

WLRN Edition 31: Hateful Attacks on Lesbians at Pride Parades and Dyke Marches

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Transcribed by Charlotte Monteith

:Rebel Girl by Bikini Kill- drums, high-pitched whine from amplifier building to gritty power chords:

*"That girl thinks she's the queen of the neighborhood
She's got the hottest trike in town
That girl, she holds her head up so high
I think I wanna be her best friend, yeah*

*Rebel girl, rebel girl
Rebel girl, you are the queen of my world
Rebel girl, rebel girl
I think I wanna take you home
I wanna try on your clothes, uh"*

:song segment fades out and transitions to an eery piano halloween sample:

Jenna DIQUARTO: Greetings and welcome to the 31st edition podcast of Women's Liberation Radio News for this Thursday, November 1st, 2018. This is Jenna, hoping you all had a safe and happy Halloween.

:Menacing cackle sound effect:

Speaking of scary things. Truly frightening and scary things...

:says Count DiQuarto:

This month's edition focuses on harassment of lesbians at pride parades and dyke marches around the globe last June that drew tens of thousands of participants. Supporters of gender ideology attacked lesbians at the San Francisco Dyke March both physically and online afterwards. Vancouver lesbians were also met with extreme hostility and harassed and yelled for being "TERF bigots" and were later branded a "hate group" by the event organisers. In London, gender identity activists shouted

misogynistic slogans at the lesbians who took to the front of the march that said “trans activism erases lesbians” and “lesbian not queer”. In Baltimore, genderists shouted hateful slogans and stalked lesbian marching in the city’s pride parade. Pro-dyke action at these parades was risky but worth it. Lesbians and feminists around the globe responded in a surge of support, plenty of unaware women were jolted into reality. We’ll hear an excerpt April did with Danielle and Eileen of the Vancouver based lesbian collective. We’ll also hear excerpts of an interview Thistle did with Giovanna Capone, Vanessa and Sherri, three lesbians that marched together at the San Francisco Dyke March on June 23rd of this year.

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

Today’s edition started off with Rebel Girl by Bikini Kill.

Here’s Julia for women’s news from around the globe for this Thursday, November 1st, 2018.

:smooth, ethereal loop- kick/electric clap/wood block:

Julia BECK: Second-wave feminists experimented with different spellings of the word ‘woman’ in order to centre women in our own word. These gyno-centric forms include ‘womyn’, ‘wimmin’, and ‘womon’ among many others. Recently men argued that the traditional word ‘woman’ is selfish, arguing that this spelling excludes men who identify as women. These men favour a new spelling ‘womxn’ an unpronounceable affront to women’s linguistic existence. To quote Ophelia Benson, “The word ‘woman’ does not need to be a bit more inclusive, just as women don’t need to be colonized by men”.

The UK organisation, Standing for Women, recently illuminated London with the words ‘women: noun, adult human female’ projected on the walls of the Royal Opera House and BBC headquarters. Posie Parker, leader of Standing for Women, fundraised enough money to advertise this dictionary definition on billboards in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Leeds. One man who does not identify as transgender claimed the billboard in Liverpool would make other men feel unsafe, saying the dictionary definition of woman was “transphobic hate speech”. Parker called him out on live TV,

saying, “What you and your misogynistic allies are seeking to do is to erase what it means to be a woman in law and in life, and that is why this campaign has been absolutely essential”.

Misogynists in London attacked Northcliffe House, a building in which The Daily Mail, The Metro, and the independent newspapers all operate. So-called transgender activists blocked the exits and threw smoke bombs at the doors. Terrified employees tried to evacuate but found it “extremely difficult to leave the building”. This act of domestic terrorism was supposedly in protest of an advertisement for Fair Play for Women, a feminist organisation campaigning to maintain women’s sex-based rights.

A male teacher at Chasco Middle School in Florida refused to supervise the boy’s locker room because a teenage girl who identifies transgender was permitted by the school administration to use facilities designated for male students. The teacher said “he will not knowingly place himself in a position to observe a minor female in the nude or otherwise in a state of undress”. For refusing to observe a female student shower in the boy’s room, the male teacher was transferred to a different school.

Stephen Terrance Wood, also known as Karen White, was sentenced to life in prison for raping female prisoners. Wood identified as female in order to be transferred from a men’s prison to women’s prison. His previous convictions of rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure, and gross indecency involving children were not considered prior to his transfer. This male rapist, like many other male rapists, provides a prime example of the ease with which male predators can manipulate gender identity.

Nine women in California are suing a women’s shelter for failing to protect them from a male sexual predator. The Poverello House in Fresno admitted a man who identified as transgender. The lawsuit states that this man made “sexually inappropriate comments” and sexually harassed women seeking refuge. Shelter staff threatened women with expulsion if they did not shower naked with this man. Workers at this shelter did not want to risk losing federal grant money, so they risked the safety and sanity of vulnerable women instead.

Indigenous women in Canada are going missing, but the investigation into this epidemic fails to name the problem. Male violence against indigenous women is generalised and deprioritised by Justin Trudeau’s inquiry. Activist Cherry Smiley says, “The national inquiry is not the inquiry that so many indigenous women fought for for so long. The inquiry we have today is, unfortunately, a reflection of modern

depoliticised politics that promote ideas of inclusivity and grief at the expense of focused political goals and action. That the inquiry's foundation puts indigenous peoples and families before women in our own inquiry speaks volumes to the reach of the antifeminist, women hating culture that we live in today".

Last year, Moira Donegan created the Shitty Media Men List, a spreadsheet that women shared anonymously to document male violence. This resource helped women navigate dangerous situations on and off the job. One of the men listed on the sheet is now suing Donegan for one and a half million dollars, he claimed that being named a 'violent misogynist' causes him emotional stress. Lauren Hough, writer and journalist, created a Gofundme campaign for Donegan, titled 'Moira Donegan's Legal Fees/Expenses'.

