she just looked at me and said, this is new to you white people, this is not new to us, you're just learning about this now. We have endured 523 years of this.

And they don't see that ending really, which is really interesting. Again, going back to the hope, and the resilience, they don't really think it's going to end because as they've explained, that's just part of their narrative at this point. But I see the treatment no matter where I am. I saw it growing up and that's probably one of the things that inspired me to start studying as a young teenager with native people in my home state of Wisconsin, because I saw that you could commit violence against them, you could beat them up, you could hold a gun to their head where I came from, because they were allowed spear fishing rights and the white guys weren't. You know, these things happen, and then of course, I see the treatment that I get versus my native sisters, so - because I'm traveling so much. I had an instance, not long ago actually, where I had two native women and a man escorting me through near where the pipeline was being constructed. Now, she was stopped, she was [indecipherable, possibly 'harassed']. I was as well, I was followed by helicopter for an hour and the helicopter, which is one of the DAPL main helicopters, was going right over the car, coming at the car, flying so dangerously low - but she was the one who was questioned whenever we were stopped. And I've since been with her other times - same thing. I'm just let go through any checkpoints at any barriers. They treat me so nicely. "Have a great day", or they'll say things, law enforcement, whenever interrogated - at the end, they'll just say, "Be really careful, you have to be careful there. You know what's really going on there? Why would you go there?"

And going back to those meetings that I had with the media people, at one point I was meeting with someone because I was trying to get an actor to back this project with his social media or however he would, and his manager said to me, "That would be career suicide for him. I wouldn't allow that to happen and you really should think about this too. This could be career suicide for you." And then he leaned forward and he said, "And really Shannon? Is this really your problem anyway?"

My thought is, absolutely. As someone who was born white and therefore privileged in the United States, I think it's more my problem than anyone else's. And I wish that everyone who makes comments, as I've been told by many, many white people as I've been making the film, "Oh, they're all just a bunch of drunks," or "They're drug addicts," or whatever nasty comments are made, I wish that all of them could have just one day, as I do, working alongside them and seeing the different treatments. It's shocking.

SHEOWL: So would you say, based on what you've heard from so many different native women, would you say that those of us who are not native, you know, non native women, especially non native radical feminists who see their struggle and want to support them and help them, would you say that the best thing we can do for them is to rebel against colonialism?

KRING: Oh yeah. I mean colonialism is what they are constantly bringing up, that this is all the result of colonialism, and I guess what they continue to say, is it means a lot to them just to be given a seat at the table, so to speak, to have their voices heard. And we keep saying that on everything, on our social media, we're active on Facebook and we post documentary shorts, little excerpts of what we've been capturing along the way. And what you'll hear over and over again is just, help give us a voice. They just want a voice.

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

FRAAS: And that concludes WLRN's edition nine podcast for January 7th, 2017. On behalf of all the women of WLRN, we wish you a happy new year. If you'd like to get in touch with us, please send an email to [wlrnewscontact@gmail.com](mailto:wlrnewscontact@gmail.com). We still need donations to get station shirts! Please consider donating \$20 or more to support this campaign. We only need \$200 more to get a stock of station shirts that we will use for prizes and giveaways to continue to get the word out about our station and radical feminism. It's easy! Just click on the donate button, make your donation on our

website, and indicate what size shirt you'd like for your chance to win! After we have raised enough money to order the shirts, we will draw the names of two lucky winners to send shirts to! Thanks again for tuning in to WLRN, YOUR radical feminist source for news and commentary in the femisphere.

SHEOWL: And I am Sekhmet She Owl. Thanks for tuning in. If you'd like to volunteer for WLRN, please take a look at our "Volunteer" tab on our website and contact us at [wlrnewscontact@gmail.com](mailto:wlrnewscontact@gmail.com). We are in need of editors, transcript writers, website designers, reporters, headlines writers and more!

PIERCE: This is Nile Pierce, signing-off from our ninth edition of WLRN's podcast, for January 2017. Stay tuned next month on Thursday, February 2nd when we explore questions of solidarity, self-love, and sisterhood as mainstream culture promotes Valentine's Day, a holiday often associated with models of romantic love that can be damaging to women.

PETTERSEN: And this is Thistle Pettersen, signing off for now. Today's podcast was produced by Jenna Di Quarto. Thanks again for tuning in to WLRN!

*:music fades out*

*: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:*