India's MeToo movement ignited earlier this month with scores of men either being removed or stepping down from positions of power in various branches of government and media. Celebrities used the hashtag *#believesurvivors* in solidarity with Tanushree Dutta, an actress who filed a complaint against her abuser, reviving a 10 year old case against him. Vrinda Grover, lawyer and feminist activist, said, "Until now we have seen consequences only on the women who complained, this time the consequences are for those who have committed the misconduct". This new wave of feminist commotion shook the upper-classes in India but has yet to effect immediate changes on the lives of the vast majority of women and girls.

A group of teenage boys and their parents physically assaulted 36 girls aged 10-14 for rejecting sexual advances. The girls were playing near the government school in Bihar, India when a group of boys started harassing them, shouting lewd comments. Police reported that when the girls argued back the boys left only to return and with the help of their parents dragged the girls by their hair and beat them with bamboo sticks and iron rods. Guida, one of 36 girls who were hospitalised after the attack, said, "They had always been teasing us and scribbling dirty words on the walls of our school", but the girls' reports were not taken seriously by school or government officials. It is unclear whether the 6 boys and 3 women arrested for this crime will be listed on India's first national sex offender registry which was established in September.

Sahle-Work Zewde was elected unanimously to serve as the first woman president of Ethiopia. She is currently the only female head of a state on the continent of Africa. Her vast experience as a diplomat and ambassador of Ethiopia is a staple foundation to work from in a male dominated society. She urged the mostly male parliament "to

uphold our peace in the name of a mother who is the first to suffer in the absence of peace". She told other leader that if they thought she was talking too much about women, she had only just begun.

That concludes WLRN's world news segment for Thursday, November 1st, 2018. I'm Julia Beck. Share your news stories and tips with us by emailing wlrnewscontact@gmail.com and let us know what's going on in your world!

:Song interlude - Welcome to Hell by Kate Mckinnon, Cecily Strong, Aidy Bryant, Leslie Jones, Melissa Villaseñor and Saoirse Ronan:

:live recording- audience applause audible:

:bubbly synth-pop, juxtaposing the song's dark message:

[Cecily Strong]

Hey there, boys. We know the last couple months have been frickin' insane.

[Aidy Bryant]

All these big, cool, powerful guys are turning out to be, what's the word? Habitual predators?

:audience laughs:

:cat meows:

[Kate McKinnon]

Cat's out of the bag, women get harassed all the time!

[Aidy]

And it's, like, dang, is this the world now?

[Saoirse Ronan]

But here's a little secret that every girl knows...

[Cecily]

Oh, this been the damn world!

[All]

It's freaky, it's narsty

It's button-under-the-desk bad

But this is our hometown, we'll show you around

Welcome to hell

Now we're all in here

Look around, isn't it nice?

*It's a full nightmare
Ain't it so coo-coo, playing this Guess Who?
Yeah, it's a lot, but it's what we got
Welcome to hell, hey!*

*[Aidy]
Oh, and this ain't a girl group
We just travel in a pack for safety
:audience laughs:*

*[Kate]
This is how I walk home at night
Meow*

*[Saoirse]
My dad gave me a pink gun, so there's a lot there*

*[Cecily]
My little trick is if someone's following me I put my arm up like this and I go :groans:
'Cause then he'll be like, "she's not worth the trouble"*

*[All (Cecily)]
Welcome to hell
Now you're in our boat
Look at that guy, what is he up to in that trench coat?
It's like a maze here, all full of boners
Hey, what was that?
Whew, just a cat
(Wait, who owns the cat?)
Could be a trap
Welcome to hell, hey!*

*[Kate]
I guess it b-b-begs the question
Woah, why didn't you say something, babygirl?*

*[Saoirse]
Well, dang, double daddy
We definitely did
For hundreds of years*

[Melissa Villaseñor]

Aww, man

:audience laughs:

[Aidy]

But I guess no one, like, cared

[Saoirse]

Because it kept happening again and again

[Melissa]

What?

[Saoirse]

And again!

[Melissa]

Really?

[Saoirse]

And again!

[Melissa]

Oh, come on!

[Leslie Jones]

Hey, just wanted to say I think what you guys are doing is really cool, I get it. Uh, but you do know that it's, like, a million times worse for women of color, right?

[All]

Oh, God, yes!

Thank you for saying that

[Leslie]

Well, let's get back into this!

[Saoirse]

Now House of Cards is ruined

And that really sucks

Well, here's a list of stuff that's ruined for us:

[All]

Parking

And walking

And Uber

And ponytails

*Bathrobes
And nighttime
And drinking
And hotels
And vans
[Melissa]
Nothing good happens in a van*

*[All]
Welcome to hell
(welcome to hell)
This isn't news
(n-n-no, not news)
Our situation's been a nuisance since we got boobs
(I got two boobs)*

:audience laughs:

*That's why our mom was always so tired
(always so tired)
Grab all your friends, mace in your hands
Welcome to hell
Yeah, it ain't fair, but pull up a chair
Welcome to hell, hey!*

NATASHA: That was a Saturday Night Live segment featuring Kate Mckinnon, Cecily Strong, Aidy Bryant, Leslie Jones, Melissa Villaseñor and Saoirse Ronan. Next up we'll hear excerpts of an interview April did with Danielle Cormier and Eileen, two members of the lesbian collective about the harassment and abuse they suffered at the Vancouver, Canada Dyke March this past August. Eileen is a lesbian, a strong advocate for the elimination of oppression, abuse, and violence against women and considers herself lucky to be in good company with a fantastic, fun, and empowering group of superheroes, the lesbian collective. Danielle Cormier is a long-time radical feminist lesbian actively involved in the protecting of female spaces since the mid-nineties. Lesbian and feminist allies are encouraged to reach out in solidarity with the Vancouver lesbian collective via e-mail at thelesbiansvancouver@gmail.com.

April NEAULT: Could you talk a little bit about the lesbian collective, how it was formed, and what its purpose was or currently is?

Danielle CORMIER: First of all, this is not my group. We are now a collective, and every member has a vote, and there are several women who have been with me right from the beginning, so there are now several founding members.

What I did is I took advantage of the moment, really, when allies, the amazing women at Vancouver Rape Relief, who have, themselves, been under serious risk and sustained attack from trans activists and their supporters for decades now, um, organised an event three years ago, inviting Julie Bindel as an invited participant and a speaker. And the event very much centered lesbians, something that just never happens anymore, so I was very excited and, uh, honestly I hadn't been that excited since Vancouver hosted the gay olympics quite frankly. So I had had the profound privilege of finding out for myself some decades ago now how powerful it is to gather and organise with other women, and it really stayed with me. And I believe that in a culture that increasingly makes female space taboo, that we should do it more, not less. And also, I'm increasingly worried about the erosion of lesbian culture, spaces, politics, how polarised and divided we have become. And I was angry and sad at what was being done to individual lesbians and to lesbians collectively, so I took advantage of a moment where there would be a lot of lesbians all gathered in the same room with whom I can count on having at least some common ground, and I said, I'm starting a radical feminist lesbian group, and I passed around this sign-up sheet. And here we are three years later.

NEAULT: According to the website for the Vancouver Dyke March, there is a two-spirit, trans, and intersex persons policy that aims to "contribute to a culture of inclusivity and welcome for two-spirit, trans, and intersex persons and repudiate the efforts of a small minority that wish to exclude two-spirit, trans, and intersex persons from Vancouver Dyke March". So when your collective was approached by two event board members before the march started, did they state your double X chromosome T-shirt was offensive to two-spirit, trans, and intersex people, or did they explicitly say it was non-inclusive of trans women?

CORMIER: It was very specific about, um- we were told that this was an inclusive march, and specifically that our T-shirts which had- our theme was superheroes, our lesbian superheroes, so we had chosen a uterus symbol that looked like a superhero- with the word 'lesbian' on it, and we made T-shirts so that we could wear them, so the

message obviously was that lesbians are female. So we were told that we'd have to take them off, that we would have to leave our placards behind, or, that; furthermore, if we had any double X symbols, or if we had any venus or interlocking venus symbols- these are all female symbols- that we would have to leave them all behind because they excluded trans women. Now, the two board members that approached us, one of them was a trans woman who further reminded us that not all women have vaginas.

NEAULT: When we talk about inclusivity, why do you think women's emotional, physical, psychological needs are always put behind those of men?

EILEEN: Well, I guess, you know, in our patriarchal society, women's emotional and physical, psychological needs are only secondary to that of men. And women are socialized to cater to the needs of men, children, and others. And women are socialized to care for men and pleasure men at the expense of their own personal needs. So, uh, for women who fought for and continue to assert women's rights and privileges to no longer be put behind those of men, has actually improved the lives of grandmothers, mothers, and sisters. All women can enjoy a better life, not just here but in many parts of the world. So the well-being of women is the well-being of everyone. And generally, they're known to nurture and protect their young. These are the traits for the survival of any species.

CORMIER: I think that women have made some hard fought for and won gains over the last few decades, and I think this is at least partly responsible- if not wholly responsible- for the increasing instances of just brazenly and openly displayed and tolerated acts of misogyny. I think the, uh, increase in violence and degradation both in pornography and prostitution are all at least partly a response to those gains, including any and all measures to roll back those gains. You know, trans activism has created a platform where misogyny and anti-feminist retaliation really can be openly displayed under a brand called *social justice warrior*, I find that quite appalling, I really do, because I know that any true social justice movement just would not be so very centred on continuously attacking women. And I think this serves as a warning to women: you've gone too far. And if you don't stop now things will get much worse. And by the way, we're gonna take back those gains, and you better not complain or we'll give you something to complain about, so you'd better be quiet. These are not the earmarks of a social justice movement, not by any stretch of imagination.

NEAULT: Ten brave women joined your group during the onslaught of abuse your collective was suffering at the hands of these trans activists during the march. What do

you think it'll take to see more women to stand up for the rights of lesbians and women in a climate that is so hostile towards women?

CORMIER: In the current climate, I think we need to evaluate that one woman at a time. I know what you're talking about. I've felt very isolated at times in this fight, and I've felt the urgency of it, and the need for all of us to speak out, as well as the certainty that they can't talk for us. If we all do it,-

NEAULT: Mm.

CORMIER: -we can turn this around. But I have also, throughout my decades as a feminist, watched too many women get sacrificed, women losing their careers, women losing their reputation. Eileen and I were just talking about this prior to you calling. There is so much being talked about, you know, poor men losing their reputations in the hashtag MeToo movement- I think that far more women have lost their reputations to trans activism, and that's really a shame.

So part of me doesn't want to sacrifice any more women. Another part of me really wants us all to speak out. And then, I think that middle ground in me, which I tend to think is probably more bang-on, that we need to identify one woman at a time. Some women have more to lose than others. Some women are more at risk and more vulnerable than others. Of course, they have their own voice and can decide for themselves what the risks are and whether they want to take them. But I don't think we should be in a position to judge them for it.

EILEEN: I would also like to add that I think the socialisation of traditional women- much earlier and the way women and young women have been socialised and conditioned right now is so very concerning because it really normalises the idea that the needs of women are really secondary to that of men, like what Danielle had mentioned about the MeToo movement, you would think here from the media that, you know, it's ruining the reputation of these men who are being accused. For that to even be out there, it really, really strongly shows that the needs are secondary to that of men.

CORMIER: We need to leave it up to them to decide for themselves what the risks are and whether it's worth it. We also need to make sure that when we resist, that we don't waste that bravery. We have to make our actions count, so that the benefits at least match the risks, yeah?

NEAULT: The Canadian Civil Marriage Act, passed on July 20th, 2005, made it legal for same-sex couples to get married. How do you think we, as Canadians, have gone in that short period of time of being inclusive and accepting of lesbians partnerships in 2005 to now branding lesbian collectives such as yours as hate groups?

CORMIER: These are words that are being thrown around entirely too much, come on now. To be branded a hate crime- we've been called Nazis, and fascists, and aggressors, and even misogynists. We've been called misogynists by men, April. Like, really, this has just gone way, way, way too far, and these are very serious accusations, and, uh, it's also important to keep it in the context of measures that have been taken and future measures that are planned as well. There have been changes to the criminal code with regards to hate crime, that now absolutely makes it illegal to perpetrate a hate crime against trans-identified individuals, which is fine. Our position is very clear on the fact that no one should be subjected to hate crime and not have full protection under the law. About that, what is up for debate here is what constitutes a hate crime against trans people. And I know that there are measures that are coming to further amend hate crime law both in the criminal code which covers all of Canada, and in the Charter of Rights, that would, for example, remove intent, so right now when you charge someone on the basis with perpetrating a hate crime, there is a burden of proving that there was an intention to commit harm. If you remove that language, then it becomes who is accusing you and whether they say they have been harmed by what you did and said or not. Now again, in the current, very volatile political climate, where the words 'hate crime', 'hate group', 'bigotry', 'acts of hatred', etc., are all being thrown around quite liberally, that can have a different context. So we're very aware of the fact that not only us, other groups and individuals have been branded hate crime perpetrators and hate groups, and we're not sure that this is all not part of that strategy.

EILEEN: I think being labelled a hate group or bigot- I think those are the terms that have been used to describe women- really shows a very intolerant opinion and perception of lesbians. And, uh, lesbians are targeted with slurs such as bigot, or hate group, or TERFs because lesbians speak up and advocate for sexual autonomy, or lesbian women's right to determine when, with whom, and under what circumstances they engage in sexual activity, and to only engage in sexual activity to which they consent. Lesbians have this right, and others who want to infringe on this have called lesbians bigots. If you want to brand anyone a bigot, you might be the very person

who has these opinions of women and lesbians. So I think that it should be very clear who is the bigot.

NEAULT: When or how do you think that this "TERF" hate campaign directed extensively at lesbian women is going to come to an end?

CORMIER: I want to take the opportunity here to say that our collective is extremely proud of this moment. In 2018, lesbians at Pride and dyke marches globally, notably in San Francisco, London, as well as here in Vancouver, without coordinating with each other, without knowing about each other's plans, clearly and loudly all said, we're absolutely not going to allow this to move any further, we're not going to allow this to continue. And we're very grateful for that moment of solidarity and the way it amplifies our own voices, and that will absolutely continue. More and more women every day are realising what is going on, that their rights are being infringed upon, and they're getting angry. And I think when women start to get angry and start to get together, historically, that's when revolutionary things happen. But power, being what power is, they will never stop of their own volition. We're going to have to make it very clear that it won't be allowed. And that's what we plan to do.

EILEEN: And I think it's extensively directed at lesbians because lesbians have been really at the forefront advocating for sexual autonomy, for liberation of women, and, so, that seems to be, really, very much, the target of a lot of threats, and verbal lashing, physical and verbal intimidation.

CORMIER: What this erosion has meant and even in the LGBTQ community, we're talked about this in our own collective, and we've realised that LGBTQ and the other increasing letters that go along with it, none of those categories include men anymore. But again, the good news is that there's us, that's the very reason why this group was started, [it] was out of the need to create more female spaces at a time when that was taboo, and the other reasons that I mentioned. And we know we're not the only one. We know this because we know our own history as women, as an oppressed class, that whenever things get hard, women continue to organise underground and perhaps in silence, and perhaps out of view, and carefully. But they don't stop, they continue to do that, so we know there are others like that out there, and we're working on seeing if we can connect with them. That's kind of one of the things I wanted to put out, to make sure that if there are other groups of lesbians or allies that are organising on this issue, on the issue of protecting female space, and protecting lesbian's and all women's sexual autonomy, we would love to hear about you, we'd love to know where

you are, and what you're doing and we welcome any and all chances to amplify each other's voice. And I think that's going to be what happens like I said, there's a lot more women getting angry now. We will reach critical mass.

:Song interlude - Hit Me with Your Best Shot by Pat Benatar:

:Punchy classic rock- power chords with 5th string root/kick/snare/hi-hat

"Well you're a real tough cookie with a long history

Of breaking little hearts like the one in me

That's okay, let's see how you do it

Put up your dukes, let's get down to it

Hit me with your best shot

Why don't you hit me with your best shot

Hit me with your best shot

Fire away

You come on with it, come on

You don't fight fair

That's okay, see if I care

Knock me down, it's all in vain

I get right back on my feet again

Hit me with your best shot

Why don't you hit me with your best shot

Hit me with your best shot

Fire away

:guitar solo- arpeggiated power chords/kick/snare/hi-hat:

*Well you're a real tough cookie with a long history
Of breaking little hearts like the one in me
Before I put another notch in my lipstick case
You better make sure you put me in my place*

*Hit me with your best shot
C'mon, hit me with your best shot
Hit me with your best shot
Fire away*

*Hit me with your best shot
Why don't you hit me with your best shot
Hit me with your best shot
Fire away*

[chorus repeats and fades out]

Sekhmet SHEOWL: That was *Hit Me with Your Best Shot* by Pat Benatar. Now we turn to an interview Thistle did with Giovanna Capone, Vanessa, and Sherri, three lesbians who attended the June 23rd Dyke March in San Francisco where they were attacked by trans gender activists.

Thistle PETERSEN: I have with me three lesbians who marched at the Dyke March in San Francisco on June 23rd. And they're each going to introduce themselves and talk about how they became interested in going to the Dyke March and their story of what happened at the Dyke March on June 23rd. So Giovanna, you were gonna introduce yourself first.

Giovanna CAPONE: Yeah, I'm Giovanna Capone, and I'm a radical lesbian feminist, and librarian, and writer, and a few other things. And I have been living in Oakland,

California, right in San Francisco for many years. And I participated in the Dyke March almost every year, pretty much.

So the Dyke March is on Saturday night, and the big, big pride march is on Sunday, and Friday night, there has been a trans march for the last, I don't know, several years. So the Dyke March was gearing up to happen on June 23rd, and I thought it would be awesome to march this year. And I thought it would also be really important because we have so many issues going around the community and so many, you know, important, significant things happening.

So I put out an e-mail to everybody that I thought might be interested in my, uh, Yahoo contact list, and I think I came up with about 31 lesbians that I thought might want to march, and I emailed everybody an invitation. And, um, I guess I heard back from maybe 10 or 12 women that said yes. And there were a couple of women from Facebook I knew that I also invited. And I talked about: hey, let's bring signs. I'm gonna make a sign that says 'lesbian visibility, lesbian power, lesbian pride'. Um, there was some discussion about what signs to make. And, um, one of the women is Max, and she cautioned against bringing certain signs. So, basically, I heard from about 10 or 12 women, and some of those women were on Facebook, so we weren't all in the initial invitation conversation. It was basically a motley assortment of women from different backgrounds, um, somewhat different politics coming together to march in solidarity because we thought there's safety in numbers.

And, um, so I made my sign the night before and then, coincidentally, that afternoon I was doing a radio program for WLRN, and we were recording that afternoon. So as soon as I finished that radio program on the history of lesbian culture in San Francisco and about half an hour later Sherri and Vanessa knocked on my door to get together to go down to the place where we were meeting the other women. And we had our signs and headed down to the Bart Station, which is the train, and met up with the other women.

And it's a long story, but basically, we marched for about an hour and the whole way there- it was a very hot day in San Francisco- we were bullied and harassed by an increasingly growing crowd of young women and men claiming to be women, marching as lesbians in this parade. There was only about 10 or 12 in our group and we were not a big, cohesive, nuclear unit, we were just kind of spread out across the street, together. But the harassment began pretty immediately, shouting at us, um, 'TERFs go home' and-

PETTERSEN: What made them think that you were TERFs? What did your sign say exactly?

CAPONE: Well, my sign said 'lesbian pride, lesbian visibility, lesbian not queer', and I'll let the other women speak for their signs but, um- So we marched for approximately an hour and that whole time we were harassed. And, um, two of the women were shoved to the ground and they will be speaking about that, their signs were torn up. Another woman was shoved also, but I don't believe they took her sign. But there was a woman with a blow horn screaming at us, 'tear down their signs! Tear down their signs! Tear down their signs!' And the other people complied and tried to go after us and tried to trip us and, uh, you know, basically intimidate us the whole way, so that's what happened. At a couple of points I tried to go get a police officer, there were police officers spread throughout the crowd, and I went to get one and bring him back into the crowd because Sherri was getting knocked down, and Vanessa was getting knocked down. And the police, at first, thought that we were the aggressors, they didn't understand what was happening, they thought we were the ones starting the problem. And they almost arrested Max Dashu, they walked her over to the sidewalk and started questioning her as if she was the instigator. So the police were not very helpful. Um, I guess that's all I'll say for now, there's a lot more that happened, but I want my other sisters to get a chance to speak too.

PETTERSEN: Thank you, Giovanna.

VANESSA: Well, this is Vanessa. Um, I am mutually acquainted, I know Giovanna from years of just, uh, casual interaction on social media, and we've had a couple of kind of joint efforts, but never really met before. So I've personally lived in the Bay Area since 1989. I didn't come out until 2004, so I been to about, I calculated about 6 Dyke Marches, and the last one I did do was in, um, 2012, and there were a couple of reasons for the gap in time, one of them is I got seriously injured at the last Dyke March that I went to. So I stayed away, and in the meantime, I moved more north; I'm in Central Northern California now, so I'm out of the Bay Area.

And, um, there's not much of a lesbian community where I am. And Sherri and I were fairly new partners, together, and she came to California to live, and we really wanted to experience Dyke March together. I wanted to show her what it was about, the pride that I remember feeling from being a part of it. The march itself was something that I had experienced as a really powerful experience of solidarity for women, lesbians. And

it's one of the few places I have ever been where being there will ground you just in a very short period of time, you know, a couple of hours one day out of the year. And everywhere you look there's another dyke, another lesbian marching next to you, and with you in power. And I wanted her to feel that in San Francisco, it's a magical locus of lesbian experience and history. So that was our intention.

Um, we did see Giovanna's email, we have also sent out some queries just to some friends. I consider myself a fledgling- or at this point, not so much a fledgling radical feminist. And we sent out: hey, you know, does anyone else want to join us? This is where we are located in California. Uh, if anyone wants to ride with us, you're welcome to come. And we really just wanted to feel the sisterhood and represent a little bit. And, um, make sure, you know, that everybody who fought and had eyes on us knew that we were proud to be lesbians. And so, we put out kind of, you know, hey, anybody wanna join us? We really want to hear from everybody, so we made sure that everybody knew that we were gonna be in the area.

It's about a 4 and a half hour drive for us. And we made up some signs the night before, you know, individually. Um, Sherri and I are together, so we did our signs the night before. And my signs centered on the social, cultural aspects of- and I knew that there would be a lot of eyes on us, you know, I was not trying to be provocative, but I did wanna make a statement. And mine said, on one side, 'change our society, not your body'. And, um, that was referring to the fact that a lot of females, lesbians, gender non-conforming youth feel in our day in age now are pushed and pressured that if they feel that they are not typically conforming to representation of femininity then that must mean that they are trans. And my message was the opposite, that gender is a social construct, you know, it's an idea that society came up with in order to tell people how to be, and what to wear, and how to present themselves. And my sign meant: hey, you know, don't change yourself, you don't have to do anything to yourself, you're perfect the way you are. Let's change our society, not your body. That's exactly what I meant by that. The other side said 'the dangers of puberty blockers' and then I listed several of the dangers of puberty blockers. Um, there are several serious health effects that are permanent and also, you know, unknown, there's a lot of things we don't know about putting puberty blockers into children and that's a particular concern of mine. And that's pretty much it, that's what I was there for and that's what I intended to do. And we'll get a little bit more into what happened after Sherri makes her introduction. And thank you for having us by the way.

PETTERSEN: Yeah, thank you for visiting with WLRN. So go ahead, Sherri, and introduce yourself and tell us how you came to be involved with the Dyke March or to march in the Dyke March in San Francisco on June 23rd.

SHERRI: Thank you, Thistle. Uh, this is Sherri, and it's a pleasure to be here. I came to California in February from Texas, I lived there for quite a few years- not really by choice. But I've been a radical feminist for many years. I went to a couple of women's marches in January the last couple of years. We didn't have a dyke march there although I've always wanted to attend one.

So I was excited about it, although my take on it was a little different. I was optimistic that we would, you know, have the dyke solidarity, but at the same time I was prepared for, uh, altercations basically because, you know, the San Francisco Public Library not too long before that had displayed an art exhibit by this extreme trans group called The Degenderettes. These are people that basically advocate violence against any women that are gender critical, calling us, 'TERFs', calling us 'transphobes', 'nazis', you know, the list is, you know, long. But they wear t-shirts that say 'I punch TERFs' with bloodstains on it. They carry, uh, baseball bats with barbed wire around them. And the public library had all this stuff on display. So, basically, they were emboldened by this, you know, they have been taking over the Dyke March for years now and basically pushing lesbians, you know, to the side and threatening and intimidating us. So I went there with that awareness, and I was prepared to make a stand for lesbians. The Dyke March was created by dykes for dykes, and that is a lesbian, a gender non-conforming lesbian. And like Vanessa said, these young women and girls are being pressured to change their sex, which we know cannot be, you know, XX chromosomes will remain XX regardless of whatever bodily mutilation that you do. And it's just so disturbing.

So, um, my sign was two-sided as well. On one side, it said, 'biology is not bigotry' and the other side was, 'you can't silence us with violence. Resist lesbian erasure.' And like she [Vanessa] we made these signs the night before, uh, we weren't a part of this initial discussion on, you know, what signs were appropriate or weren't, you know. And I had my own take on it. I wasn't anticipating this group for one which came from all walks of life like Giovanna said. Um, but I was there on a mission, and I'm not gonna try to, you know, misrepresent that.

But the first side of my sign, 'biology is not bigotry' was referring to the policing and redefining of our biological and anatomical terms, you know, that we use to describe ourselves as women. We were not even allowed to call ourselves women, we're

supposed to be 'cis-women', we're supposed to be 'chest-feeding', and 'menstruators' and all these other terms that they're making up for us. It's even, you know, coming down to misdiagnosing and mistreating medical conditions because women aren't... you know, trans women and trans men, as they call themselves, are misrepresenting themselves.

But anyway, the other side 'you can't silence us with violence. Resist lesbian erasure.' It was referring basically to this, um, more menacing and violent faction of the transgender movement, in particular The Degenderettes, you know, who have campaigned against women and basically threaten and bully us, abused and physically attacked us.

So, yeah, we met Giovanna the day of the march and, uh, she'd just finished her interview, so we had to rush down to the Bart Station. We met everyone there at the station. I had the signs in black trash bags because I had a feeling there was going to be some animosity. I took them out of the bags when we were all collected there, at the Bart Station, showed everybody, made sure we were on the same page and, you know, had their opportunity to not march with us if they didn't feel comfortable.

Uh, Max Dashu and I had a nice conversation. We all moved on to the march, and we started right on time. But it wasn't very long after we started marching that the one woman with the blow horn started yelling out, you know, to tear down their signs and to go home. They all started chanting before long, 'hey, hey, ho, ho, transphobes have gotta go.' And they kept doing that throughout the march, and it kept getting more and more aggressive. Vanessa and I were right in the middle of the march, basically, right in the centre of the crowd, and they became more and more aggressive. Um, I was knocked down 3 different times in the march, I couldn't see who it was. But they started bumping into us, and I was tripped. And my sign was torn from my hands on 3 or 4 different occasions, twice I ran after it and took it back. And another woman we met at the march retrieved it once for me too. My partner, Vanessa, she was repeatedly shouting out, 'we're not violent, we don't hate you, we're just speaking for lesbian's and children's rights'. My sign kept getting more and more ripped up, and I kept holding it up even though it was ripped. Uh, after the second time I got knocked down by somebody I got back on my feet and I noticed a police officer, and I yelled 'police' twice. He came over, and he kind of pushed everybody away, so I was able to, you know, move forward.

Now, um, as we continued marching Vanessa- as we were getting more and more hostile- she started protecting me from behind, which I didn't realise 'cause I was just, you know, keeping my eyes open for anybody else who was coming at me. But she was right behind me with her arms around me, holding onto my backpack. But I didn't know that behind her, there was a trans activist that kept stepping on her heels for several blocks and, eventually, used her [a trans activist] own hip to bump Vanessa onto the ground. Now, Vanessa was using a cane to walk, she has metal plates in her knee, and she has trouble walking long distances. So she actually attacked a woman with a physical disability. You know, Vanessa was saying we're not violent, and then this woman actually said, 'we will be, bitch', and she [Vanessa] got that on audio. Um, we've got some video coverage as well but not of the actual attacks but of us speaking to the police, but you can see them all chanting and yelling at us in the background.

Um, we kept going for, you know, most of the march but a couple blocks from the end after I'd been knocked down a third time, Max had come up behind me at one point and put her arms around me, and I swung out thinking it was someone else attacking me, and she was like, 'no, it's me', and I apologised. So she did come, you know, and intervene at one point. But by that time, you know, it was just really volatile, and we all made a group decision to get out of the march, so we went over to the side.

We were all speaking to the police, and we asked them for a police escort which was a little hard to convince them to do 'cause I think they were still of the mindset that we were the ones who were the aggressors which was ridiculous . The majority of the group was like 50 and older, you know, we had women in their 60s and 70s. Obviously, we were not going to be aggressive to these young 20-somethings, you know. It's just ridiculous. But they did end up having 2 police officers escorting us several blocks down. We found pieces of Vanessa's ripped up sign- and mine- along the way. And, uh, we all met in the restaurant, um , had dinner, and we got out of there safely afterwards.

Yeah, but this harassment continued after this, I posted on Facebook, a public post, which I wouldn't-

CAPONE: May I interject? Can I interject something that was part of the end of the march that I experienced?

SHERRI: Yeah, of course

CAPONE: Well, when the march ended and we were all standing on the side, and the cops were talking to us. There was a group of vocal people still screaming at us, you know, 'transphobes go home' and 'TERFs go home', screaming. And I said to the police officer 'can't you ask them to disperse?' because they were getting more and more livid in their harangue-ment , you know, and I said 'can't you ask them to disperse?' and the police officer said, 'oh no, well, they have freedom of speech'

[laughs]

VANESSA: And he also thought that, you know, actually, if we just talked to each other we'd find that we have a lot in common.

CAPONE: Right.

VANESSA: And it just shows us that, you know, a lack of understanding of the issues that are at hand. I mean we're at our own dyke march, and I kept reiterating, 'this is Dyke March. We're dykes, we belong here', you know, they were telling *us* to go home.

PETTERSEN: Who are the official organisers? Are there trans women-

VANESSA: Yes.

PETTERSEN: -or, you know, so-called-

VANESSA & SHERRI: Yes.

SHERRI: There are.

PETTERSEN: -men who believe that they are women or say they're women or whatever? Are there those TIMs involved in the organising of the Dyke March?

VANESSA: Yeah.

SHERRI: There are.

CAPONE: Yeah, the history of that Dyke March committee is that overtime, I believe, there have been fewer and fewer actual lesbians and more and more people identifying as women and as lesbians, making decisions about the Dyke March, so-

PETTERSEN: Right. *Men. Men* who are identifying as women and lesbians.

CAPONE: -you know, the infiltration started a while ago.

PETTERSEN: Right.

SHERRI: That's right.

PETTERSEN: Okay, then it's really not the Dyke March, it's really not our march. And the observation is that you were crashing their party, right? I mean, their party, even though they had theirs the night before.

VANESSA: There's a joke amongst lesbians at this point that it's 'Dick March' because we're clearly not welcome, you know, and that's sad, you know, it's kind of a joke, but it's not. It's not a joke when we're not welcome in our own environment, and we're threatened with violence.

PETTERSEN: It's supposed to be for you. So then, what do we do? How can we create another march that's actually led by women that are lesbians, you know what I mean? Why is that so hard for that to happen? Why does it keep getting, you know, taken over and hijacked?

CAPONE: Let me make one point about the kind of the generational stuff around 'cause- some of the people that were harassing us and attacking us were very young women. The ones that actually got physically violent with us were women, the other ones that were screaming were the men. Men were, you know, walking alongside them and screaming at us, but it was the actual women that got violent with us. And, um, so it was a generational element too which is that most of these folks were much younger than us. But as far as our group, there were older women in the group, but there were some young women in the group too. So I'm hesitant to chalk it up to just generation 'cause I know many young lesbians that are radical feminists that had they been there, they would have been marching in solidarity with us.

VANESSA: Right, and so we stick to your question, we've done a lot of kind of talking about that after the fact what can we do and part of what we know we've done is inspire other women to come out more in force, and that's what's gonna have to happen. That's gonna have to happen for us to take back what's ours. If we have to insist that- we have to be ready to be confrontational when necessary. And we can't do it with 10 people, we need a lot of bodies. And we need them to be just as angry, and upset, and insistent on what's theirs as we were. And then we can , you know, have a conversation about what we need to happen. We don't want to fight violence with violence. That's not really what we want, we just want to have some space for ourselves, you know.

PETTERSEN: Exactly. *Exactly*. And, strategically, is it a step in the process in getting our own space, getting the L out, is it a step in the process to go to these so-called dyke marches and have a presence? Is that a strategy that's effective for our movement?

[interviewees talk over one another in agreeance]

CAPONE: One of the reasons, I thought, we better march this year, and we better march in a group was because the nature of what's happening in recent years is that we are leaving our lesbian spaces, we are leaving our lesbian clubs and bars and any gathering spaces. And I knew this was the year- I had a feeling too that this, as far as the trans activist side, I felt that this was the year they decided that they were going to take over all the dyke marches, not just our march in San Francisco but this was happening in Vancouver, this was happening in Baltimore. Throughout the country, there was a huge presence of trans activists at dyke marches. And I do believe that whether it was coordinated or whether it was just the spirit of the time it was a feeling that the trans activists- this was gonna be the year they took over the dyke marches. And anybody- it almost like they were looking for targets- anybody who had a different opinion, those women, we're gonna get harassed and attacked.

DIQUARTO: To hear the full interview with Giovanna, Vanessa and Sherri go to WRLN's Wordpress site and click on the interviews tab. You'll hear them talk more about their connection with women in London and the insight they gained through having to grapple with violent attacks from fellow marches at the San Francisco Dyke March.

: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:

DIQUARTO: You are listening to WLRN.

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

:a sustained accordion chord introduces a bouncy, palm-muted strum, bass and drum sample:

:Drawn out accordion note leads into fasted paced gypsy jazz instrumental:

:WLRN Crew, one by one, exclaims

*'Get the L out. Get the L out.
 Get the L out! Get the L out. Get the L out.
 Let's get the L out of here.
 It's time to get the L out of here.
 It's time to get the L out of here! It's time to get the L out of here.
 Let's get the L out of here!':*

PETTERSEN: Yes, sisters, it's time to get the L out of the LGBTQWTF organisations and institutions that no longer respect us. Even our marches intended to demonstrate lesbian pride and visibility by people who hate the L. If it weren't for male domination and male-patterned violence in our society, there would be no problem aligning with men who are gay for the purpose of fighting homophobia in general. But we do not live in a society that views women as anything other than sex objects and servants to men and their families. So aligning with men of any sexual orientation isn't going to work to further our safety and our cause of female freedom from male tyranny. The only thing that will save us is ourselves and our willingness to see ourselves as

something different and separate from the class of males called gay, and the class of people called bisexual, and certainly the class of men who now identify as trans.

Hear me and hear me good: men who identify as trans and march on the streets at lesbian and pride parades are not in the same or similar category as lesbians, especially the ones with baseball bats and ripped up, red-painted, stained t-shirts that say 'I punch TERFs'. There are men who identify as women who do not engage in this behaviour, of course, but the numbers of men who *do* are growing. And progressives and liberals continue to see this growth as something to go along with rather than for the misogyny, discrimination, and violence that it is against lesbians, in particular, but really against any woman who questions trans gender ideology.

The social and political interests of men who identify as trans and women who identify as lesbians are in opposition. This is not to hate men but rather to analyse and understand the culture of misogyny we all operate in, that impacts how things play out. Lesbians are women who do not desire sexual contact with men, and straight men who identify as trans wish to be included by lesbians in our dating pool. If we do not, then we are thought of as intolerant bigots towards the men who wish to impose themselves upon us sexually by saying that they are us. Nope, the L stands alone.

The L is its own thing separate from the world and power dynamics of men. This separation from the GBT alphabet soup is the only way we will regain our visibility and rights as a people. As a class of women who refuse to date men and who desire dating women, or at least accept, support our friends with and embrace women who are sexually involved with other women. You do not need to be sexually active with women to support lesbians and lesbian sovereignty. Vocally supporting lesbians means taking a stand against male entitlement and access to women's bodies.

Heterosexual women gain in their rights when lesbian rights are upheld. Supporting the rights and sexual boundaries of lesbians means supporting the rights and sexual boundaries of all women. Heterosexual women benefit when lesbian rights are supported. This is the consciousness I wish everyone could understand because male dominance, unfairness, and discrimination against women as second-class citizens is real and very measurable. Even liberal feminists understand that women are paid less than men, and that it isn't fair. Even liberal feminists understand that equality between the sexes has not been achieved. So what's the problem? Why can't our society allow lesbians to march with pride and in celebration of their part in the rainbow coalition, free of harassment and violence from men who say that are 'trans dykes' and the

women who support them. I answer that question with another question: why would any patriarchal society accept men as women other than to serve male power interests?

What do men have to gain from being lesbians? According to progressive culture, and media, and police reports, and laws, they have our bodies, physical safety, hearts, minds, and souls to gain is the answer. This ideology of male equals female if I says it does is a ploy for complete access to the most 'disobedient women, the women who refuse to be part of sex servant class to men.' Make no mistake, lesbian feminists are the most feared and threatening kind of woman known to patriarchal society because not only do we keep ourselves away from men as their handmaidens but we have an analysis of male power, and the politics that go with that intends for women to be truly accepted as full human beings with the rights and protections that guarantee our equal participation in society as full citizens. For example, take sports, something that doesn't seem to have much to do with pride parades and lesbian marches, the politics of trans genderism allow for men to compete in women's sporting events and *win* medals, scholarships, titles, trophies, and tournaments. If there was not this violent push in the streets disguised as progressive politics and accepted by liberal and democratic institutions, such as the San Francisco Public Library, I can guarantee you regular women, regardless of their sexual orientation, would be organising against men competing with them in sporting events.

I studied sociology in college, and I have a master's degree in medieval Spanish literature and taught Spanish to undergraduates at the University of Michigan for 5 years. This background has helped me to think about and analyse power dynamics in our society that still leaves a lot hidden to the average liberal or progressive thinker out there. This is especially the case because there is an active and well-funded media blackout on getting our news out to average citizens. Most good, well-intentioned people just cannot see- yet- what the problems are with trans gender politics. But, hopefully, that will change in the next few years, and we will look back on this time period when society could not understand that the fight for civil rights of men to self-ID as women is, in fact, harmful to the rights and protections of women.

I have at least dozens of locals in the Madison area who know who I am and wish I would just shut up and go 'live in the woods away from humans because you are just so disgusting, and unsafe, and hateful, and bigoted, Thistle'. Madison institutions, such as the Crystal Corner Bar, WORT 89.9 FM, Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, Bos Meadery, Common Ground, and the Wil-mar Neighborhood Center have stood by

members of The Degenderettes, a very scary, male-supremacist group that has chapters and members all over the country, including in my home town. The silencing of women and feminist analysis keeps good people in the dark about what is actually happening to the rights of girls and women.

Our culture is so misogynistic that violence, male-supremacists can increase in their power and intimidation of women who do not toe the party line. Male abusers flip the narrative to claim women like me are the aggressors for provoking violence against men who self-ID as women. For the record, I have never threatened violence against any man ever whether he identifies as trans or not. I have never threatened violence against any women either. I have never harassed anyone, targeted anyone's place of employment, trying to get them fired, nor have I sent human feces in the mail to anyone. I have never used acts of intimidation like that on anyone ever at any time. But, sisters, all of what I've just described has happened to me. I wish being quiet and just not talking about the stuff would make the violence stop, and I could just live my life in peace again, but our silence will not protect us. I wish to thank my WLRN sisters for their continuing solidarity and material support as I navigate how to recover from being so hotly pursued by ideology of 'trans-dykness' in Madison and beyond.

Please speak out, speak over, speak through the noise. And speak loud, so I can hear you. I wanna know you. I wanna know your real voice... I wanna hear your real voice. We need each other, and we need to get the L out now more than ever.

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

DIQUARTO: Thanks for listening to WLRN's 31st edition podcast on queer backlash against lesbians. I'm Jenna. The WLRN Youtube channel is in development, and we'd love to get your pictures and images to co-create beautiful videos of all of our podcasts. If you're interested in participating in this project, please send an email to wlrnewscontact@gmail.com. Just put in the subject line 'WLRN podcast videos', and we can roll up our sleeves together and start making videos that will be cherished by our feminist community for years to come.

BECK: WLRN would like to thank our guests this month for sharing their views on lesbian activism. This is Julia Beck. Thanks for tuning in!

NEAULT: If you like what you are hearing and would like to donate to the cause of feminist community radio, please visit our Wordpress site and click on the donate button. Check out our merch tab to get a nice gift in exchange for your donation as well. In addition, if you're interested in joining the team, we are always looking for new volunteers to conduct interviews, write blog posts, post to our Facebook and other social media pages, and do other tasks to keep us moving forwards as a collective of media activist women. Thanks for listening! This is April Neault, signing off for now.

NATASHA: And I'm Natasha. Thanks for tuning in! Next month we will focus our programme on solidarity and sisterhood. Our handcrafted podcasts always come out the 1st Thursday of the month, so look for it on Thursday, December 6th. If you'd like to receive our newsletter that notifies you when each podcast, music show, and interview is released, please sign up for our newsletter on the WLRN Wordpress news site. Stay strong in the struggle, and thanks for listening.

SHE OWL: This is Sekhmet She Owl, signing off on another addition of WLRN's monthly handcrafted podcast. You can find us on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Soundcloud, in addition to our Wordpress site. Thanks for listening, until next time. Over and Out.

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

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

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

:driving acoustic guitar fades in:

:vocal harmonies:

"...But how will we find our way out of this?

What is the antidote for the patriarchal kiss?

How will we find what needs to be shown?

And then after that

Where is home?

Tell me

Where is my home

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

:lyrics fade out: