

Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies

Colleen Lutz Clemens, Ph.D.



A Member of The Pennsylvania Alliance for Design of Open Textbooks



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About PA-ADOPT

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About the Author

Colleen Lutz Clemens, Ph.D., professor of Non-Western Literatures and Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, earned her Ph.D. in Post-Colonial Literature with a certificate in Gender Studies at Lehigh University. Her dissertation focuses on issues of veiling in literature and studies the intersection of women's issues in art and politics (Full CV).



Dr. Colleen Lutz Clemens,
Ph.D (she/her/hers)

Previously, she earned her M.Ed. in English Education at DeSales University while teaching twelfth grade English in the public system. She earned her undergraduate degrees in English and French Education from Penn State University where she was a Schreyer Scholar focusing on French drama.

Her academic work has been published in Feminist Formations, Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing, South Asian Review, and NCTE's English Journal and online at World Literature Today. She serves as an academic consultant for the Contemporary Literary Criticism series, where she focuses on postcolonial writing by women, for the Norton Anthology of World Literature, and Oxford University Press's Gender Studies. She reviews novels by postcolonial authors for World Literature Today.

She enjoys working with fellow teachers and is a frequent contributor to Learning for Justice, with her articles on masculinity having some of the highest unique visits for the entire blog site. She has worked with both those working in classrooms and in corporations to facilitate discussions about privilege, equity, and inclusion. Her entire 25 years of teaching have been dedicated to ensuring all students are heard and valued.

Some Notes for Students

I hope you will approach this text more as a participant in a conversation and less as a passive recipient of knowledge. You will find written content alongside videos and podcasts meant to reinforce the concepts in that section. Transcripts for all of the audio texts can be found the appendix.

A note about the audio and video texts: there may be some explicit language in these. Many of the topics covered in this book arouse high emotion, so such language is to be expected. Do not discount the main argument in these texts simply because some of the language feels emotional. Links to the podcasts will take you to the full-length versions of the episode, but only the Table Talk, which is the main discussion of the podcast episode, will be relevant to the listener for the purposes of this book, so the transcriptions will only go to the end of that first segment.

Be aware of your own wellbeing when working through the topics in this text. If you need help, reach out to the resources at your institution or

- ◆ The Trevor Project: Get started by texting 'START' to 678-678 or go to their website where you can chat with a counselor
- ◆ Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Dial 988
- ◆ National Sexual Assault Hotline: Call 800.656.HOPE (4673) to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area

All research is supported with a link to the source material. Instead of providing citations at the end of the book, I have embedded links that will take you directly to the source material. In 2023 when this book was composed, all of those links were functioning, but you may find when using this book that a link may have been broken in the meantime.

Key Concepts

This list of Key Concepts may help guide your reading (each term is linked to its definition in the book):

- [gender](#)
- [sex](#)
- [intersex](#)
- [gender identity](#)
- [cisgender](#)
- [transgender](#)
- [gender norms](#)
- [gender equity](#)
- [masculinity](#)
- [femininity](#)
- [gender-based violence \(GBV\)](#)
- [human trafficking](#)
- [intersectionality](#)
- [maternal health care](#)
- [feminization of poverty](#)
- [biosocial](#)
- [biological essentialism](#)
- [social constructionism](#)
- [patriarchal societies](#)
- [stratification](#)
- [suffrage](#)
- [slavery](#)
- [child marriage](#)
- [reproductive rights](#)

Some Notes for Teachers

Teaching about Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) sometimes feels like a balancing act: there is much content to teach but we are teaching this content to human beings who might be thinking about these things for the first time. In my decade of teaching WGS, I have found that the human always takes precedence over the content, and so I emphasize self care and try to remind students to be gentle with themselves as they learn to question everything about themselves and their surroundings, kind of like the fish who doesn't know it is in water until it is taken out of it, gasping for breath while it looks around at the world outside the fishbowl.

Here are some ways that I try to ensure students know that their safety is my priority as they begin this journey with me:

- I do a short pronoun survey on the first day of class. I explain what I am asking on the survey since some students may have never thought about pronouns before. I also ask if there is a name I should be calling them that is different from what the class list might indicate in case the student has not changed their name officially but does not go by their birth or "dead" name. I also post a [bitmoji](#) of my pronouns (they have a lot of great LGBTQ+ options) on the course pages, so before the course even starts, students know I care about their identities. GLSEN also has some great images.

- I post on my learning management system a list of campus resources that are available for them if they feel they want to talk with someone. I also post resources beyond the classroom and show it to them, mentioning that these resources are available 24/7.

Some of these include:

- ✦ [The Trevor Project](#): Get started by texting 'START' to 678-678 or go to their website where you can chat with a counselor
- ✦ [Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#): Dial 988
- ✦ [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#): Call 800.656.HOPE (4673) to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area
- ✦ For a fuller list of online and phone resources, you can visit [this list of support hotlines](#).



Pronouns Graphic

- I put a trigger warning on my syllabus and point it out to them. As I state in [my essay on Learning for Justice](#), “When I put a trigger warning on my syllabus, I do not see the act as coddling. Rather, I see it as an act of nurturing. We cannot know all that our students carry with them into our classrooms. This awareness compels me to ensure that my students can feel safe in my classroom. I still expect them to be challenged rigorously by the texts I teach. My trigger warning is not a pass for lack of engagement. Instead, it is an escape route if a student starts to panic or have an emotional response that would make it hard for them to concentrate or remain in class safely.”
- I have a zoom background from an equity organization on at as I am greeting students in online classes. I find backgrounds to be distracting, so I turn it off once I am beginning the day’s class. I want students to be greeted with a new affirming background every day. [It Gets Better](#) offers a bunch of free ones (you might have to turn on the mirroring feature in zoom for a few of these, I found). [Human Rights Campaign](#) offers more. I created a folder on my computer of all my backgrounds so I wouldn’t need to seek them out every day.

This book is meant to provide a foundation for students to learn the terms and concepts in women’s and gender studies. What is missing is the voices of people within the field writing about the topics, voices that should be part of the course discussion. Historically, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) people’s voices have been left out of the conversations. For this reason I have added suggested readings at the end of some sections. Suggested readings are texts that are still under copyright that you might consider seeking out to add primary source material to your lessons. I link to some of them as resources (and links may change as time passes), but please follow copyright laws if using them for your classes.

You can find a [library of lesson plans and activities](#) on many of the readings in this text. This is a catalog of teaching resources I wrote to accompany some of the topics in this text. These free resources are all available for your use (start at Chapter 17 to go directly to the teaching ideas) in the classroom or to inspire your own teaching ideas.

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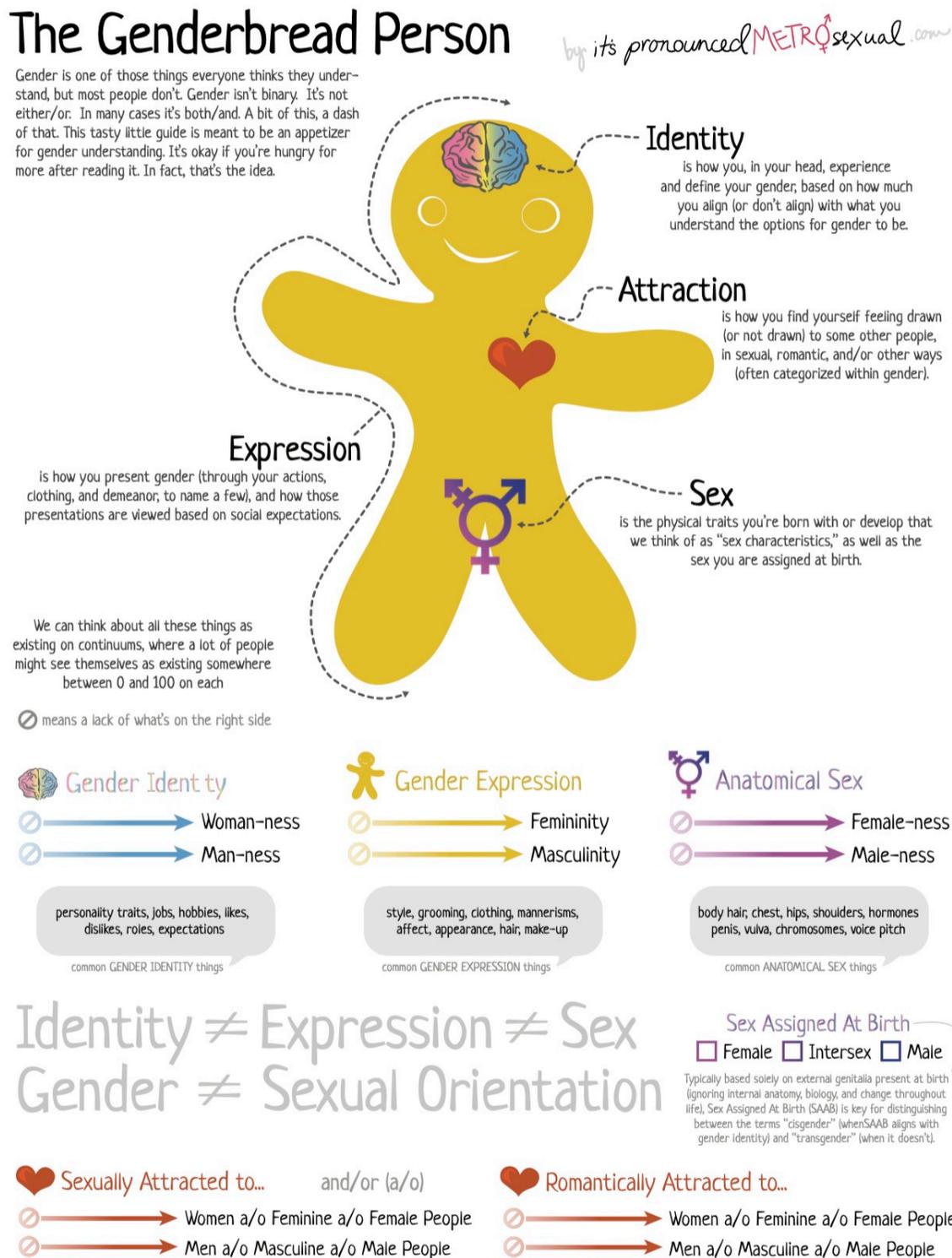
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Gender

What is Gender?

Gender can mean many different things. To understand what gender means, first one needs to know what the term **sex** means in the context of identity—because sex and gender are not the same, even though people confuse the terms.



Genderbread Person Version 4 created and uncopyrighted 2017 by Sam Killermann [For a bigger bite, read more at www.genderbread.org](http://www.genderbread.org)

Provided by The Gingerbread Person (online version)

A person's anatomical sex is determined through biology. One might quickly think of external genitalia, but the body has other markers of sex: chromosomes, hormones, and internal genitalia, for example. Sex used to be thought of as a

binary by many people (there have always been people who knew there was something beyond this binary); that meant one's body was either a "girl" body or a "boy" body according to medicine, families, and other institutions. However, such language did not take into account that not every "body" is sexed in that "either/or" way. Bodies can have a combination of girl and boy biology; when a body has such a combination, that person's sex identity is **intersex**. Sex assigned at birth is a way to talk about one's sex that may not align with their gender.

Gender (sometimes called **gender identity**) has nothing to do with biology and everything to do with one's emotional self. Gender is about how one feels in regards to their place in society and how they define themselves.

Gender Revolution Trailer



[Watch the Trailer on YouTube \(Go to "Gender Revolution" trailer transcript\)](#)

Gender and sex do not always align, nor do they need to. When one's sex and gender align, that person would use the term **cisgender**. When one's sex and gender do not align, that person would use the term **transgender**. "Cis" is a term from chemistry that means "two particular atoms or groups lie on the same side of a given plane in the molecule." That's where gender terminology for alignment got its name. "Trans" means to cross over; hence the word (**always** used as an adjective) "transgender." So, a person who is sexed female and has a male gender identity is transgender while a person who is sexed female and has a female gender identity is cisgender. And those are just a few of the dozens of genders people are.

Gavin Grimm

When Gavin Grimm was 15, he reintroduced himself to his classmates “as the boy he knew himself to be.” He used the bathroom for boys with permission from his principal.

At first, I used the nurse’s office restroom, but after a couple of weeks the long trips back and forth felt stigmatizing and unnecessary. I was using men’s restrooms in restaurants and shopping malls, so I told the principal I would like to use the boys’ restrooms at school, too. I thought then, perhaps naively, that this commonsense “issue” would be resolved quietly and privately, as it should have been.



"Gavin Grimm" by Pax Ahimsa Gethen is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)
[Full Text of Gavin’s Opinion Piece in the Washington Post](#)

But soon some members of his community demanded he not use the men’s room and instead use a unisex, single-stall bathroom. During two school board meetings on the matter, members of the public openly discussed Gavin’s “genitals and restroom usage in front of reporters and television cameras” and called him a “freak.” Feeling his civil rights were being denied, Gavin filed a lawsuit against the Gloucester County School Board using Title IX which “prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.” Ultimately, the case was almost heard by the Supreme Court, which would have created federal law determining what rights transgender students have in school. Gavin became a symbol for students all over the United States eager to have their voices heard by the Supreme Court, an honor which left him “humbled.” In March 2017, the Supreme Court

announced that it would not hear Gavin's case and sent it back to the Fourth Circuit of Appeals. Although some saw this announcement as a blow to advocacy for transgender rights, Gavin continues his fight within the legal system and is now an activist. Supporters have taken to using the hashtag #standwithgavin to show support for the transgender community. Gavin graduated high school in June 2017, not being able to use the men's bathroom that he fought to use.

When one's sex assigned at birth does not align with one's gender, a person may or may not participate in gender affirming medical care. A person does not need to have any kind of medical intervention in order to be transgender. Someone is transgender when they say they are transgender. They are not required to cross some kind of arbitrary medical finishing line in order to be transgender. What medical care someone has done is no one's business. Asking someone about their anatomy or medical history is harmful and no one's business.

There are many, many more ways to think about the relationship between sex and gender. Facebook has over fifty choices for gender on one's profile! Anyone can change their profile to reflect their gender identity.



Photo by [Alexander Grey](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Pronouns

Knowing a person's pronouns and using the correct pronouns for a person are important ways to ensure everyone's identity is recognized. In the past, activists tried to add new words to the English language to accommodate more genders. These neopronouns are used by some folks, but for some other people, the singular they has created some space to push against the feminine/masculine binary in singular pronouns, i.e., she/he.

Gender neutral pronouns

The following chart is a quick reference guide to traditional and gender neutral pronouns. Four versions of gender neutral pronouns are included. Many others exist, but this chart should help you conjugate any type of pronoun.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive adjective	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive	Pronunciation
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	pronounced as it looks
He	Him	His	His	Himself	pronounced as it looks
Ze	Zim	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Pronounced as it looks
Sie/Zie	Hir	Hir	Hirs	Hirself	pronounced: zee, here, here, heres, hereself
Zie	Zir	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	pronounced: zee, zere, zere, zeres, zereself
Ey	Em	Eir	Eirs	Eirself	pronounced: A, M, ear, ears, earsef
Per	Per	Pers	Pers	Persself	pronounced as it looks
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themself	Pronounced as it looks

Chart provided by [Forge \(Online PDF Gender neutral Pronouns Chart\)](#)

The singular they is quickly gaining more and more attention in the media and writing and teaching circles for its inclusive nature. Once considered acceptable and used by authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer and Jane Austen, the singular they fell out of favor in style guides in the early 20th century.

For example, in their *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White command writers to stop misusing they:

“Do not use they when the antecedent is a distributive expression such as each, each one, everybody, every one, many a man. Use the singular pronoun.” The authors also caution writers against using they with the antecedents anybody, somebody and someone. (In the first 1918 edition of *Elements*, Strunk ruled that he was the default unless the antecedent was feminine.)

Later, the feminist movement of the 1970s asked writers to consider the deferral to masculine pronouns to represent all people. *Vis*, *cos*, *zir* and *zim* came into being, but their use was limited.

Now, the singular *they* is addressing another problem with English grammar: There is no room for gender identities other than the *he/she* binary of singular pronouns. But the tide is changing when it comes to the grammar of the singular *they*, and as writers and speakers, we can either be on the right or wrong side of stylistic history. Language matters. It reflects our culture and our constructions of identity. If we do not make room in our language, it seems we cannot make room in our society for anyone who does not fall on either side of the slash between *he* and *she*. As we question gender binaries, we must question our language—and the way we use it.



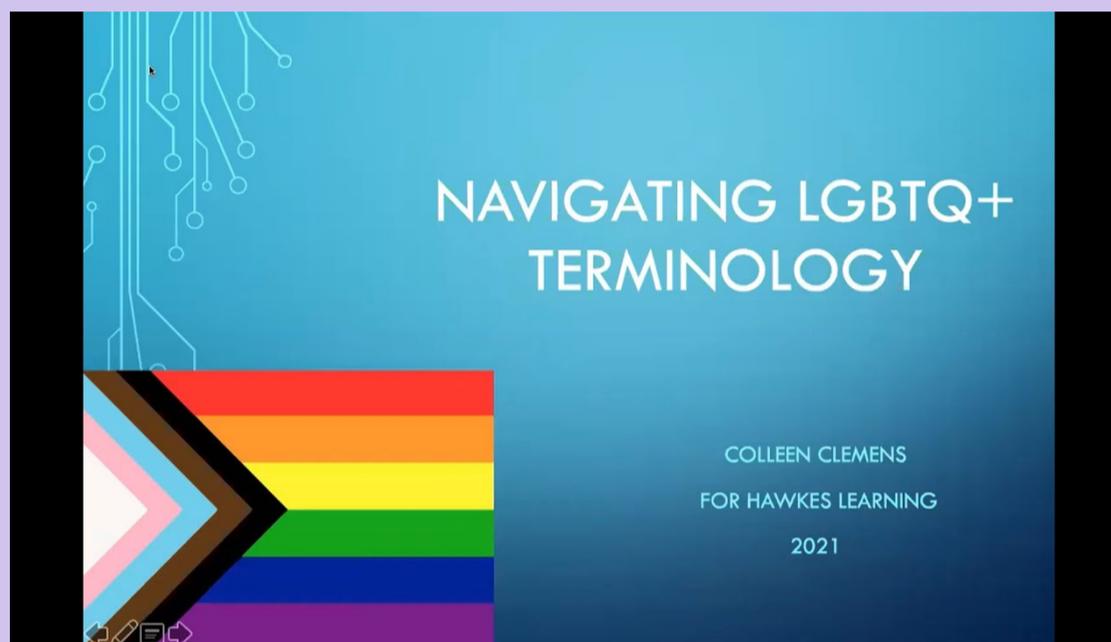
Image: Homegrown

Print sources and language associations are setting the precedent by adopting the use of the singular *they* in their publications. *The Washington Post* uses it: "The Post drops the 'Mike' - and the hyphen in 'e-mail'". The American Dialect Society (ADS) named it 2015's Word of the Year. Ben Zimmer, chair of the ADS' New Words Committee, explained, "In the past year, new expressions of gender identity have generated a deal of discussion, and singular *they* has become a particularly significant element of that conversation. ... While many novel gender-neutral pronouns have been proposed, *they* has the advantage of already being part of the language." Because this word is already in the language—even though many people consider its use to be incorrect—it may have more of a chance of extending gender fluidity into our language in ways that other words have fallen short.

Using the singular they is an opportunity to affirm gender identity and fluidity, and as a way to open to the door to other gender-neutral terms. The he/she binary's exclusionary nature harms the work feminist, transgender, genderqueer and intersex activists (among others) and their allies are doing. We can make spaces for all genders one sentence at a time, thanks to the resurgence of the singular they.

A Note on Sexuality: Gender and Sexuality are NOT the same.

Navigating LGBTQ+ Terminology



Watch on YouTube: Dr. Colleen Lutz Clemens explains key terms—but remember, these terms are always evolving. [Read Terminology lecture transcript.](#)



Love is Love Flag
Photo by [Yoav Hornung](#) on [Unsplash](#)

While this text does not address sexuality, it is important for readers to know that even though these two terms are commonly conflated, they are not the same thing. For a thorough look at the terminology of sexuality, please review the lecture above.

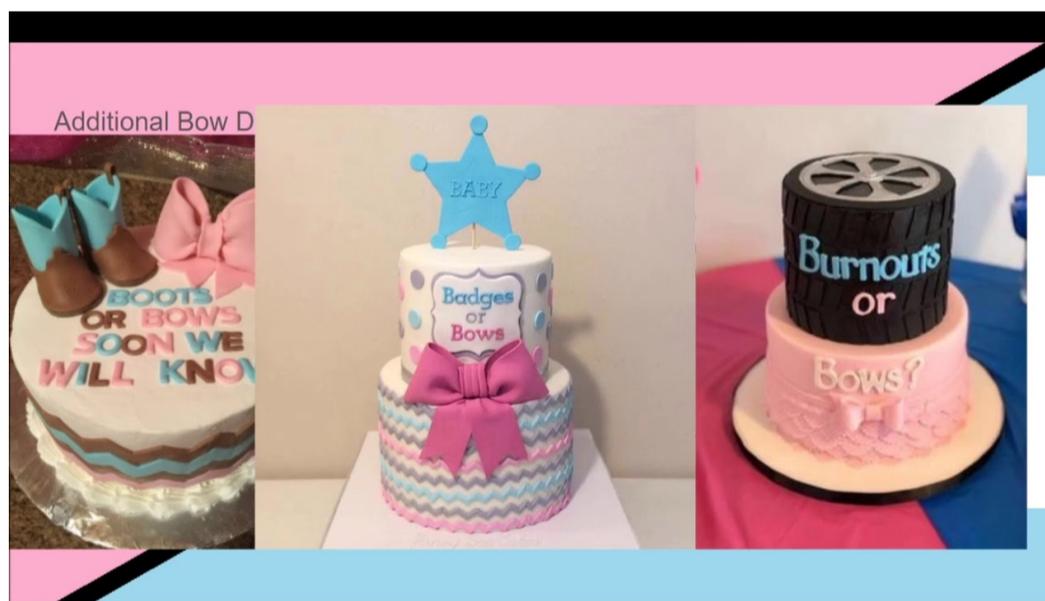
Have You Ever Been Invited to a “Gender Reveal Party”?

Gender reveal parties are a popular type of baby shower. There are almost a million videos on YouTube sharing families’ reactions to seeing blue or pink balloons rise up from a box, blue or pink powder rain from a piñata, or blue or pink icing be revealed upon slicing a cake. Now that you know the difference between sex and gender, what do you notice about the name of these parties? Should they be called “gender reveals” or “sex reveals”?

Are they revealing gender? Or are they actually revealing the baby’s sex? When a baby is *in utero*, no one can know the baby’s gender because no one knows what the baby will feel about their gender identity. The popularity of the name of these parties shows how easy it is for people to mix up the terms “sex” and “gender.” From now on, you will know that such parties are really sex reveal parties!

Such parties are not inherently bad, but they may demonstrate there is less of a willingness to consider gender fluidity when the child grows older.

Satirical Video About Gender Reveal Parties



This humorous video points out the strong desire people might have to know the gender of their baby when really all they can know is the sex of their baby. [Watch Gender Reveal Video on YouTube-closed captioned.](#) [Go to Gender Reveal video transcript.](#)

Where Does Gender Come From?

There are many theories about how gender or ideas about gender are formed. The two main schools of thought about gender formation relate to biology and society. Some theorists believe these theories intersect into a **biosocial** idea of gender.

People who follow **biological essentialism** believe gender comes from biology. This popular children's rhyme illustrates essentialist theories of gender:

"What are little boys made of?

What are little boys made of?

Frogs and snails,

And puppy-dogs' tails;

That's what little boys are made of."

"What are little girls made of?

What are little girls made of?

Sugar and spice,

And all that's nice;

That's what little girls are made of."

Nursery Rhyme: What Are Little Boys Made Of?



[Watch Boys Video on YouTube - open captioned](#)

Nursery Rhyme: What Are Little Girls Made Of?



[Watch Girls Video on YouTube - open captioned](#)

Essentialist theories argue that biology or nature determine how one acts. The rhyme suggests that girls are born sweet and soft while boys are born rough and tough. Ideas such as "boys will be boys" and "girls are drama queens" suggest that one's roles are determined by the differences in brains and bodies and that society is an insignificant factor in one's behaviors when it comes to gender.

Those who believe **social construction** theories of gender may find essentialism limiting and argue that society *teaches* boys to be rough and tough and girls to be sweet and soft, but that they are not born that way. Social construction ideas

about gender argue that nurture, not nature, determines how a child might perform their gender. Neuroscientist Lise Eliot, in her book *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*, shows that there are very few biological differences between the brains of boys and girls. Social constructionists use the lack of difference to illustrate that gendered behavior has little to do with biology; therefore, it must have to do with the way children are taught **gender norms**, lessons on what is thought to be “normal” behavior for an entire gender. Gender norms are taught from the moment a baby is born and a pink or blue card is put in the nursery. From what colors are considered boy (blue) or girl (pink) colors, to what toys are deemed appropriate for girls (dolls) and boys (trucks), to what kinds of careers are encouraged for girls (teaching, nursing) and boys (engineering, construction), gender norming is a powerful way to construct children’s ideas about what girls and boys “can” and “cannot” do.

**What would happen if a baby were raised without gender norms?
This short film is based on a story that imagines just that!
BABY X | Animated Short Film based on Lois Gould’s 1978 Short Story**



[Watch the short film on YouTube.](#) Closed Captioning accurate on YouTube

A biosocial theorist would see both elements of biological essentialism and social construction as important to gender formation. But how do these theories relate to our everyday lives? Consider the following questions: Have you ever paid close attention to commercials on television or advertisements in magazines? How are males and females portrayed? Are certain stereotypes (widely held and oversimplified beliefs about people and things) or gender norms reinforced through these advertisements? In studies on advertisements, researchers found

that girls were more likely to be portrayed as shy and giggly while boys were seen as more powerful and assertive. Can you think of other gender norms?

Questions to Consider

- What does gender mean?
- How do gender norms affect your life? Your friends' lives?
- How do you think gender identity is formed?

Suggested Readings

- Judith Lorber, "The Social Construction of Gender"
- Janet Mock, "Redefining Realness"
- Liam Lair, "Navigating Transness in the U.S.: Understanding the Legacies of Eugenics"
- Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism"
- Tina Vasquez, "It's Time to End the Long History of Feminism Failing Transgender Women"
- Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism"
- [68 Terms That Describe Gender Identity and Expression](#)

Why do gender norms matter?

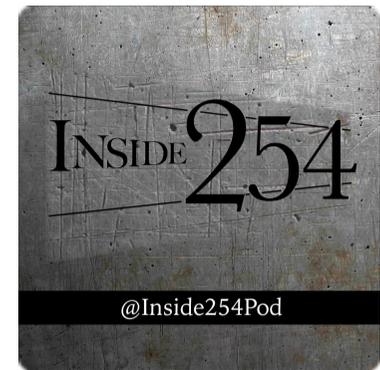
According to The United Nations High Commission on Human Rights: "A gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives."

Gender norms can limit people's lives, so we must be conscious of them.

Femininity

Discussing gender norms is different than discussing individuals, i.e., discussing femininity does not mean we are discussing all women. This kind of confusion leads to hurt feelings and anger in discussions about gender, so being clear to separate the structural from the individual is important. The following podcast episode explains the importance of separating the individual from the structural (click the following icon on the right to take you to the audio):

Episode 5: Structural v. Individual



["Structural v.
Individual" Episode
Transcript](#)

What might be some gender norms connected to femininity?

Take a moment and make a list of words you associate with femininity. Ask others what their list might be. Words associated with femininity might be:

- Quiet
- Demure
- “Sassy”
- Domestic
- Physically weaker than men

Remember, gender norms are different than the characteristics of specific women you know—we separate the personal and individual from the structural.

Confining and limiting ideas about femininity can affect women in several ways. Here are a few ways that women’s labor and earning potential are affected by gender norms (all bullets from "Beliefs about Gender" study):

- Women only make up 26% of workers in computer and math jobs even though more women than men earn advanced degrees and make up half the labor force
- Women are less confident in subjects such as math, which can lead to women unconsciously participating in “occupational sorting,” when women’s own thinking about their “limitations” stops them from seeking higher-paying career paths

- Women are less likely to speak up in discussions at work and often discredit their abilities and skills
- Women who are perceived as “warm” are perceived more favorably by male colleagues, but this trait does not translate into men’s evaluation of women’s competence in the workplace.

Gender norms surrounding women can also be harmful—and cause a second harm to women of color when the norms are rooted in whiteness. It is easy to forget that the images we see of women in the media are constructed and do not depict reality. The video very quickly shows how a woman’s image is transformed after hours of effort and computer manipulation:



“Sherm for Disabled And Here” by Sherm is licensed under Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

No. 1 Dove: Campaign for Real Beauty



[Watch Dove Campaign on YouTube - music audio](#)

Bodies are differently-abled, are of different races, genders and sizes. Feminist practice fights beauty norms and remembers that all bodies matter.

Because of rigid standards of beauty, women find themselves spending much of their time and energy trying to change their bodies. For example, invasive plastic surgeries done in the United States (a small percentage of these may be gender-affirming surgeries) totaled over ten million procedures in 2013. In 2020, the top five invasive (and usually not covered by health insurance) plastic surgeries were nose reconstruction, eyelid surgery, face lifts, liposuction, and breast augmentation. Jean Kilbourne has been studying the problems with the depictions of women in the media and the gender norms that arise from such depictions for decades. Her work starting with the first *Killing Us Softly* has helped audiences understand the implications of these depictions.



In a lush green forest, a Black non-binary person smiles while twirling the skirt of their flowing leaf print dress and dancing with their cane in hand. Their head is shaved and they wear glasses, gold earrings, and gold sandals. Image by Justin Katigbak on [Disabled and Here](#) is licensed under [Attribution 4.0 International \(CC BY 4.0\)](#)

Masculinity

Remember, discussing gender norms is different than discussing individuals, i.e., discussing masculinity does not mean we are discussing all men. This kind of confusion leads to hurt feelings and anger in discussions about gender, so being clear to separate the structural from the individual is important.

What might be some gender norms connected to masculinity? Take a moment and make a list of words you associate with masculinity. Ask others what their list might be. Words associated with masculinity might be:

- Powerful
- Strong
- Unemotional
- Breadwinner
- Violent

Remember, gender norms are different than the characteristics of specific men you know—we separate the personal and individual from the structural.

Jackson Katz on masculinity in his film *Tough Guise*

"The climactic scene where Toto pulls back the curtain to reveal a nervous, tragic man, pretending to be the great and powerful Oz, represents more than just the classic moment in American cinematic history, rather, it also gave us a metaphor for looking at masculinity in a new way. Not as a fixed, inevitable state of being, but rather as a projection, a pose, a guise, an act, a mask that men often wear to shield our vulnerability and hide our humanity. This mask can take a lot of forms but one that's really important for us to look at in our culture at the millennium is what I call the Tough Guise. The front that so many men put up that's based on an extreme notion of masculinity that emphasizes toughness and physical strength and gaining the respect and admiration of others through violence or the implicit threat of it. Boys and young men learn early on that being a so-called "real man" means you have to take on the "tough guise," in other words you have to show the world only certain parts of yourself that the dominant culture has defined as manly."

Watch [the Tough Guise trailer](#) if you want to learn more.

What is Violent or “Toxic” Masculinity?

“Toxic masculinity” is tricky. It’s a phrase that—misunderstood—can seem wildly insulting, even bigoted. Recently, after tweeting about toxic masculinity and its relationship to violence, [I ended up the topic of discussion](#) on a major nightly news show and the recipient of the online harassment that regularly follows such discussions these days. The phrase “toxic masculinity” is derived from studies that focus on violent behavior perpetrated by men, and—this is key—is designed to describe *not masculinity itself*, but a form of *gendered behavior* that results when expectations of “what it means to be a man” go wrong. The Good Men Project [defines toxic masculinity](#) this way:

Toxic masculinity is a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It’s the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly “feminine” traits—which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being hypersexual—are the means by which your status as “man” can be taken away.

Discussing toxic masculinity is not saying men are bad or evil, and the term is NOT an assertion that men are naturally violent. In fact, this conversation was started by men. ([Jackson Katz’s TED Talk on the subject](#) is a useful starting point.) It was also inspired by a feminist movement that had done much to unpack what might be called “toxic femininity” (think eating disorders that seek to control one’s eating and environment). After the good work feminism did to try to find better ways to teach girls about their options, men began to take notice and apply those same gender-construct theories to their own experience.

Decades of study show that men are not naturally violent. But in a culture that equates masculinity with physical power, some men and boys will invariably feel like they are failing at “being a man.” For these particular men and boys, toxic masculinity has created a vacuum in their lives that can be filled through violence: through the abuse of women and of children in their care, through affiliation with the so-called “[alt-right](#)” or extremist groups, through gun violence or any other promise of restored agency that those parties wrongly equate with manhood.

The stakes of this conversation couldn’t be higher. When we talk about toxic masculinity, we do so not to insult or to injure. We do so to spare men from

thinking that there is only one way to be a man—or any other gendered identity, for that matter—and give them the space to express their gender in ways that feel authentic and safe for themselves. When we talk about toxic masculinity, we are doing so out of love for the boys and men in all of our lives.

“Toxic masculinity” can sound like a lot of different things, such as the following:

“Boys Will Be Boys”

I am on the playground with my young daughter. A boy, a stranger, knocks her over, leaving my child crying in the sand. The mother tells me, “Boys will be boys” and neglects to ask her son to apologize to my child.

We have all heard it: on the playground, in a teacher conference, in the faculty room. In my 20 years as a teacher, I have heard “boys will be boys” more times than I can count, most often during discussions of a boy’s behavior. But when we unpack this comment, we see that it perpetuates negative ideas about what we expect from our boys, particularly when it comes to aggression.

First, the phrase implies that boys are biologically wired to be violent, rough and tumble—and that they should be excused from any consequences for that behavior. When our culture buys into the idea that the “male sex” (not gender) is hardwired for violence, we can excuse behaviors that hurt others physically and emotionally.



[Michelle Ding](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Despite what '90s self-help books may say, when discussing sex (not gender), men are not from Mars, and women aren't from Venus. Neuroscientist Lise Eliot has done extensive work to show that the brains of girls and boys are not all that different. Such biological essentialism argues that "boys will be boys" because their biology naturally leans toward violence and aggression. When such a belief is upheld in a classroom, it contributes to a toxic foundation to boys' senses of self.

Second, this phrase—and the other two I address below—replicates the idea that there is only one way to be a boy. If we shift the discussion from sex (the biological elements) to gender (the psychic elements), we find the freedom to disrupt this one-size-fits-all way to be a boy.

Understanding how people identify allows us to define gender differently. If we think about gender as distinct from sex, as the way someone feels as opposed to something that is biological, we can no longer excuse negative behaviors in or out of the classroom with the line, "Boys will be boys." As The Good Men Project reminds us, toxic masculinity is "a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designating manhood as defined by violence, sex, status and aggression." Let's give boys more credit by deleting "boys will be boys" from our conversations.

“He Does That Because He Likes You”

I am in junior high school. A boy snaps my bra in the hallway. When I inform the teacher, she tells me he did it because “he likes me,” and he doesn’t know any other way to tell me.

Toxic masculinity relies on notions that boys are incapable of expressing themselves through means other than violence. When we dismiss boys’ aggression as evidence of affection, as with “boys will be boys,” we sell all children short. To girls, the message is, “That violent act to which you did not consent means that he feels love for you.” And the message to boys is, “When you feel an emotion, you should express it through violence.”

Trailer for *The Mask You Live In*



[Watch The Mask Trailer on YouTube](#) - [Read trailer transcript](#)

This kind of thinking implies that it’s strange for boys to having feelings of love that are disconnected from feelings of violence. In a time when our country is coming to terms with the pervasiveness of sexual assault and sexual harassment, parents and educators must think carefully about what we tell our children.

When we tell our boys it’s normal to show that they like someone by hurting them, we don’t just excuse toxic masculinity—we encourage it. We are effectively not teaching our children what safe and consensual relationships look like at the moments when they are just starting to come of age sexually.

“Locker Room Talk”

I am an adult on a talk show discussing politics and sexual assault. A man tells me that grabbing women by their genitalia is “locker room talk.” I tell him that I have more faith in men than he must have.

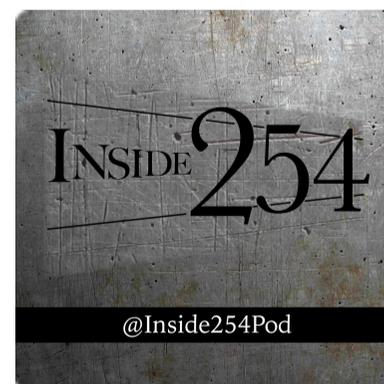
For many secondary students, school is where they find themselves in a locker room for the first time. Because they are separated by sex and/or gender, locker rooms are often regarded as spaces where people can “let loose” and “be themselves.” For students, locker rooms can become places to study what it means to be one’s sex. (I wish I could say “gender,” but locker and bathroom laws still need to be legislated fairly in many states).

Because, as a woman, I am prohibited from the space of a men’s locker room, it becomes mysterious, something men can define. I can’t know what men say in men’s locker rooms. But I can know that when the phrase “locker room talk” is deployed to excuse aggressive sexual acts that do not involve consent, we as a culture are using a more advanced version of “boys will be boys.”

I respect the boys and men in my life too much to have such low expectations for them. Their biology does not demand that they become assaulters. And their biology does not necessitate that they speak about women in vulgar ways. Our constructed beliefs about masculinity teach them that, in order to “man up,” they must perform their masculinity in aggressive ways—or have their masculinity questioned.

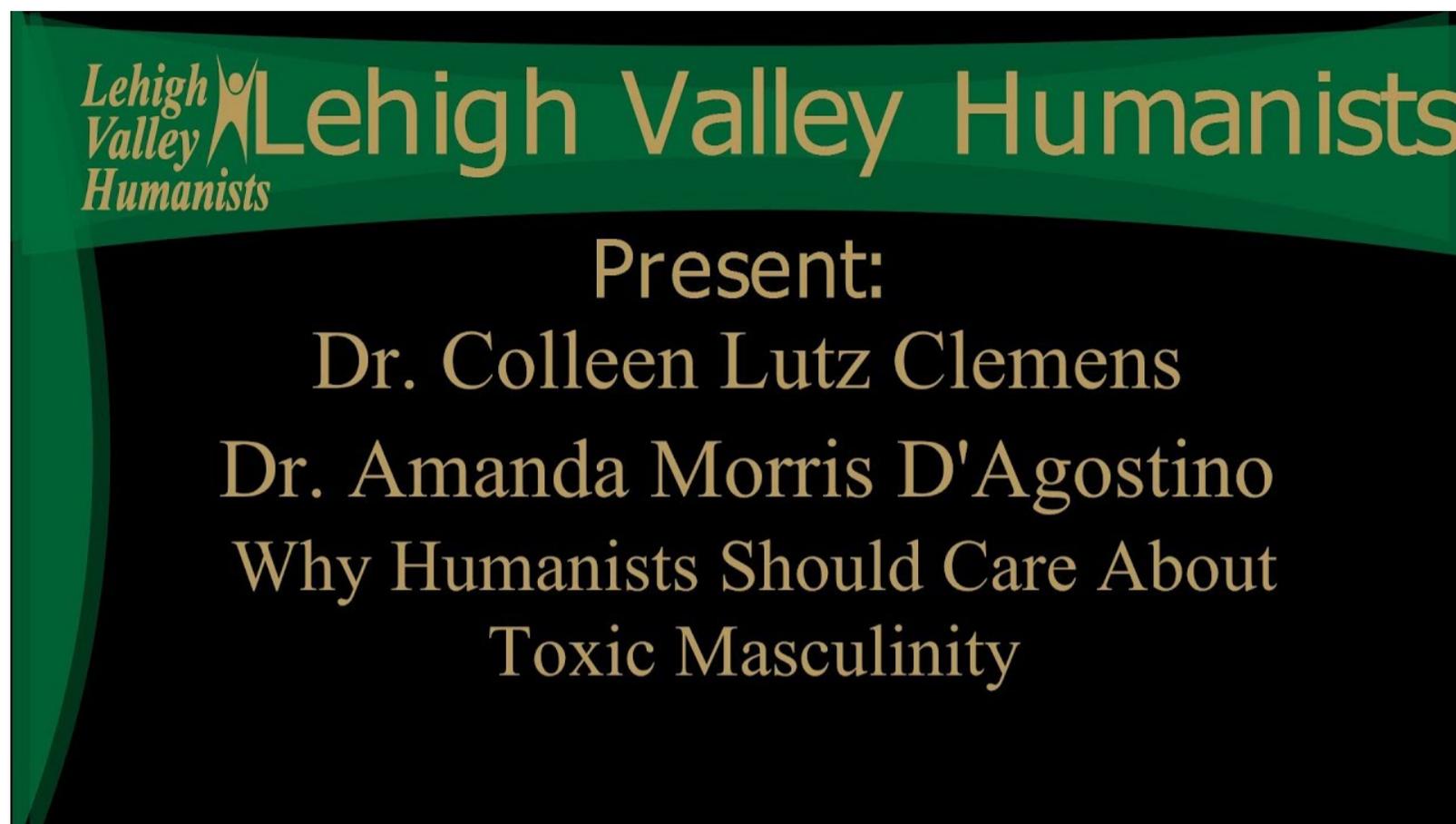
The boys in our lives deserve better, and we must work to dismantle the cultural messages and societal structures that promote toxic masculinity. We have a lot of work ahead, but we can begin one phrase at a time.

Episode 26: Toxic Masculinity



["Toxic Masculinity"
Episode Transcript](#)

A Conversation on Toxic Masculinity



[Watch Toxic Masculinity Conversation on YouTube.](#) [Read Presentation Transcript.](#)

Questions to Consider

- When is the last time you were aware of a gender norm in your life?
- Is masculinity always toxic? Is there a toxic ideal of femininity as well?
- What effect do these norms have on people in relation to their own and others' bodies?

Suggested Reading

- Katz, Jackson, "Memo to Media: Manhood, Not Guns or Mental Illness, Should Be Central in Newtown Shooting" (2013)
- bell hooks, "Men: Comrades in Struggle" (1984)
- Ijeoma A., "Because You're a Girl"
- Meda Chesney-Lind, "Mean Girls, Bad Girls, or Just Girls: Corporate Media Hype and the Policing of Girlhood"
- Judith Gardiner, "Women's Friendships, Popular Culture, and Gender Theories"

- L. Ayu Saraswati, "Cosmopolitan Whiteness: The Effects and Affects of Skin Whitening Advertisements in Transnational Indonesia"
- *As Nature Made Him*, David Reimer
- C. J. Pascoe, "Making Masculinity: Adolescence, Identity, and High School"
- Allan Johnson, "Patriarchy, The System: An It, Not a He, a Them, or an Us"

Feminisms

What is Feminism?

Ask 100 people what the word feminism means, and you will probably get 100 different answers. Some people think feminism is the most important set of beliefs while others think it is the most damaging. Some think it is inclusive of everyone while others think it is exclusionary and elitist. Some think it is still relevant while others think we have moved beyond the need for it. For all of these reasons, scholars do not speak of feminism as a monolithic, singular term but in the plural to signify the multiplicity of meanings associated with the word.

Perhaps the best way to learn about feminism is with an historical perspective—specifically for the purposes of this text the history of the United States and Britain, even though all corners of the world have expressions of feminism. Global feminist movements are discussed in different ways or may have different “waves.” When scholars speak about feminism, we often speak of it as in “waves.” Whether or not you identify with the term “feminist,” understanding what each wave of feminism is will give you foundation for understanding the word. Each of these waves is the focus of catalogs of books, so what follows is a **BRIEF** introduction to these complex social movements.

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton



First-Wave Feminism

When one thinks of first-wave feminism, one might think of suffrage or voting rights, abolition—when feminists were not simply focused on the rights of white women—and working rights (some of this history is discussed later in this text in more depth). This wave is the end of the 19th and early 20th century—though

**Passers-By Looking at Window Display at the
Headquarters of National Association Opposed to Woman
Suffrage, ca. 1919**



National Archives

again, there is no hard and fast line between the waves—in the United States and Britain. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony are names you may recognize from history books in discussions about the 19th Amendment that gave SOME women the right to vote in 1920 (e.g., Indigenous women were not given citizenship until 1924). Most first-wave activism focused on the injustices specific upper class women faced in their own lives. In Britain, women were concerned with the Angel in the House trope that women should only be in domestic spaces. Women wanted access to more spaces and to have more agency in making their own decisions about work—and their reproduction, specifically birth control, which became another important facet of this wave’s activism that led directly to the next wave...

Second-Wave Feminism

When one thinks of second-wave feminism (in US and Britain, early 1960s to late 80s/early90s), one might think of women’s rights in the sense of bodily

autonomy and the phrase “the personal is political.” Women continued to push against the idea that their place was only “in the home” and sought more agency over their bodies and choices. White feminists still took most of the limelight during this time, even though women from all races and ethnicities were participating in feminist action. So while names like Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem might first come to mind, the names of Angela Davis, bell hooks, Madonna Thunderhawk, and Shirley Chisholm should also be associated with this wave of feminism. The National Organization of Women was established in 1966 to advocate for women’s rights.

During this wave, the right to abortion was codified by the Supreme Court with the case Roe v. Wade in 1973. After seeing images of women dying from illegal abortions—those who can be pregnant will always seek abortion, whether it is legal or not—feminist activists were able to make legalized abortion a national issue. (This case was overturned in 2022 with Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, leaving each state to create its own set of abortion laws, which has led to confusion and anxiety for those seeking abortions in states that have less legal access to abortion.



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

Third-Wave Feminism

When one thinks of third-wave feminism, one might think about intersectional approaches and activism. Some say this wave began with Anita Hill testifying at Clarence Thomas's appointment hearing that he had sexually harassed her—and the subsequent pillorying of her in the media (and the appointment of Justice Thomas). In 1992, The Year of Woman brought women to Congress in record numbers after watching a committee composed of only men interrogate Hill at her testimony.

Anita Hill's Full Opening Statement: October 11, 1991



[Watch Opening Statement on YouTube](#) - [Read the Opening Statement Transcript](#)

The idea of gender became much more important—complicating the binary of male/female—thanks to the academic work of Judith Butler and Patricia Hill Collins, who engaged in thinking about the intersections of race and gender on the heels of the work of bell hooks.

At the same time, punk rock was a space where women could express their anger at the discrimination they saw—and the violence perpetrated against women. Riot Grrrrl published their manifesto in the *Bikini Kill Zine 2* in 1992. Here are a few of the assertions they made in their manifesto—you can see how they are calling for an intersectional approach to activism, within the music community and beyond:

RIOT GRRRL MANIFESTO

BECAUSE doing/reading/seeing/hearing cool things that validate and challenge us can help us gain the strength and sense of community that we need in order to figure out how bullshit like racism, able-bodieism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism figures in our own lives.

BECAUSE we see fostering and supporting girl scenes and girl artists of all kinds as integral to this process.

BECAUSE we hate capitalism in all its forms and see our main goal as sharing information and staying alive, instead of making profits of being cool according to traditional standards.

BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak.

BECAUSE we are unwilling to let our real and valid anger be diffused and/or turned against us via the internalization of sexism as witnessed in girl/girl jealousyism and self defeating girlytype behaviors.

BECAUSE I believe with my wholeheartmindbody that girls constitute a revolutionary soul force that can, and will change the world for real.

Fourth-Wave Feminism

There isn't necessarily an agreed upon definition of fourth-wave feminism because we are living in it—but one might say the idea of gender and equity with a more global, intersectional approach is the focus of the current wave of feminism. Some scholars don't think the third-wave has ended. Some scholars think feminism became irrelevant after the third-wave.

Women became more prominent in government, most notably Nancy Pelosi becoming the first woman Speaker of the House in 2007. The technological landscape created new spaces for activists and thinkers to connect. Perhaps the best-known example of this networking and community-building would be the #metoo movement, started with a hashtag Tarana Burke created in 2006 when she wanted to connect with a fellow survivor of sexual assault. After Ashley Judd publicly accused Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault in 2017, Alyssa Milano posted a tweet with #metoo attached, and that tweet went viral. For some time, Burke was not given credit for originating the hashtag. A social reckoning

commenced, with powerful men being called to account—from losing jobs to facing criminal charges ([you can find a full timeline of the #metoo movement, including the list of perpetrators called to account here](#)).

One of the most important moments of activism came a day after the inauguration of Donald Trump who had been recorded admitting to sexually assaulting women, famously saying he can “grab” women “by the pussy” in 2005.

Trump: Yeah, that’s her. With the gold. I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. You know, I’m automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything....Grab ‘em by the pussy. You can do anything.

Upon the election of Donald Trump, women across the United States—and the around the world—began planning a day of protests. On January 21, 2017, [almost half a million people](#) marched through the streets of Washington, D.c. wearing pink “pussy” hats to draw attention to Trump’s comments about what he thought he could grab. The Women’s March continues to plan activism and protests, most recently to protest the lack of reproductive health care in many states since the fall of Roe v. Wade.

Women’s March, Washington, D.C. 2017



Photo by [roya ann miller](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Questions to Consider

- How would you define feminism?
- Do you think of yourself as a feminist?
- What are some of the negative words associated with feminism?
- Why do you think people might not identify as a feminist? How might one's race or sexuality impact their relationship with the term "feminist"?

Suggested Readings

- Angelina Emily Grimké, "An Appeal to the Christian Women of the South" (1836)
- Seneca Falls Convention, "Declaration of Sentiments" and "Resolutions" (1848)
- Sojourner Truth, "1851 Speech"
- Ida B. Wells, "A Red Record" (1895)
- The New York Times, "141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire" (1911)
- Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework" (1970)
- Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1970)
- Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman" (1970)
- Chicago Gay Liberation Front, "A Leaflet for the American Medical Association" (1970)
- The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness" (1987)
- National Organization for Men Against Sexism, "Tenets"
- Angela Davis, "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex" (1998)
- Women's March, "Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles" (2019)

Intersectionality

Why is it important to consider and listen to many different voices in women's, and gender studies? What happens when some voices, especially the voices of people of color (or BIPOC), are ignored?

Intersectionality—or having an intersectional approach—deserves its own texts, which of course exist. It is important to know what intersectionality is within Women's and Gender Studies, but also within any kind of movement that works to ensure the liberation of all people. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term in 1989 when, as a lawyer, she tried to make a judge see that a Black woman would experience discrimination differently than a white woman would.



Photo by [Simone Fischer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Intersectionality 101



[Watch on YouTube at Learning for Justice](#) -closed captioned

To understand how gender and race intersect in current criticisms of policing, watch Crenshaw's TED talk on women and policing.

In her 1851 speech, Sojourner Truth calls white women to account for forgetting that Black women do not have the privilege to move through the world in the

The urgency of intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw



[Watch Kimberlé Crenshaw on YouTube - closed captioned](#)

same ways white women do ([read about why Black is capitalized](#)). Her speech is about intersectionality, even though that term would not come into being for another 140 years!

Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" Performed by Kerry Washington



[Watch ZinnEd Project on YouTube. Read performance transcript.](#)

It is important to know one's own subject position when thinking about one's feminist practice: race, gender, sexuality, class, physical ability, nationhood/status, education, etc. This way we can recognize spaces from which we come from power and those spaces in which we are marginalized.

In "There is No Hierarchy in Oppression," Black feminist Audre Lorde explains the importance of intersectionality before Crenshaw even coined the term:

I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, .wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you.

Questions to Consider

- What does the phrase "the personal is political" mean to you?
- How does identity come into feminist practice?

Suggested Readings

- The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"
- Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza/ Towards a New Consciousness"
- Angela Davis, "Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex"
- Women's March, "Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles"
- Sojourner Truth, "1851 Speech"
- Beenash Jafri, "Not Your Indian Eco-Princess: Indigenous Women's Resistance to Environmental Degradation"

Gender Equity

While media, education, and culture play a role in creating gender dynamics, other systems (i.e., policies and laws) also contribute to the ways we think about gender. Policies or laws can enforce inequity between genders. **Gender equity** happens when people of all genders are treated fairly in accordance with their needs. Policies that reinforce inequity may include not allowing women to own property, not giving women the right to vote, disallowing men from taking childcare leave, or denying transgender people access to a bathroom. Inequity and discrimination based on gender can have consequences for social well-being, economic development, and even environmental preservation.

Gender Equity Matters to ALL Genders

While many people think about gender-based issues as women's issues, people of all genders can face gender inequity.

Consider the disparities shown in the following statistics:

- Statistics about Sexual Assault:
 - One in 71 men has been a victim of sexual assault.
 - One in five women has been a victim of sexual assault.
- One in two transgender individuals has been a victim of sexual assault.
- Men are incarcerated at a rate 10 times higher than that of women.
- Nearly one in six transgender persons has been incarcerated, well above the incarceration rate for the general population.
- In 2016, the ratio of men dying by suicide to women dying by suicide was 4:1.
- Transgender and gender nonconforming people experience exceptionally high levels of suicide compared to the general population.
- Worldwide, 60% of chronically hungry people are women and girls.
- Women are over two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people.

While men do face a number of gender-based issues, the consequences of many gender inequities may be felt more strongly by women and those in the

transgender community. These inequities stem from a variety of systems in place that discriminate because of the prevalence of **patriarchal societies**—that is, a society in which the male is the dominant authority in the household, the workplace, or the government. While a number of societies have shifted to more egalitarian systems, patriarchal systems are still present throughout the world. Within these societies, legal, political, and economic power are often held by a male majority without concern for gender equity.

Therefore, while people of all genders may individually face inequality, as evidenced by the statistics above, women and transgender people structurally—through systems of law, employment, decision-making, or politics, for example—face more inequity than men. They may have a more difficult time overcoming structural factors that prevent them from sharing equal power with men, even when they individually enjoy equal opportunity.

All people have different strengths that they bring to their families, their communities, and their work. Involving all people, regardless of gender, in sustainability efforts worldwide requires the support of those holding political or economic power—often men—who often have central roles in family, community, and societal decision-making.

While women have certainly featured prominently in sustainable development efforts thus far, many around the world do not have access to the same education and economic rights.

Gender & the World

Sustainable development simply is not possible without gender equity, including equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal access to resources for all people of all genders. In order to build a sustainable future, people of all genders must be included in solutions and decision-making for improved economic, social, and environmental well-being.

Economy and Women

Economic growth increases when women's work is formally recognized. Much of women's work is informal—in the home, in the fields, or in cottage industries carried out in the home instead of in an official workspace. Without an officially recognized job, it is nearly impossible to secure credit to do something like buy a cow or start a small business. When women are able to get loans for activities like these, their families benefit from increased opportunity and they contribute to the larger economy.

Studies in both developed and developing countries have shown the benefits of providing women monetary income. In highly industrialized countries, a woman's increased participation in paid employment has been shown to strengthen financial status for her and her family in addition to improving her mental and physical health. In impoverished countries, women farmers who earn income usually spend their money on children's education, nutrition, and health.

In many countries, credit associations and export crop marketing cooperatives have only allowed male household heads to become members, excluding married and unmarried women. Organizations such as the World Bank have worked to help expand the role of women in developing economies. One way they have tried to help is through legal arrangements to give women more equality when it comes to accessing credit. In Ethiopia, a World Bank pilot project tested a simple change to land title forms: space for a second name and picture was added to the form, allowing two people to jointly be listed as landowners. The result was a great increase in the number of women who officially had land ownership.

Gender in Society

Increasing gender equity can improve physical and mental well-being for all people. The norms created about men—**masculinity**—and around women—**femininity**—can often be rigid and make people feel as if they are “wrong” or “abnormal” when they do not conform to the norms. For example, one factor in

the development of an eating disorder may be the feeling that one's body is not fitting into a gender norm. The [National Eating Disorders Association](#) reports that "in the United States, 20 million women and 10 million men will suffer from a clinically significant eating disorder at some time in their life." When people suffer from eating disorders, it affects families, workplaces, and society.

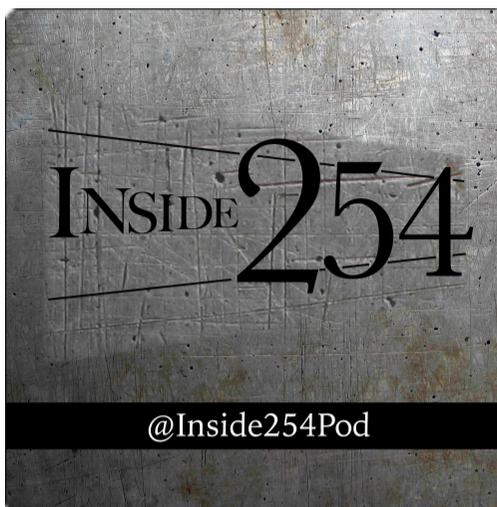
Gender-based violence (GBV) is prevalent around the world and affects all elements of a society. The United Nations defines GBV as "any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. It can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual in nature, and can take the form of a denial of resources or access to services. It inflicts harm on women, girls, men and boys." Even though the definition relies on binary thinking, GBV affects all genders, though women and girls experience higher rates of GBV. In the United States, sexual assault and domestic violence are the most occurring forms of GBV. A quarter of a million sexual assaults occur every year in the United States. One in four women and one in seven men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. "Domestic violence and sexual assault have ongoing and destabilizing effects on individuals, families and communities, resulting in violations of dignity and human rights. They also have an enormous fiscal impact: a 2002 study found that [intimate partner violence costs the U.S. economy \\$12.6 billion annually](#) in legal and medical services, judicial system costs and lost productivity." The United Nations estimates that, worldwide, [one in three women will experience GBV](#). Within the transgender community, rates of



United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is on November 25. [Orange the World 2014 - Kyrgyzstan](#) by [UN Women](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

GBV are often underreported; a 2008 survey showed that almost 20% of the community had experienced domestic violence perpetrated by a family member. GBV comes at a great personal and societal cost to communities.

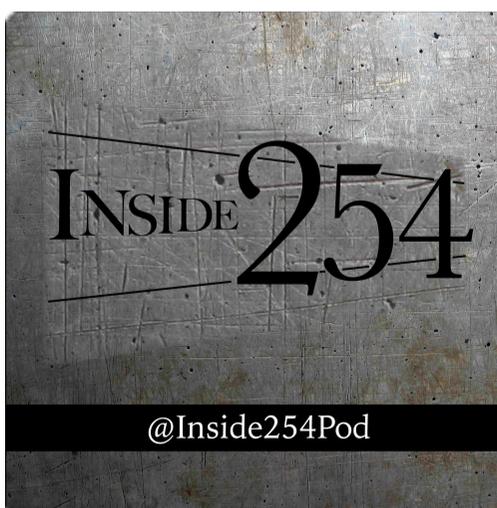
Episode 36: What is an INCEL?



"What is an Incel" Transcript

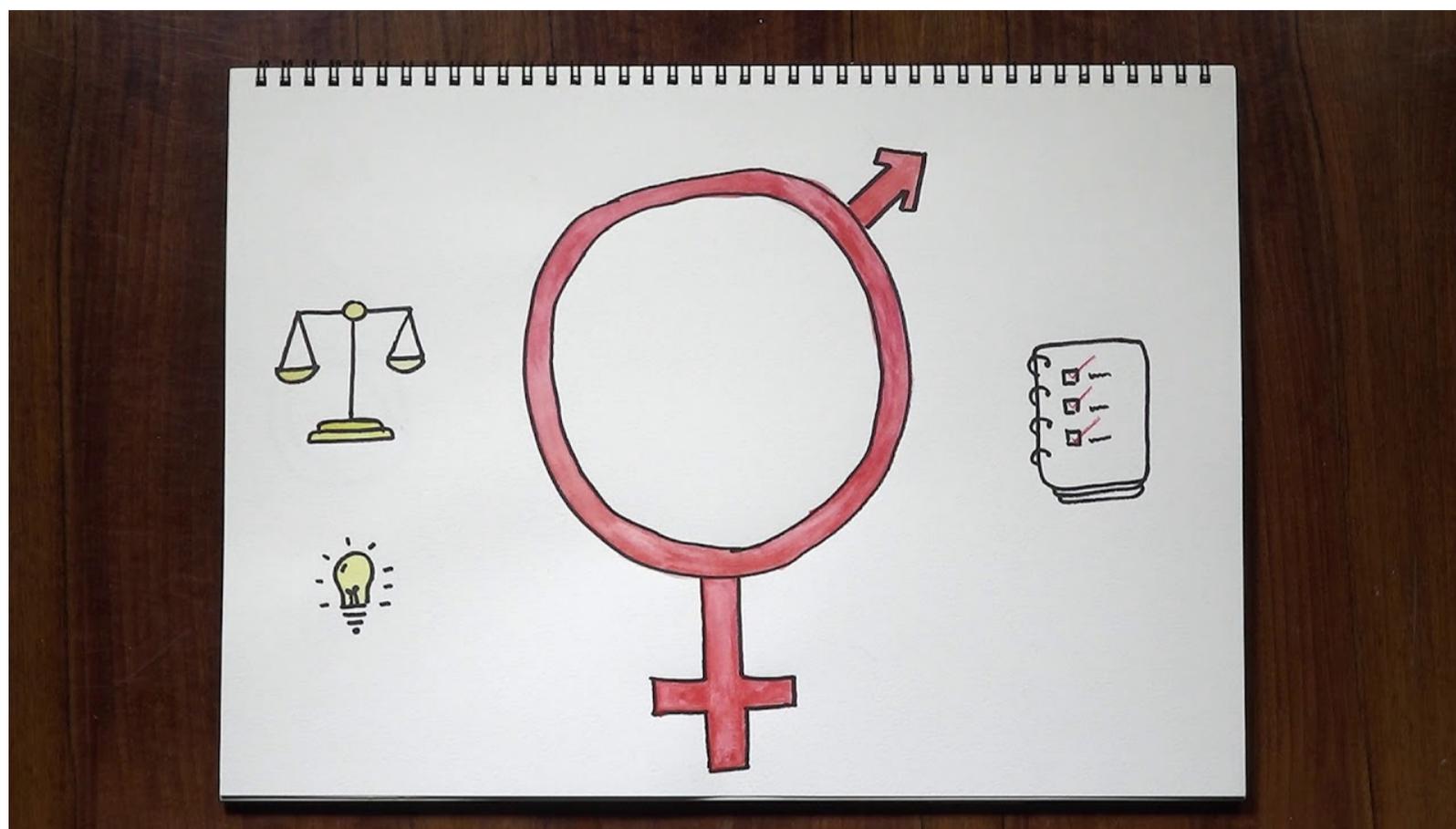
When societies work toward gender equity and move away from violence surrounding gender, they see the benefits. The benefits of gender equity can extend well beyond the walls of a family's home or beyond the well-being of an individual, perhaps even impacting a nation's politics. A 100-country study found that decreasing the gap between male and female primary school completion rates increases democracy. In other words, countries where girls and boys have similar rates of completing primary school are also more democratic. When members of a society feel unsafe, they cannot contribute fully to their families, the economy, or other elements of a healthy democracy. Only a safe population and an equitable society can allow for a sustainable approach to global development.

Episode 30: The #metoo Movement



#metoo Transcript

United Nations on Gender and Climate Change



[Watch UN Video on YouTube - closed captioned.](#)

Environment and Gender

In developing countries, women spend a disproportionate amount of time in the natural environment doing agricultural work or collecting water and firewood. Collecting firewood without replanting trees can lead to the degradation of forests, which in turn can lead to increased resource scarcity; this affects all members of society. In addition to being a detriment to the environment, unsustainable firewood collection also puts women at risk as they try to feed their families. The lack of wood means that women must leave the safety of their homes, villages, or refugee camps and go further to find wood in remote areas where they are in danger of gender-based violence. To alleviate this problem in Sudan, Oxfam and the Sudanese Agency for Environment and Development Service joined together to provide fuel-efficient stoves to women. This solution allows for both gender equity (women will be safer because they will not need to seek out firewood; men will be able to find better land on which their animals can graze) and environmental sustainability (the stoves are more efficient and will not burn wood, allowing the land to recover from overgrazing and drought).

Many men and women die defending their land from those wanting to exploit or control it. In 2017, 185 environmental defenders died while protecting land and natural resources. Indigenous communities are most affected by this violence as men and women work together to save their land from mining, poachers,

logging, agribusiness, and unsanctioned water use. Both women and men are killed while defending land; however, a majority of those killed are men.

Those working to save the environment are realizing that gender equity must be part of the equation for a solution. For example, in the fight against global climate change, women and men are coming together in Troika+, a group working to connect gender equity to slowing climate change. The Mary Robinson Foundation connects leaders who understand the need for collaboration and shared decision-making in the fight against climate change. Environmental sustainability is deeply connected to gender equity worldwide.

The Green Belt Movement

In 1977, Wangari Maathai started the Green Belt Movement in Nairobi, Kenya. Her goal was both to protect the environment and to empower Kenyan women. To do this, the movement organized rural women in order to help them stop deforestation, become trained in skills like forestry and beekeeping, and promote ecotourism. Since the time Wangari Maathai started the program, over 30,000 women have been trained and over 51 million trees have been planted. Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 to commend her lifetime of work and its immense benefit for women and the environment.

A Short Introduction to Wangari Maathai



[Watch Introduction to Wangari Maathai on YouTube - closed captioned](#)

The Green Belt Movement remains a force for environmental justice, even though Maathai died in 2011. It continues its planting, advocacy work, and educational outreach all over Kenya and inspires ecofeminism well beyond Kenya's borders. The Green Belt Movement promotes gender equity and recognizes that "when the communities understand the linkage between their actions, environment and their livelihood situations (poverty, water scarcity and soil loss and food insecurity) they are more likely to muster their energies and take action for change." Maathai's Green Belt Movement connects gender issues and environmental issues to bring about peace and sustainability.

Questions to Consider

- How are environmentalism and feminism connected?
- Why is economic justice a gendered issue?

Suggested Reading

- Beth Richie, "A Black Feminist Reflection on the Antiviolence Movement"
- Courtney Bailey, "A Queer #MeToo Story: Sexual Violence, Consent, and Interdependence"
- Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Richie, and Kay Whitlock, "False Promises: Criminal Legal Responses to Violence against LGBT People"
- Isis Nusair, "Making Feminist Sense of Torture at Abu-Ghraib"
- Vandana Shiva "The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply"
- Yifat Susskind, "Population Control is Not the Answer to Our Climate Crisis"
- Wangari Maathai, "An Unbreakable Link: Peace, Environment, and Democracy"

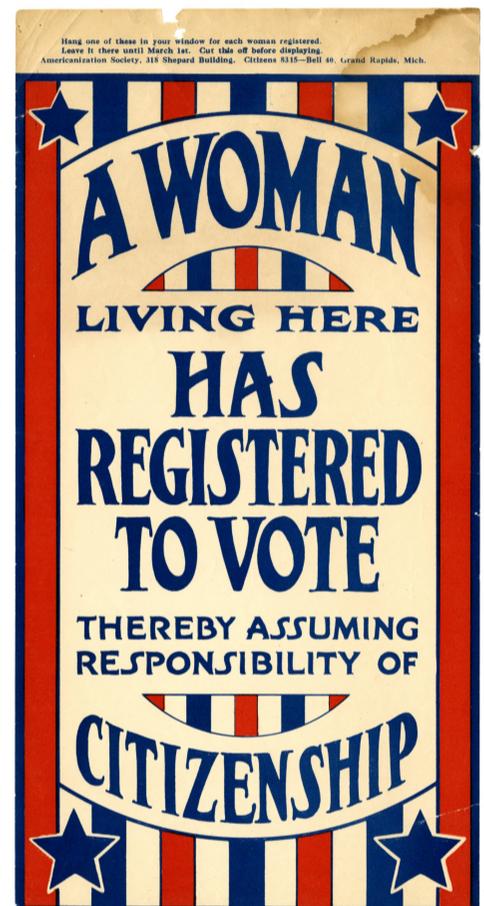
Gender Inequity Throughout History

Historically, gender inequity was the norm in most communities. As societies slowly shifted from hunter-gatherer groups to agricultural settlements, the **stratification**, or distinction between men and women, became even more pronounced. In the past, women shared similar status to men because they participated in equal amounts of labor. However, when advanced technology was introduced to improve food systems in certain areas (e.g., the plough), women's labor shifted from outside the home to the domestic space.

Of course, traditional male roles are also demanding. In societies in which men are seen as the "stronger sex," men are expected to provide food, shelter, and protection for their families. Women's responsibilities are different, but equally important. Gender norms often dictate that women prepare the food, maintain the shelter, and raise the children. In many places, including both developed and developing nations, elements of these roles persist today. Nevertheless, women around the world slowly gained rights they were largely denied in the past and continue to work for gender equity. The following sections explain some of the historical movements led by women in the name of gender equity.

Voting Rights

During the 19th century, women's roles in the United States were defined by certain values referred to as the "cult of true womanhood." Women were reminded of how they should act in sermons at churches and in women's magazines. They were meant to run their households, take care of their husbands and children, uphold religious beliefs, and maintain an even temperament through it all. However, women were not supposed to participate in hard labor or political life. Men were the ones who earned money for their work; women's labor fell outside the cash economy. Nevertheless, 19th century women began pushing boundaries. More and more women participated in the economy, got involved in reform movements related to slavery and women's rights, wrote for newspapers, and lobbied political



This sign was designed to be placed in the window of a home so that all who passed would know that the woman within had exercised her right under the 19th amendment and registered to vote. It also served as a reminder to other women to do the same.

Smithsonian

bodies. As a result, women's roles slowly transformed and they earned a political voice.

Women (white women specifically—not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did the right of suffrage apply to most United States citizens; there are still people who do not have the right to vote, most significantly those who are incarcerated) in the United States finally gained the right to vote, or **suffrage**, through the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1920. Women in Great Britain, provided they were over 30, gained the right to vote in 1918. Most European countries granted women the right to vote by 1931, though some notable exceptions include France (1944), Belgium and Italy (1946), Switzerland (1971), and Liechtenstein (1984).

Women were voting in most Asian countries by 1960. In many African nations, women won the right to vote by 1960, although in those countries men and women typically received the right to vote at the same time as formerly colonized African nations gained their independence. By the end of the 20th century, most women around the world had access to voting and standing for election. In more recent history, Saudi Arabia granted women the right to vote in September of 2011.

Economic Rights

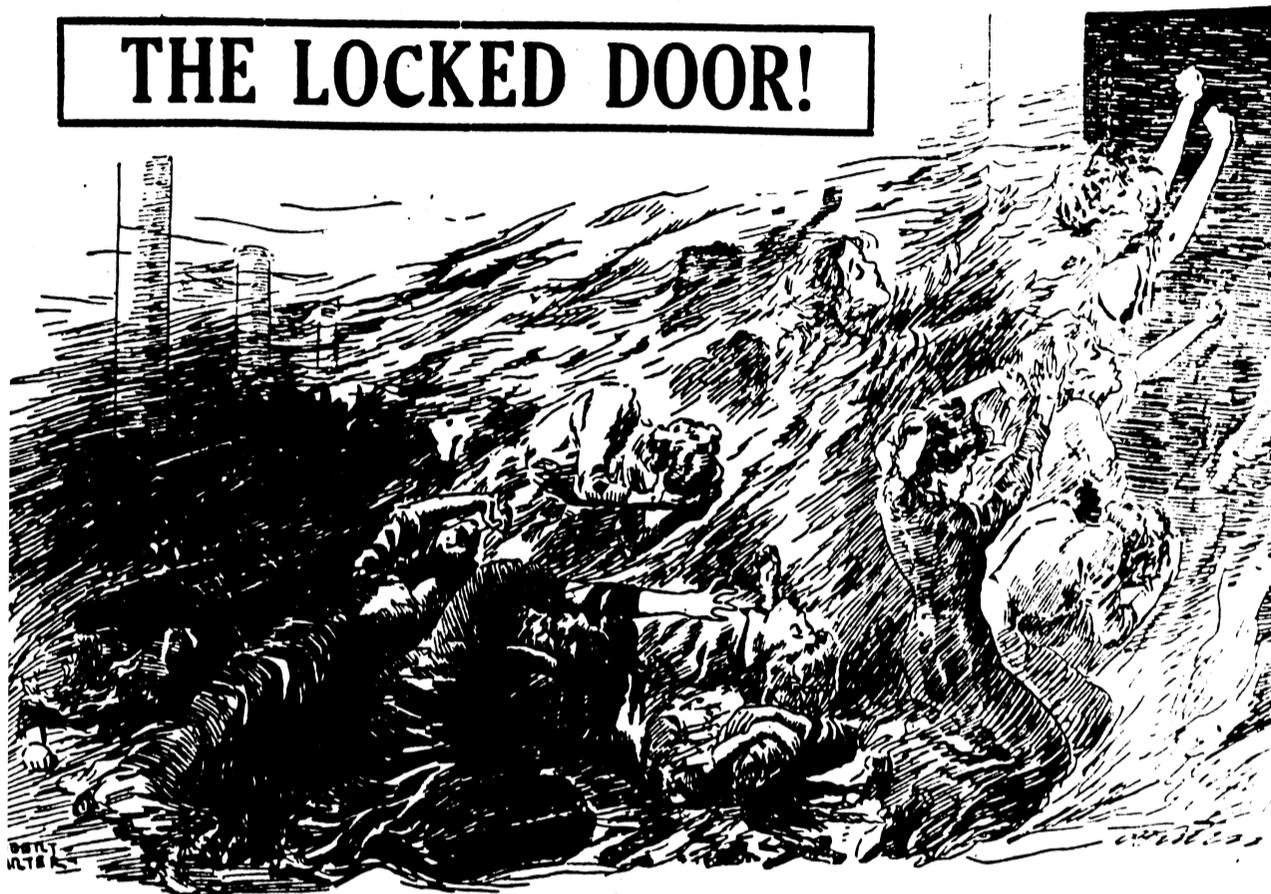
Similar to voting rights, women did not have property rights for a long period of U.S. history. In 1769, the 13 colonies adopted the same system of property rights used in England. Married women were not allowed to own property in their own name and they could not keep any income they earned; instead, this money went to their husbands. By 1900, every state passed legislation that allowed women to keep their earnings and to own property.

The right to own property is still an important issue for women around the world. Women currently own only 1–2% of all titled land worldwide. Land ownership can bring social status and is often a prerequisite for securing loans and credit. Those who do not own land are often more vulnerable, especially during times of famine and unrest.



Though this image depicts a white woman engaging in factory work, women of all races participated in the war effort. In 1940, African American women, for example, called for integration in the defense marketplace, though after the war, many of these women quickly lost their jobs. Public Domain Photo

Along with the right to own property, the struggle for the right to work and earn a fair wage has engaged women for centuries. The Industrial Revolution began in 1750 and increased the need for women in the work force. There weren't enough men to fill all of the factory positions, so factory owners had to hire women and children.



Drawing "The Locked Door!" refers to the Triangle fire and depicts young women throwing themselves against a locked door in an attempt to escape the flames. Date: 1911 Photographer: Unknown, editorial cartoon by Robert Carter (cropped signature lower left)

Factory owners still did not see women as primary employees, however, and did not give women workers the same rights as men. One example of this lack of concern over women's working conditions is the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911; because of unsafe working conditions, 145 employees—mostly women and teenage girls—died.

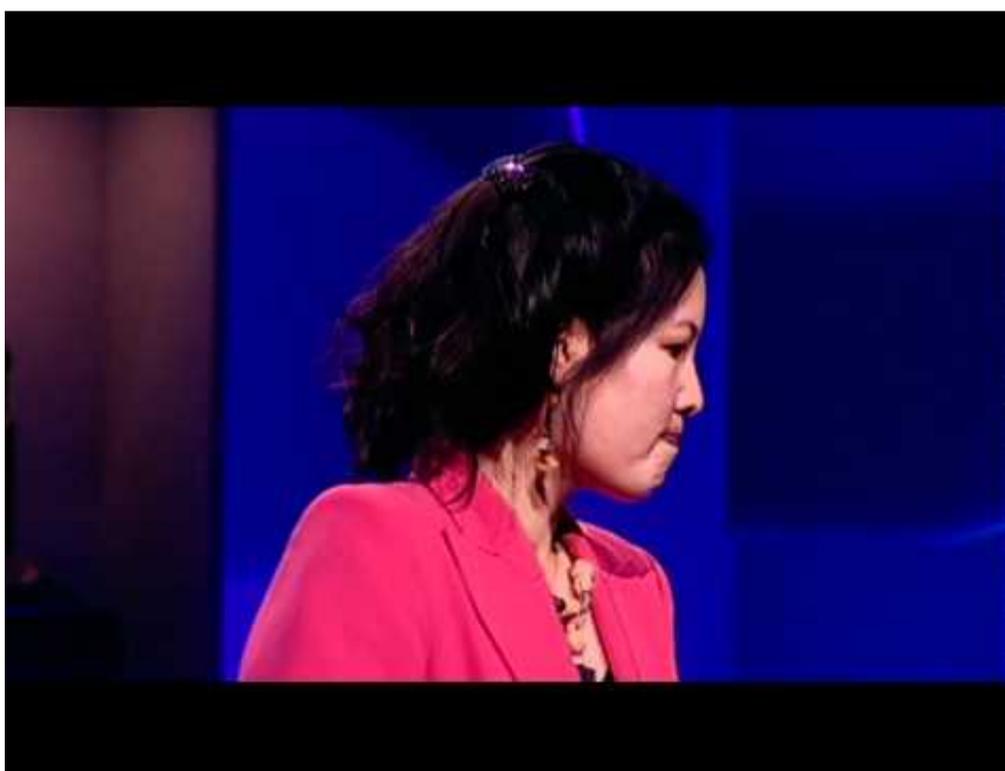
The next major shift in economic roles started with the two great wars in the beginning of the 20th century. Wartime in an industrial economy forces many changes on society. World War II is a perfect example of how conflict forced industry to admit women into workplaces typically seen as reserved for men. With so many of the world's men away fighting, factories had to employ the women left at home. Women were not allowed to fight in the war, so many saw factory work as a way of fulfilling their patriotic duty. Many women who entered the work force during World War II discovered that they enjoyed working and continued once the war was over, setting the stage for the women's movements of the second half of the 20th century.

Economic rights regarding gender equity evolved quickly during the 20th century. Women born in the early and mid 20th century had differing expectations for their daughters. More and more women within the United States have pursued degrees in higher education.

Women hold 60% of bachelor's degrees, 60% of master's degrees, about half of all medical and law degrees, and just over 40% of all M.B.A. (Master's of Business Administration) degrees. In 2010, just over half of management and professional positions in the United States were held by women. However, only 6% of Fortune 500 companies were run by female CEOs in 2017. In 2022, that number was only higher by a few percentage points at 8.8%--and only 1% are women of color.

While the research on issues transgender people face in the workplace is relatively new, data suggests that transgender individuals face unique challenges in the workplace. Often, those who transition find themselves earning more or less depending on their confirmed gender. A small 2016 study showed that "trans men reported that approximately 10% increased earnings in the same job post-transition, whereas trans women reported approximately a 30% decrease in earnings post-transition. Generally, these studies suggest that the gendered nature of the workplace may have similar effects on trans men and trans women as men and women." Transgender employees express concern about "coming out" at work at a rate of almost 50% and fear their identity can affect their economic status.

Our Century's Greatest Injustice



[Watch "Our Century's Greatest Injustice" on YouTube - closed captioned.](#)

Girl Up: The Power of Youth Leadership



Watch Discussion on YouTube. Girl Up Executive Director Melissa Kilby and the Head of Impact of 'The Meteor' Tara Abrahams discuss the importance of youth leadership and activism when fighting for girls and women's rights at the 2022 Leadership Summit Partner and Investor Collective! Read Discussion Transcript.

Questions to Consider

- How were gender roles defined in the early 19th century? Do any of these roles still hold true today?
- How did the Industrial Revolution impact gender roles in the United States?

Reproductive Rights

For many young women today, it would probably be difficult to contemplate not having control over the number of children they give birth to. However, many women throughout the world face this issue and continue to struggle for reproductive rights, especially in developing countries. **Reproductive rights** are legal rights and freedoms regarding reproduction and reproductive health. These rights include such things as voluntary choice in marriage and determining the number of children to have. According to the World Health Organization, one third of women in the developing world face illnesses related to pregnancy, childbirth, HIV, and other related reproductive health issues. Many of these illnesses could be prevented with better reproductive health systems and rights for women.

Gender Issues in Today's Society

As is evident from the discussion above, progress truly has been made toward gender equity. Girls and women attend school at higher rates than in the past. Women enjoy more legal rights, are healthier, and participate in the world's workforce more than ever before. For the transgender community, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has stated that "discrimination because a person is transgender or gender non-conforming constitutes illegal sex discrimination," thereby protecting the rights of transgender employees.

Yet there is still much progress to be made. As you will read, some people in the world do not even enjoy basic human rights. And in extreme cases, such as conflict or poverty, women are the most vulnerable population.

Human Trafficking

Slavery is a centuries-old practice. The Roman Empire exploited the labor of thousands, if not millions, of prisoners of war. Ancient Egyptian culture was heavily dependent on slave labor. The forced import of people from the African continent to the United States created the plantation lifestyle that defined the American South.

Slavery is enforced labor with no compensation. You may have thought that slavery ended with the abolition movement and the U.S. Civil War. Sadly, though, slave labor, while illegal, is still widely used. In fact, there were 27 million slaves in the world in 2017, a number that has risen to 50 million in 2021, more than at any time in history. While many of the world's enslaved persons live in places where laws go unenforced, these people continue to be illegally bought and sold into some of the world's most wealthy, developed countries.

People who deal in buying and selling human beings, especially with the purpose of promoting slavery, are human traffickers. Trafficking, in general, means dealing or trading in something illegal. Trafficking of human beings is a gross abuse of human rights. People are forced into many different types of slavery—domestic service, forced labor, or sexual activity. In 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act was enacted and offered specific guidelines for defining and combatting human trafficking.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines trafficking as:

- sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

A victim need not be physically transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within these definitions

There are several reasons that **human trafficking** exists today. Extreme poverty can lead people into desperate action, including selling wives and children for profit. This has been the case in recent years in Cambodia, where human trafficking has serious consequences for women and girls who are enticed from rural areas by promises of domestic jobs in the city, only to be coerced into sexual slavery once they arrive. Traffickers are not only members of organized crime syndicates but can also be parents, friends, relatives, or neighbors. While this type of activity is illegal, it often goes unnoticed or unreported. Reports have documented how human traffickers are connected to international criminal organizations and are difficult to prosecute.

Mass migration across the world and globalization also put those migrating at risk to be preyed upon by traffickers. The United States State Department acknowledges that the United States is not without a human trafficking problem: “The United States is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, transgender individuals, and children—both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals—subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. Trafficking occurs in both legal and illicit industries, including commercial sex, hospitality, sales crews, agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, janitorial services, construction, restaurants, health and elder care, salon services, fairs and carnivals, peddling and begging, and domestic service.”

Across the globe, people of all genders are exploited through human trafficking. Often nongovernmental organizations only provide help to women and children, leaving male and transgender victims without access to help or resources.

However, there are institutions all over the world trying to help those who are enslaved through trafficking. In the United States, the National Human Trafficking Hotline provides “human trafficking victims and survivors with access

to critical support and services to get help and stay safe, and to equip the anti-trafficking community with the tools to effectively combat all forms of human trafficking.” Globally, the United Nations tracks the movement of humans being trafficked and works to dismantle injustices that can lead to trafficking of humans of all genders.

Gender in Conflict Zones

In places where violent conflicts terrorize daily life, women are disproportionately affected by war. While the majority of combatants are men, women and children are left at home, where they become vulnerable to sexual violence, including rape and forced prostitution. The threat of this type of violence affects children’s ability to go to school safely; women gathering firewood or water are targets as well.

After a conflict ends and a society begins to rebuild, both men’s and women’s roles need to be taken into consideration. With men gone during conflict, women are often forced to be the primary family caretakers and breadwinners. Women have more responsibility and must make decisions and grow into new roles. After the conflict ends and men return to their normal lives, women may face hostile attitudes as both genders attempt to readjust. Men who return to their communities to find women expressing greater authority and independence may feel threatened, which can generate hostility toward women and put them at risk of violence.

However, sometimes women emerge from conflict with opportunity to make strides toward gender equity. Rwanda offers an example of moving from a horrific conflict toward a safer and more sustainable form of governance. In 1994, an estimated 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda as a result of genocide. That same bloody history prompted the country’s women to form the majority of the nation’s leadership. Because so much of the male population was murdered, women were forced to step into leadership roles. During the post-genocide transition period, Rwanda redrafted its constitution and allowed for input by and participation from women, which was not previously allowed. Adopted in 2003, Rwanda’s constitution guarantees at least 30% of the parliamentary positions to women.

Malala Yousafzai



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Malala Yousafzai was born in Mingora, Pakistan, in 1997. She shared her father's love for learning. When she was ten years old, she began writing anonymously for the British Broadcasting Corporation about what it was like to live in the Swat Valley that Taliban militants were slowly taking over. One of their rules was that girls could no longer be educated. Even though the Taliban wants to silence girls, Malala spoke freely to the international community about the importance of equitable education for all children. Her work earned her Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize. The increased attention she drew to the Taliban made them want to silence her forever. On October 9, 2012, militants boarded her school bus, asked her if she was Malala, and shot her in the head, neck, and

Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Prize Speech



[Watch Nobel Prize Speech on YouTube](#) - [read Nobel Prize speech transcript](#)

shoulder. She was airlifted to a hospital in England, where she survived. In March 2013, Malala returned to school. In October of that year, she and her family set up the Malala Fund to raise awareness about equitable education and to advocate for girls all over the world. In December 2014, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which she shared with education activist Kailash Satyarthi. In 2016, she began the online campaign #yesallgirls to promote education for children worldwide. In October 2017, she began her higher education at Oxford University. The militants

tried to stop Malala, but she survived to continue her mission of speaking for girls everywhere.

Women participate in resistance to political strife in many contexts. Perhaps most recently, women in Iran began to protest being harassed by “morality police” in Iran. Masha Amini died while in custody of the morality police in Iran in 2022. Women are often at the forefront of protesting injustice in their countries and use their collective voices to work toward change.

Maternal Health

When women do well, their children are healthier. But not all women around the world have access to **maternal health care**, or the health care women receive during pregnancy, childbirth, and after. When women are provided maternal health care, they receive services that support their education in safe birthing options, nutrition, and how to identify danger signs while pregnant. Women in developing countries are disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of substandard health care. Of the 830 women that die every day due to preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, 99% of those deaths occur in developing nations. In the United States, black women suffer disproportionate rates of maternal death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that “Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women. Multiple factors contribute to these disparities, such as variation in quality healthcare, underlying chronic conditions, structural racism, and implicit bias. Social determinants of health prevent many people from racial and ethnic minority groups from having fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health.”

While poverty plays a role in women’s access to health care for themselves and their children, culture is also a factor. One factor in poor maternal health care is **child marriage**, which occurs when one or both of the people married is under 18. The majority of those married before their 18th birthday are girls, often called “child brides.” Global rates of child marriage have declined over the last 30 years, but it still happens at an alarmingly high rate, especially in extremely poor rural areas. As of 2023, 76% of girls in Niger, 67% in Chad, and 59% in Bangladesh were married before their 18th birthday (“Girls Not Brides” Interactive Map).

Marrying at such an early age can have lifelong consequences for these child brides and their children. Death due to pregnancy-related complications is 5 times more likely in girls younger than 15 than it is in older women. Additionally,

babies of child brides have a 75% higher mortality rate. Babies that do survive have a good chance of being born prematurely with a low birth weight and a higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Other consequences of marrying so young can include illiteracy, poverty, domestic abuse, and abandonment by the woman's spouse.

The good news is that education can be a highly effective preventative measure. Girls who have a secondary education are up to 6 times less likely to become child brides, largely due to the fact that education provides so many other opportunities for a girl; each of these opportunities can be seen as an alternative to early marriage. One way to combat child marriage is to educate men in communities to see women's rights as valuable.



Photo by [jaikishan patel](#) on [Unsplash](#)

For example, in India, community members of a rural area in Rajasthan began to teach men about gender equity. When boys are taught to see girls as their equals, they are less inclined to participate in child marriage, leading to better maternal health.



Photo by [Andrew Khaanh](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The United Nations made maternal health their fifth Millennium Development Goal. Some improvements were seen, specifically a reduction in maternal mortality by half since 1990. Births assisted by a skilled health professional increased to 71% in 2014 compared to 59% in 1990. However, only half of women worldwide have access to prenatal care, an improvement, albeit a slow one. Continual education for all involved in childbearing and childrearing will continue to improve lives around the world.

Partners in Health on Maternal Health



[Watch Partners in Health video on YouTube](#) - only audio is atmospheric music and environment noises, such a birds in the beginning.

Gender Gaps

Wage Gap

All over the world, women performing the same jobs as men are paid significantly less for their work. This is not because women are less capable or less skilled, but is largely a matter of inequity. Even though society has changed and many women are now an equal contributor to family income (or in some cases the only contributor), social perceptions have not changed at the same pace. A gap in earnings between men and women can be observed even in very wealthy countries; in poor communities, gender disparities tend to be more pronounced.

The widening gap between the number of men and the number of women in poverty is referred to as the **feminization of poverty**. Women form a much higher percentage of the 1.5 billion people worldwide who live below the poverty threshold than men. Worldwide, women earn just slightly more than 50% of what men earn.

While many countries are starting to realize that there is a gendered aspect to poverty and are crafting new policies accordingly, great disparities still exist. In

rural Asia, for example, households that are led by women are typically poorer than those run by men. Because of these disparities in pay equity, the United Nations “identified the eradication of the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern requiring special attention and action by the international community, governments and civil society” in their 1995 Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. The feminization of poverty is an issue that affects all members of a community, and communities must commit to the support and education of all children if pay equity is ever going to come to be.

Education Gap

Children in families headed by women, especially female children, are more likely to drop out of school to help their mothers. Consequently, the lower education level of these children will make it even more difficult for them to escape poverty. Another factor restricting women’s access to education and later opportunities is largely cultural. In many cases, if a family has more than one child but only enough resources to send one child to school, that child is typically the oldest male.

In certain places around the world, when girls are able to stay in school they often do not receive the same quality of education as their male counterparts. They might be pushed toward careers seen as more “feminine” which are often lower paying—such as social work and teaching—and steered away from higher paying careers in science and math which are often seen as more “masculine” positions within gender norms, a divide written about as early as 1904 when women were entering workforces deemed “men’s” spaces. Quality education that does not discriminate between genders benefits everyone.

Paying close attention to trends in different countries can help to ensure that girls and boys are doing equally well in school. For example, boys are 30% more likely to drop out of school in the United States than are girls. Prison and the cycle of poverty have proven to have serious consequences on certain populations of men within the United States. Low education levels correlate to increased incarceration rates. Creating preventative measures to ensure all children can be successful in the classroom and less inclined to drop out can be a powerful solution.

Questions to Consider

- What are examples of contemporary issues of gender inequity? What has been done to address these issues?
- Why is education a preventative measure for a number of gender-related inequities?
- What strategies for supporting gender equity make the most sense to you?

Pathways to Gender Equity

Slowly but surely changes are being made to create equitable opportunities for both men and women. Breaking the cycle of poverty, investing in education, promoting women's health, transforming perceptions of gender, and supporting gender equity are all positive changes being made today.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

Many women work long, hard hours with little to no compensation and no formal recognition of their labor. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) of India seeks to change that, at least in India. SEWA is a trade union for poor, self-employed women workers. These unrecognized and often lonely laborers come together as one body and use their strength in numbers to get benefits that they would not be able to obtain on their own. SEWA helps members organize services such as savings and credit, insurance, health care, and legal aid. This cooperation gives members valuable life skills and knowledge that make them more self-sufficient and more likely to be able to move past poverty.

Investing in Education

Half The Sky Movement on Educating Girls



[Watch Halth the Sky Movement video on YouTube](#) - only audio is slow background music

In many parts of the developing world, by the time a girl is 12 years old she has most probably left school in order to take care of the household, cook, and clean. In sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than one in five girls attend secondary school and almost half are married by age 18. Educating girls can be instrumental to improving gender equality, and it has additional beneficial impacts, such as supporting economic growth.

In response to the reality faced by adolescent girls in developing nations around the world, the organization Girl Up raises funds to help girls gain access to education and health opportunities. In Liberia, Girl Up helped to launch a program that helped support costs for uniforms and school supplies and provide space for counseling services. In Guatemala, Girl Up helped create a peer education program in which girls learned to teach health education to their friends.

Promoting Women's Health

Healthy women are strong women. Many women around the world are denied access to even basic health care—including vaccinations and pregnancy-related check-ups—that most women in developed countries take for granted. One of the biggest areas of inequality is in reproductive and sexual health. Lack of access to birth control results in more than 70 million unintended pregnancies each year in the developing world. Women may lack knowledge about birth control, they may be too poor to afford it, they may not be allowed to use it because it is neither socially nor religiously acceptable, or they simply may not have access. Whatever the reason, the resulting unintended pregnancies can contribute to a cycle of poverty if a mother is unable to adequately feed, clothe, or shelter her children.

Transforming Perceptions of Gender

Perhaps the most important element of change needed to ensure gender equity is the dismantling of harmful gender norms that tell humans they need to act in certain ways because of their gender.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, what you see in the media can influence the way you might think about gender. According to the World Health Organization, public awareness campaigns and other media interventions can be effective in changing gender attitudes and norms. One organization working to do just that is Reel Grrls. The group's mission is to empower young women from diverse communities to realize the power, talent, and influence they have through media production. Reel Grrls teaches teenage girls skills related to animation,

cinematography, scriptwriting, and other elements of film. In addition, the girls are able to meet women filmmakers and form lasting relationships that help them to develop a critical lens of what they see in the media and how they can change perceptions of gender. In the words of one participant, “Ever since participating in Reel Grrls, I see the world through new eyes.”

Boys are also affected by what they see in the media. A rigid idea of masculinity might teach boys that they need to be muscular physically and hard emotionally. Jackson Katz in his film *Tough Guise* argues that boys are forced to feel like their only option is to be “tough,” which leaves boys suffering emotionally because they are taught they cannot show feelings. Katz is a proponent of undoing strict gender roles of masculinity so boys can express themselves emotionally. *The Mask You Live In* also investigates the ways that gender norms affect boys and men in many facets of life, from parenting, partnering, and coming of age. Scholars and thinkers are starting to see that rigid gender norms don’t just affect girls but also affect boys.

Gillette Commercial About Masculinity



[Watch Commercial on YouTube - closed captioned](#)

This ad is working to transform perceptions of gender. It’s important to remember that this “short film” is an advertisement meant to gain attention for a product. But that isn’t necessarily all bad—the context is part of what makes the advertisement so powerful. It deserves attention for its extraordinary shift away from the tone of most ads that sell “men’s” products, especially ads that run during the Super Bowl.

Supporting Gender Equity

People can address gender equity in a number of ways. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), for example, is often referred to as the international bill of rights for women. The Convention was created in 1979 and over time it has been signed and ratified by 186 countries. CEDAW offers a way to challenge discriminatory laws against women and girls. Its influence has prompted countries to take initiative to address women's rights.

The Role of Individual Action

Support for gender equity can come from individuals, too. Questioning inequities and stereotypes is an essential first step toward gender equality and requires the participation of both women and men. Programs throughout the world have helped support boys and men in conversations about gender so that they can, in turn, contribute to building gender equity in their communities. In certain cases, high-ranking officials, such as religious leaders, have stepped in to speak to men about making decisions to create healthy families. The United Nations Population Fund has found in recent years:

- Monks in Cambodia taught men about HIV prevention.
- Clerics in Saudi Arabia instructed fathers not to force their daughters to get married.
- State officials in Brazil spoke to men about ending domestic violence.

Changing gender-based perceptions and ways of doing things to reinforce equity can be a powerful way of making change within a society.

What Can You Do?

Theory is important, but praxis is even more important. Taking what you have learned and making change is the goal of WGS studies. Consider the following ways to get involved:

- Learn more about campaigns around the world working to create gender equity.
- Work with your friends, classmates, and school community to challenge gender-based stereotypes that could be harmful to everyone.

- Volunteer with an organization that provides educational opportunities for girls around the world.
- Get involved with drop-out prevention programs.
- Listen to the people around you and use their correct pronouns.
- Model inclusive behavior when with friends.
- Be a good ally/accomplice.
- Create a voter registration drive on your campus. Find out where students can vote in your community and make sure you inform them of the locations.
- Become a member of and volunteer for a social justice organization on your campus or in your community. Many campuses have chapters of FMLA.
- Does your campus have a Women's/Gender/LGBTQ Resource Center? Attend a meeting. Go to one of their campus events. Attend a lecture they are sponsoring. Show your school that these events are worth their efforts and funding.
- Many campuses host annual Take Back the Night marches, Pride Weeks, Transgender Remembrance Days, and other events like V-Day with The Vagina Monologues. Make a resolution to attend at least one large-scale activist event per semester
- Have conversations with friends about feminism and women's, gender, and sexuality studies explaining why this is important in our society. Use your social media feed to educate them.
- Organize a panel of women scientists on campus to discuss their career paths.
- Find out how contraceptives are distributed on your campus or in your community. If you find that some populations do not have access to contraception, work with community or campus officials to increase distribution levels and accessibility.
- Decrease the stigma of menstruation and sanitary products by hosting a tampon and pad collection drive on your campus. This engages people

in discussion and destigmatizes menstruation, plus you can donate the collected items to a domestic violence shelter or a homeless shelter. Be sure that all single sex stalls on campus have these products to support transgender students.

- Remember to engage in self-care. Activist work can be draining, so making time for yourself can help you de-stress and avoid burnout. The movement needs you to be healthy and well. Take turns with others in activism—we don't all have to hold the notes all the time in the choir.

Questions to Consider

- What are personal ways to address gender-based inequities?
- What are structural ways to address gender-based inequities? How could you as an individual support these structural reforms?

Suggested Readings

- "Ally or Accomplice? The Language of Activism," Colleen Clemens
- "Disrupting Rape Culture Through Education," Colleen Clemens
- "10 Ways to Be an Ally & a Friend"

Appendix

“Gender Revolution” Trailer Transcript

[Intro]

Katie Couric Narration: It used to be so simple. You were a boy, or you were a girl, but that was then, and this...

[Music]

Woman Interrupting: the next battleground transgender right.

Katie Couric: is now...

Man 1: Born both a boy and a girl.

Katie Couric Narration: as we find ourselves in the midst of a gender revolution.

Woman 1: She's like “I'm not a boy, I'm a girl in my heart and in my brain.

Man 2: There are areas in the brain that correlate with gender identity.

Katie Couric: When Ellie, then your son, said that. It's at a little scary?

Woman 2: And then, the doctor came over and said “well, sometimes babies are not quite a girl and not quite a boy.

Woman 3: She would need surgery.

Woman 4: These are human rights violations on intersex kids' bodies.

[Music]

Katie Couric Narration: There's evidence that seems to show trans brains are in fact different.

Man 3: And I use he/him/his.

Person 1: I use they/them/their. I am plural.

Man 4: This is not just one individual but a whole group of kids.

Katie Couric: At times do you feel like, whoa, whoa, whoa, it's too fast!? it's all, it's making me dizzy?

[Music]

Katie Couric: What about your mom and dad, do they call you Brian now?

Brian: They call me Dave.

Katie Couric: Do wish they'd call you Brian?

Brian: Yes.

Woman 5: A lot of us don't even have the strength to report a crime.

Woman 6: Well, I want to empower other women like us.

[Music]

Katie Couric: Your case is going to be heard before the Supreme Court.

Person 2: I'm looking for the same opportunities that my peers enjoy every single day, and that includes using the same restroom.

[Music]

Woman 7: I said, "Goodbye, Bill," and she became Kate. If you love someone, you're willing to do what it takes.

Man 5: There are people in these societies, they recognize more than two genders.

[Music]

Katie Couric: We're all a lot more complicated than we've assumed.

[Music]

Return to "[Chapter One](#)"

“Ep 5 Privilege: Conflating personal with structural” Transcript

[This transcript is only of the “Table Talk” section of the episode, as it is the relevant information to the eTextbook.]

[Intro Music]

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: Welcome inside Two fifty four. Let's close the office door and start the conversation.

[Intro Music]

Colleen Clemens: This week, the talk around the table is about conflating the personal and the structural. I teach a lot of gender studies classes, and I talk a lot about gender and many, many times on a daily basis, somewhere on social media or in my classroom, someone says to me, Well, you're just attacking white men. And my reply is always this. I love white men, but I fucking hate patriarchy and that those are two different things. And I think what we need to all be careful about is that when we are talking about issues having to do with oppression, we're talking about structures. We're not necessarily talking about people and individuals. So when I am talking about changes that I want to see that come out of feminism, I am not saying that I do not like someone as an individual, but I do not like systems and structures that benefit those individuals. So just like me, I don't, I don't like to benefit from white privilege, but I do. And maybe some small part of me does like to benefit from it 'cause I can't even separate myself out from it as much as I'd like to. So the example that I always come back to is when black lives matter came about, then the all Lives matter signs came up and what was missing there is the individual, right? So all lives matter is a focus on the individual. And when I see all lives matter, I see that people are missing the point because black lives matter. I don't want to speak for the movement, but from what I understand is that it is about the structural system of racism that has meant in the past that black bodies matter less and black bodies are in danger.

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: So they're not saying that all lives don't matter. Again, I don't want to speak for a group. What I understand, because I see this very much with feminism as well is when I talk about feminism, I'm not saying that white men should have less or suffer. What I'm saying is a structure needs to be torn down, not a person. Just like I think with the Black Lives Matter movement, they're not

saying police officers should be taken down. They're saying a system of oppression that allows black men to be shot without thought and with abandon is what needs to be torn down. So that difference between the individual and the structure, I think people get really caught up in it the moment somebody hears it, and then they're like, But you're attacking me and I'm not attacking you. I am attacking a system, a system that I benefit from as well.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: You know, I'm glad that you articulated it that way because I thought that was a very good articulation.

Colleen Clemens: Thank you.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: And it's making me think so. Why is it that people? Why do people respond, especially, I mean, white people? I mean, it's just a fact. Why do white people respond with such disdain and with such defensiveness when presented with a marginalized group, there's black lives matter. There's now a native Lives matter. There's, we're looking at sort of traditionally marginalized peoples who have absolutely been damaged and hurt by systemic oppression within the structure of our government, of our educational systems, of our economic systems, the fact that we're willing to step out of our bubble, and we're trying to get other white people to step out of their bubble and just recognize, yes, this is a problem. And, yes, these, these people, these marginalized groups, have a right to say, "Hey, we are here. We are equal to you." No, if that's what to separate you.

Colleen Clemens: To answer your question, I think that people don't want to be bad people, and you're not a bad person. If you benefit from privilege and you're not a bad person, you're not a bad. It doesn't mean you're a bad person at all. So, again, coming back to, I hate patriarchy, but I'm married to a white man, So I'm capable of separating the two that I think people feel. And especially, we just saw this in the election cycle. People, when they hear privilege being attacked, systemic, obvious privilege being attacked, they feel personally attacked. And I think we all need to be careful about that. I don't like hearing feminists attacking white men, particularly. I want them to talk. You know, I always say I want to talk about patriarchal, heterosexist, capitalist, misogynist structures. I don't want to talk about people per se.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: And, you know, so when somebody embodies that, like Donald Trump, right to me, he's embodying those structural issues, then I'm willing to talk about it at the base level. We can't just be attacking individuals. We need to

be working together to be tearing down systems. And that will mean, but, and it's also really hard to let go of some privilege.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I think that's some of it, too. Yeah, and also, well, and also, now I'm thinking, as you're talking, it's making me think that it's also this desire for simplicity instead of acknowledging the complexity of society and the complexity that we live with, you know, we are privileged. We're not perfect. Of course, we're benefiting from privilege. We look at what we're doing here. We are trying to recognize our privilege, and that doesn't make us bad people. But people really want to be simplistic and just say, well, society is this way or that way. It's just black and white and not acknowledge any gray areas because that's complicated. And, oh, that might make me feel bad. And, oh, it's, no, no, I don't want to focus on the complexity of life or privilege or where I exist. So maybe that's part of why people are defensive, is it?

Colleen Clemens: And it requires you to think in a more complex fact, and everybody has felt oppressed at some point. And so I think it's hard to separate that out. Well, there was this one time that this happened to me. Well, yes, I mean, that's very possible. And systems of oppression and structural oppression can still exist, right? *[Amanda agreeing in the background]* We don't need to have competitions. I think that there are opportunities for us to all move forward together, but I think I don't, I shouldn't have to defend on a daily basis my own experience and be told that I'm making things up or I'm seeing things. I'm not seeing things. This is my experience. It is very clear this is a structural issue. And people that have even, I always say there's not some man behind the curtain like saying, Well, let's be patriarchal today, right? And the people that have enacted those structural oppressions upon me, they're not bad people, right? And there are people who might even say they have my best interests at heart. I think we just need to. We need to separate the two. We can talk about privilege. You are not being attacked. Nothing is going to be taken away from you, necessarily. You are not a bad person, but also then trying to say all lives matter devalues the actual systemic oppression of a group telling me that a woman's march should be an all person's march devalues and takes away that specific focus on a structural system of oppression that I want to slowly tear down. I don't want to tear my white male husband down, but I do want to tear down some of the structures that lets him move through the world a little differently than I do.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: And a little more easily.

Colleen Clemens: Yeah, exactly.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So acknowledging the difference between the structure and the person...

Colleen Clemens: Yes.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino:...is really, it's essential for all of us to, yes, grapple with that complexity,

Colleen Clemens: and it's lazy and those who are doing that right, who are doing ad hominem attacks. It's lazy, right? Because it's way easier to do that than to really learn and think about structures. So do your homework no matter where you are in this process. But don't fall onto those easy, easy, individual attacks. Tear down the patriarchy with me.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Tear down, tear it down.

Colleen Clemens: Tear it down.

[Transcript ends at 8:04 of 18:23]

[Return to "Femininity"](#)

“Ep 26 Toxic Masculinity” Transcript

[This transcript is only of the “Table Talk” section of the episode, as it is the relevant information to the eTextbook.]

[Intro Music]

Colleen Clemens: Welcome to Inside 254. Let's close the office door and start the conversation.

[Music continues]

Colleen Clemens: Today's talk around the table is about toxic masculinity. So we're going to need a quick primer on the difference between sex and gender so that we understand what masculinity means. When we say that sex is biological traits most often thought of as genitalia, but also chromosomes, hormones, those things, right. So sexed male, sexed female intersex. Those terms have to do with biology. Gender often has to do with construct. So when I'm talking about femininity and masculinity, I'm not talking about sex. I'm talking about gender, and that's a really important baseline when we are thinking about the idea of toxic masculinity because it's not saying toxic manliness or toxic men, it's talking about the construction of masculinity formed around gender. Construction of maleness is what is toxic. So when people bring up toxic masculinity very quickly, somebody might get defensive and say that you're talking about men. And really, I think conversation being toxic, right? And it's not that at all right, has nothing to do with that. It has to do about the ways we construct and talk about masculinity. And then how those ideas about gender might play out on a sexed body that's male, but it doesn't have to be right. Toxic masculinity is a brand of masculinity. It is not the only discussion about masculinity.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, yeah. Can you give us? I guess I don't know...

Colleen Clemens *[interrupting]*: I can give you a definition...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino *[continuing question above]*: a basic definition.

Colleen Clemens: I can give you a definition. Masculinity. So one that I work with is from the “Good Men Project”. And they write, “Toxic masculinity is a narrow and repressive description of manhood, designated manhood as defined by violence, sex status and aggression. It's the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything, while emotions are a weakness where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured, while supposedly quote, feminine

traits which can range from emotional vulnerability to simply not being hypersexual, are the means by which your status as a quote man can be taken away." So it is...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Well, I was going to say, I, I feel that's a, that's a pretty, that's a pretty broad definition. And it definitely transcends and goes beyond the idea of men picking up a gun and shooting up a crowd of people. I mean, and I think that's where we're seeing it a lot in the mass toxic masculinity, It's most hyper, right. That's the argument I would make. Right. But then this is sort of an everyday cultural phenomenon. So can you think, can we talk about maybe some examples that are more dialed back?

Colleen Clemens: Sure

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: First going into a church and killing people back every day?

Colleen Clemens: First, I want to say that I think having conversations about toxic masculinity come out of deep love for men because it really, the idea about having a conversation about the construct of masculinity that is limiting in the way that the Good Men Project defines is that it wants to. The conversations I want to have are how do we create more space for more ideas about what a man can be? What does manliness mean? And a great example would kid knocking over my daughter at, you know, in a playground when she's two, a little boy and the mother says to me, oh, you know, boys will be boys. So that's, I think, the first moment of this idea of toxic masculinity that connects the idea of being a boy to the idea of being innately or naturally violent. And my deep love for man is that I don't think that's true, that when you talk about when I talk about toxic masculinity, what I am doing is undoing this biological idea that one is innately or naturally violent. *[Women acknowledging statement]* In this case, I think that boys will be boys is a piece of crap. And I think boys are much better and more worthy of love and can be something other than violent. *[Women acknowledging statement]* it's limiting to me, toxic masculinity is a limiting brand of masculinity.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So toxic mass to me, to scholars, let's just talk. So toxic masculinity is it limits men's ability to have to be a more complicated, full individual with a range of emotions. And like, accepted that men have a range of emotions, like the men might cry, that men might cry. And so if you think about, if you think about love and joy and like, and they're,...

Colleen Clemens *[adding in]*: But when men publicly express those emotions, also, they're called a pussy, right? They're immediately emasculated and

feminized. So toxic masculinity really breeds in that space that there is only one way to be a man and the only access you're going to have to that is through violence, hyperage, agency, sex, right? This idea of like getting some, I can't tell you how many times I've had conversations with, Well, I think Kevin Mahoney, when he interviewed me on his podcast, you know, *[Women acknowledging statement]* he talked about how growing up he was watching the, he was like performing, right? This idea that you need to perform one brand of masculinity when maybe it doesn't match, you are. But you feel like there's only one way to be a boy and only one way to become a man. And if you don't, you might be a fag. Oh, you're a pussy, right? Like think of all the language that we have to emasculate men. They are, they are connected to sexuality or to feminization, *[Women acknowledging statement]* So hypermasculinity is, is a brand. It's not saying that this men are innately its way. And it's not saying that there's some man behind the curtain, like in The Wizard of Oz who's plotting and planning on this. It's saying that throughout time we have culturally come to represent toxic masculinity as this is the way to be a man. And I would argue that no one really used this term, but the feminist movement really tried to draw into account toxic femininity, right? That there's only one way to be a woman. Nobody really called it that. But I'm starting to see that in the sixties and seventies and eighties and that first and second wave toxic femininity. But the reason that I think people didn't talk about it that way is because it was embodied and embedded within women's bodies. So like enacting eating disorders or, you know, or policing our own bodies, whereas toxic masculinity does seem to have an element of going beyond one's own body and out, like into the world for violence, but external, exactly.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino *[adding in]*: Expressions.

Coleen Clemens: OK, so this is why I think maybe, and I'm just starting to think about this. But these one track brands of gender identity that are really coming into question now. So toxic masculinity is masculinity that is toxic.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK.

Colleen Clemens: It is a brand. It is not saying, I can't say this enough.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: Gender and sex are two different things. It is not saying toxic men, right?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: It's not saying if you were born with male genitalia, you are, you are a toxic man.

Colleen Clemens: Correct.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Like, that's, I feel like that when I see online trolls, and when I see it on right wing media, and when I see even my newsfeed, my Facebook feed don't like some of the men, just don't fucking get it. And like, what is it that they're not? And I think it's to me,

Colleen Clemens: Well, good. And if anybody would ever listen. But, and again, I think it's coming from a deep love for the men in our lives that we need to have... The boys that we're trying to raise, right? Like, what does it mean? How do you rate? I was so relieved that I wasn't having a boy child. I mean, my child may eventually gender identify as male, but because I was terrified of fighting the, I know how to fight the wave of, you know, barber and all that. I don't know how to fight the wave of toxic masculinity that is putting a shirt on a two year old that says all the girls want me and stuff like that, you know, like, sexualize it. Well, people think that's cute. The argument I get when I try to disrupt that. Yeah, it's cute. It's so cute. Okay, so that's a very so I'm gonna give you another example. Give us another example. High school. A good example of this would be, you know, I'm walking down the hall and this happened to me and a boy would snap my bra and then I would tell on that person because that's completely inappropriate behavior and sexual harassment and be told, well, he's really doing that because he likes you. So that is confusing, because toxic masculinity doesn't call boy behavior into account because the idea there is, Well, boys just naturally don't know how to express themselves. So what they do is they hurt you because they don't know how to say they like you. So that's toxic masculinity in, like, a high school setting.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, what about is sexism, men who are sexist? Is that a result of toxic masculinity, or is it related?

Colleen Clemens: Yes. Well, yeah. I mean, that's a big question. I could write a whole book...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino *[interrupting]*: like a specific examples of, you know, men being, I don't know. I'm trying to think of, like, daily, like in your work environment. When can..

Colleen Clemens: I give you a hyper example?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, but I'm OK. I'm trying to ground it in, like, some of the everyday stuff that women and men might see an experience and not realize that this is an example of toxic...

Colleen Clemens: denying women promotion because the work that they do is seen as gendered as, you know, like service on a campus, for example, right. That gendering that as the, quote, natural realm for women. And meanwhile, exactly. And then, meanwhile, going to men getting promoted at higher rates because self overseeing, right. Because they, well, and whatever they say is, and because they are seen then as, like having power.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: So finding ways to, I call it ghetto wizing, but finding ways to, like, get a wise femininity, things that are things that are seen as feminine, mentoring, nurturing, seeing. That is less than, right. So to me, that's a brand of this idea that masculinity can be toxic and limiting.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, and give me one more hyper example. Hyper

Colleen Clemens: A hyperexample is, for example, the person who just killed women in California a few years ago and then wrote that manifesto, and he did it because other girls wouldn't date him. The idea that he is deserving that women should date him, and because women didn't date him, he is going to just generalize and take down other women in the name of that. That is hypertoxic masculinity. And my argument is always because toxic masculinity is, you can't hit the target. It's a losing game, just like femininity, right? Like, so toxic masculinity, you can't win that. It's a losing game. And so that's going to create a vacuum that needs to be filled by something. And we see that often filled by violence. We see it filled by gendered violence. We see it by, you know, I would argue something that ISIS really takes advantage of. You don't feel like you're man enough. And so therefore, here's an opportunity where we will show you and let you feel man enough. So these vacuums are created that are often filled in with violence. Because this trajectory of toxic masculinity is, it can only be fulfilled when you have status and status. If you can't get it through sex, if you can't get it through money, maybe you can attain it through violence.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Got it. OK, so that's good. Thank you. I feel like I've learned welcome here. So I know you have made this statement, and it is, I mean, you know, you make a lot of brilliant statements, but this is not unusual. The idea that it hurts toxic, masculine, and he hurts. It's bad for everyone. It's

men and women. And, you know, people who identify as all different genders. So can you tell us why and how it hurts men and women.

Colleen Clemens: So I think the obvious for women is gendered violence. And so we're just going to move past that and talk about men. Maybe a great thing that our readers could watch would be *The Mask You Live in*, which is a Netflix documentary. And in *The Mask you live in*, it's talking with different sections, you know, different subsections of boys in high school, adults, athletes, and they all talk about how they felt like they couldn't actually express who they thought they could be or want to be, that they were denied a part of themselves, a part of their humanness because they believed that a boy can't cry or a boy is not allowed to do this, or in order to be blank, an athlete, you have to assert your masculinity and there's no space for anything else. So my argument, and also, I think it's bad for everybody because then when somebody tries to fill in that void in those deep moments where somebody is feeling like a failure, and I think I would argue that everybody is going to feel like a failure in these rigged games, that they'll take down anybody. Right? I think if we look at what happened in the Texas church, that person was wanted to take down everybody and there was a connection to his mother in law, right? So there's this connection of, like, emasculation. And then I will hyper masculinize in the sense of, I'm just going to take this gun and shoot everyone, that's in my wake. Hyper toxic masculinity is bad for people because it doesn't differentiate, and it doesn't always discriminate when it's enacting it gender wise, like that person didn't just walk in and shoot women, right? That women, children, men, like, there was no discrimination based on gender once these, these large scale, violent moments happen.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So. One thing I saw as a response to that tweet that you had made and a response that to this idea that toxic masculinity really hurts everybody. In the example, with that Texas church shooting, I saw women online on Twitter specifically saying, well, what about the man with the gun who took the shooter down? So, I mean, I feel like that's a conflation, but that's something that the alt right really loves to do. But that is a message and a narrative and a pushback that I do see in many ways...

Colleen Clemens: But that's one. It's just an interval, right? So that was the individual act, right? When we're talking about masculinity or gender constructs, we're talking about structural things. So that could have been a woman with a gun, right, too. I don't think that moment needs to be gendered. I think women and men carry guns.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So who aren't, who don't subscribe to or fall prey to toxic masculinity? Who pushed back...

Colleen Clemens: who, who resist those imports resist that. And it's, it's a daily, I think resistance. I think there's a level of self actualization required that, you know, most children don't have yet, and teenagers might not have kids in college might not have, Maybe by the time, as an adult, you can eschew those gender norms. But I think that takes a lot of work and a lot of.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So just to end this table talk, then what can we do? We, you and me listeners, to resist toxic masculinity need to challenge it and to change it, whether it's in the public domain or our own personal lives. I mean, what are you seeing?

Colleen Clemens: What do you forward to getting the Nobel Peace Prize for figuring that out? But what I say, what I do in my daily night daily life is I tried. It's constant subversion of gender norms. Constant pointing out of here is where this could lead. So maybe we shouldn't talk this way, right? Boys will be boys, for example, and have those expectations. I have those expectations that people will not act that way when they do. I will explain to I it doesn't feel good. It's really uncomfortable. But to have a conversation about why this is not, OK, constant disruption, constant calling out of it, trying to live a life that creates a space and a model for what it can look like to not participate in toxic masculinity. But it's hard. I think as educators, we have a unique opportunity to have those conversations, which is why I'm writing about this for teaching tolerance, because I'm seeing the classroom as a space and literature as a space to really talk about authentic. And I don't know that I believe in an authentic identity, but at least at least having the choice to cry or express an emotion.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: And, I mean, I'm thinking even down to the very common line of don't tell a man who's crying to man up.

Colleen Clemens: I was just going to say that. I would say literally, No, I was just going to say, never let the phrase man up or station. Exactly.

Woman: Don't call men pussies, right? Right. Don't emasculate men for showing any kind of motion that isn't in the quote, accepting range.

Colleen Clemens: I mean, like on John Boehner for crying.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: That really annoyed me.

Colleen Clemens: I was like, stop it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: That's terrible.

Colleen Clemens: Here is a man crying in public. Don't shame him. And I think shame is very much wrapped into this. So that's something that we can all do. We can all do that. Never say man up to somebody, ever, you know, immediately delete that from your vocab. Don't ever say boys will be boys. Don't, don't read. Boys are made. I'm sure that, you know, I've never read that to my daughter.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Don't call men pussies.

Colleen Clemens: Please don't show any kind of emotion or fag. I'm sorry...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Don't.

Colleen Clemens: I'm using that word. Yeah, but that's the other. That's the other terrible word that is deployed against men when they show any kind of emotion.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah. And be supportive of the men in your life who are maybe taking steps to learn, who have asked a question, who seems skeptical, but, and maybe even sort of resistant, but yet they're listening, right? I mean, I have men in line shutdown.

Colleen Clemens: Don't immediately shut somebody down if they ask a question,

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: and that's the thing. You're going to get resistance from the men in your lives who really haven't bought into this idea or understand it. But if we keep saying it and we keep explaining it and pointing out examples and being loving when we're trying to explain, don't get angry when the men in your life go. Oh, did that's such bullshit. OK, but that's coming from a very specific place and to push through it, drop the ideas, just make the say, hey, maybe you should read this or, hey, you know, here's an idea. I mean, keep disrupting. Like you say, I like that idea of constant disruption and pull.

Colleen Clemens: It's part of sex and gender. Yeah, if we start there, if people start there, we might have a chance to really unpack this. But if you can't get there, if you can't get the difference between sex and gender with somebody, this conversation is only going to go to the place where you think you're saying men are bad and you're not. I'm not saying I'm not saying that any. When I talk about toxic masculinity at all, I want the men in my life to feel safe and loved and emotional and, and feel like they can be themselves.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: But you're right. I mean, you're absolutely right. That's, I'm thinking of very specific conversations that I've had in my world, where in my life, where there are men in my life where I can't get them past the differentiation between sex and gender, that they literally think that sex and gender are the same thing. So it's a challenge.

Colleen Clemens: Yeah. I mean, I'm going to do that if you want. You know, your question was, how do we change, How do we change or resist it? Pulling apart those two terms is a really great start. And teaching those two terms early on and putting using them correctly in conversation is super important. I like it. That's good.

[Transcript ends at 20:30 of 47:52]

Return to end of "Masculinity"

“Understanding LGBTQ+ Terminology” Lecture Transcript

Colleen Clemens: So I'm so glad that you are here today and just put this on. Some of you maybe came to the session about allyship. This is actually taking a bit of a step back in a way, because I'm, I'm realizing that just understanding and navigating all the terminology around LGBTQ plus folks is really challenging and always evolving. So I propose to doing this session just to introduce folks to terms and to make sure that you leave understanding any terms that you might not to the best of my ability in here, we have the flag with all the good different colors incorporating white, pink and blue for transpoken and then having the brown and the black for black lives matter. So I like to remind us all the time that we are all in this together. What I mean by that is I am learning along with you some of these words I didn't even know ten years ago. And while I'm the director of a program about this, I learned a lot from my students and, and I have to constantly be re-navigating as well. So never feel like you should already know this because the other day, for example, one of my students came out on Facebook and I could tell she was coming out as something, but I didn't know what the flag was or even what that was. So I had to look it up. So we are all doing this together. And the other reminder is that I know different schools are different climates. So today, you know, not so much because we're not talking about things we might do outwardly that much. But everywhere is different. And every culture is different. Every school is different. And you know better what will work in your school climate and what won't. I think she may be settled down. What's up? So here's the big question. Because you're probably here because we all just want to do better by our students. What do you do? I need to be an ally. And how on earth can I keep track of all these words? And really, what I want you to get out of today is if a student says something about their identity, you know what it is, or you may, you know, know how to ask. So I would like you to raise your hand throughout. I think I'll be able to see it. And, and please remember that each of these slides could be an hour. This is an introduction today. Hopefully good introduction that leaves you feeling like you have a good foundation yet it is an introduction. So the first thing, and I'm not sure that I'm going to have access to this. Is it? Oh, yeah. We don't have a chat. We have a Q A. Let me see if that'll work here. So I want to make sure that I know I want to. I want you to put in the Q A terms that you want are curious about, and I'm not sure. Will it work like that? I forgot that this wasn't a chat. I think it would open the chat up if you would lie on that. So that's only the presenter. So it will be private. I think that would just be easier. I am alright. I said it to all panelists. So you and I can see it so that can be set to private. Like

you were saying here. So I are you. It's OK if I can't see it. Are you seeing it? That you could read some of the words to me coming up? I have not seen anything come through yet, but it is. Okay. So now there we go. Here we go. Oh, there it is. Thank you all. Ok, so gender fluid intersects demi. Sexual is the word I had to look at. I'm just scaring this to see if there's anything that I how I talked about. I have no idea what school sexual. I'm going to write that down. How to use terms in teaching writing. Yeah, it's good. OK, I'm going to get to most of these. All right. I think I had to look up scoliosesexual ones, and I don't remember what it was, but maybe I'll pop over and see if I can look that. So thank you. That's really helpful to me. Just to make sure that I'm going to hit all the bases. And thanks for opening them up. That chat made things a little easier. So if you have those kind of bigger questions, just hold them to the end. I do have lots of time built in for that today. A little more than I had last time because we had such good questions last time. And if any of you were here last time. Welcome. Happy to see you. So don't panic, right? I know there's a lot on here, but I'm just using this for the, the big words that you might see when you see LGBTQ two s, Q IA plus. OK, that's kind of all of it. Your school might have an LGDQ center. They might have the plus, there's no one right way to do this. I think the most important thing. OK, good. I am going to get to pronounce. I think the most important thing is that everyone sees you're trying. And if you're trying, that counts for so much. So this is just, I'm going to explain what these things are in slides and talk about them. But just so you know what all those letters in the acronym mean? So the L is for lesbian. The G is for gay. The B is for bisexual. The tea can be a lot of different things. Transgender, trans identified two s is two spirit. If you've never seen that term before, don't worry. We'll talk. I'll explain what that is queer. I'm going to spend some time talking about that word as well. Questioning is somebody who's questioning. That's what that means. Intersex and asexual. I will explain. And the plus sign is anything else acknowledging you're not. You don't need to read the small print. Don't panic. I was just using it for the big letters. Um, the plus sign is just acknowledging that these things change. These things are fluid, and that the plus is just is something that people. You know, this, it evolves, everything evolves, and it's always changing. So the plus just creates space for these things. And a lot of these terms are about creating more space instead of a gender binary where you're either this or that you're either gay or you're straight. You're either man or your woman. A lot of what we're talking about today is about creating space. So the plus sign makes sense at the end of this. But whatever your school uses is is what you should use. OK, so this is a document that I use with my students when I'm teaching women's gender sexuality studies, want to one hundred, which is our intro class, so that I can show you all these different terms at once.

I'm going to go through the mall, so please don't, don't panic. I'm gonna say, don't panic a lot because I know, like immediately all this stuff because we care so much and we want to do it right. Feels like a lot. And so I'm going to break it down for you. So I like the gender bread person because it has these terms here. Gender identity, gender expression mover on the right biological sex. And I've typed in their sex assigned at birth because somebody did just ask in the chat about medical terms and the medical worlds. So you would use sex assigned at birth, probably in, in a medical term and attracted to I've put the term sexuality. So what are these things? Let's start with biological sex because that is the thing that people think of right away. And one thing I want you to make sure you leave with today is pulling apart the two terms of sex and gender and realizing, at least in these conversations, it is two different things. And among our student populations, it is sex and gender are two different things. You've probably noticed, just as I have, how different our students think, how differently our students think about these things than I did growing up in the past twenty five years of teaching, I would say that this is the place we've grown the most and become most inclusive when it comes to LGBTQ issues. And it's been thrilling to watch. And having started in the classroom in nineteen ninety six and thinking back of what you know, what it was like in nineteen ninety six. So biological sex is sex assigned at birth. And here's the drawing here. So right here, biological sex, the easiest, most simplistic, but also reductive way to think about this is genitalia. And so sex assigned at birth is when the baby comes out, doctors looks at genitalia and says it's a boy, it's a girl, or we're not sure which happens more often than not. So that would actually be intersex. So somebody who is intersex shows biological characteristics of both male and female genitalia, basically. I I'm gonna. So a word you may have heard that is no longer appropriate would be hermaphrodite. So that that is not a word we use anymore. Intersex is the correct word. And there are lots of ranges of being somebody who is intersex. So if we look, you don't have to read this. I'm just looking at these little words to make sure. Right. So intersex is the main term that I wanted to talk about there. So if sex is your parts, um, gender is how you feel about your parts, about how about your life, not just your parts. So identity, right? Gender identity or gender is how somebody feels about how they move in the world as a gendered or non gendered person. So non gendered is somebody who has decided or does not feel that they can participate or want to participate in the construct of gender. The idea of gender. So gender, identity or or gender I would just use at this point is, is how you feel. And sometimes how you feel about your gender does not match your sex assigned at birth. And we will get there. So if gender identity, the some of those little terms there that you don't need to see, I'm just looking here. Woman man. So those are two concepts of gender that we're all pretty

comfortable with, at least the knowledge of to spirit. I will talk about gender. Queer is somebody again who's really fluid who moves between or among gender identities, Fluidity, space, all those concepts. Right? Again, the space, the space and gender less. So that, again, is somebody who doesn't feel like they have a gender, which I know can be hard to wrap your head around. But that's what that term means. It can be either be somebody who's willingly not participating in the construct of a gender as a resistance to the construct of gender, or it might just be somebody who just feels that way and just doesn't feel like they are one or the other or anywhere in between they're outside of. So that would be non gendered. So then your gender expression, you might hear people say that that's what people see on the outside. So that's why I'm kind of going around that. So if sex assigned to birth is your biological sex, is your body is your body right? Or chromosomes, your hormones, your genitalia, your identity, or your gender is your brain, how you feel about those, how you feel about what you are moving through the world. Gender expression is what you put on, how you express to the world what you are. And sometimes those things don't match as well. So some terms you may have heard a gender would, again be somebody who. Just. You know, we have ideas. Our gender norms in this world, girls should look like this. Boys should look like this. Somebody who's a gender doesn't participate in that. So we may use the term androgynous for that, but it might not for them be the same thing. But they may present and express in a similar way to androgyny. So in terms you maybe have heard before, butch or femme. So somebody who presents as as butch kind of dresses in a really, quote, unquote, masculine way, femme is somebody who really dresses in a quote, unquote feminine way. Again, these are just ideas we have about this gender neutral. You may have heard that term like a baby shower, for example. You know, I asked for all gender neutral clothing, meaning I didn't want somebody to for some kind of gender expression on my baby. Right? So I didn't want to get, I had a girl, so I didn't want, like, the tide of pink. So gender neutral in our culture would be things that are like yellow, white. Again, neutrality, not the things that, not the two different colors that would shoot out a cannon at a gender reveal party, which is not a gender reveal party. But we'll get to that. And then finally, in these terms is attraction or sexuality. So that's your heart where your heart is drawn and also your genitalia. Right? So, so attraction is sexuality. So somebody might be straight or gay. These are terms that we use. I have a whole slide on pansexual because I find that students use that term a lot. Asexual is not having any attraction to anyone, and we'll talk. We'll get a little deeper into that as well. Or bisexual. So the big takeaway from this, the kind of me just slamming you with all these words is gender is different from sex is different from sexuality. Biological sex is your biology, your genitalia, chromosomes, homozone

hormones, your gender, Your idea of gender is more than just your biology. Your gender expression is how you show the world how you want to present yourself as your gender. And sometimes that doesn't fit with how the person feels. And then sexuality is different from all of those things. Sexuality is who you want to be with. And that may be nobody that would be asexual. I'm gonna get into all these now. So hopefully that made a little sense. I see a Q and A. Yes, non binary as well. Yep. I'm gonna get to that term, but I'm gonna read this because I think this is really important. So typical for non. Typically for non gendered. A lot of us prefer to use the term non binary. Yes. So you'll hear students say that as well. They are neither. And even those that may feel they are mixed of both. Androgynous is someone who feels neither too masculine or too feminine, whereas a gender is someone who doesn't feel like they are a particular gender in gender. Oh, and you're welcome. By the way, I appreciate your. Thank you. So intersex? Yeah, I have a slide on that. If I didn't. If I don't answer your question about intersex, I'll get to the end of it. But yes, it is when a doctor cannot. Assign a sex at birth definitively that fits within the binary of man and woman, which is problematic as well. And I think we'll talk about this. But let me just say really quickly that, you know, the problem with folks who are intersex when I was growing up is that the doctors would just decide which genitalia, that they would decide the biological sex of the child, usually based on what sex characteristics that child had more of, and the world has seen. And in fact, I think with John Hopkins last year apologized for doing this, the problems that that created. So now the idea of somebody who's intersex, if they want to change, there's no responsibility or need for that. Is to wait until that person's idea of their gender has really formed, and then that person can affirm their gender with that surgery if they choose to have it. So that is what intersex is. Hello. Can we come back here again? OK, so this is like, again, this is really reductive and we can talk about each of these things for an hour. But there's my daughter who's super girly and everybody thinks it's hysterical. So, Jen, and she's really trying to make sense of this stuff right now. She's really working. You know, these kids are growing up having vocabulary we did not have. So I tell her, gender is how you feel about yourself and sexuality is how you feel about others. That's what I would tell a nine year old. OK, so I know that it's more than that, but she often confuses the two. So to me, this is an easy way to talk about it. So our gender terminology, I just went through this, I think, but just to review. So. And this, this is a great resource. The GL sen, you'll see a lot of stuff coming from that today. So here, again, sex assigned, sex assigned at birth. What the medical community would label you, your gender identity, how you see yourself, your gender attribution or expression is how your gender is perceived by others. Oh, I'm sorry. A generous expression is how you want to display your

gender. And then gender attribution is what others put upon you. So, and sometimes what others put upon you is wrong. And we notice that as teachers, we do that right? We do that. And I will talk about pronouns. I know someone asked about them. So this is a really easy way to remember this. And I talk about this on the second day with my students. You know, you hear about all these gender reveal parties on online and in social media, But actually, there's no such thing as a gender reveal party because what's actually happening is you're revealing the biological sex or sex assigned at birth. Like those parties aren't about gender. Gender is about self and understanding of self. So really, those parties should be called sex reveal parties. Which drives me crazy. So just that term, knowing in our kind of cultural lexicon, we hear gender reveal based on the terminology that is not correct. It's a sex reveal party which would sound scary to people. So. OK, so within the gender terminology, these are some terms that you might want to use yourself. You might hear students say it. I think it's for my field. It's important for me to identify, you know, put, identify myself up front, then I'm cis gender. I'm cis gender, white, heterosexual woman. So a cis gender person. So cis just means same. That that's what cis means. So a trans gender person is a person whose sex assigned at birth or biological sex aligns or is the same as their gender. So talking, and I would never ask a student to talk about themselves as an example. But, you know, using myself as an example. So my sex assigned to birth, biological sex is female, and my gender is woman, right? I feel that's how I feel about myself kind of coming up through the world and growing up. So those things are the same. So that's where the term cis gender comes from. So you might hear, you might hear a student say, cis gender, cis, he heterosexual. So if you see here those like syllables, that's what they're doing. So this gender, I don't believe this. OK, I'm not using that word, but this is what people who are not interested in having these conversations about fluidity and space would consider normal. That would be the term. But it is, obviously, I wouldn't be sitting here doing this if I thought that was correct. So that's what that term means. So then transgender means across, right? Trans means across. So all this term means is somebody who's true gender identity does not match the sex or gender they were assigned at birth. So what? That all it means is it goes across in the sense that somebody might be. So if I used me as an example, sex assigned at birth based on genitalia, hormones, chromosomes only genitalia assigned birth. Female. But if my gender, like, if I really felt like what I move, what I want to move through the world as and my true identity is, is man or closer to what we think of as man or masculinity, then that would be a cross would just go across, see those little arrows. So that's what these little dots are for. So the example I just gave is if I were born biologically biological sex, women, cross trans, man. I want to be very clear that

this word is an adjective. Again, I'm saying words that should not be said, but I'm saying them. So you don't ever say them? No, A person is not a transgender. A person is not transgendered. It is a transgender person or transgender people. So that that matters. Using it as an adjective really really matters when you're using this word. So I saw a quick question. Asexual. Who You want to be within a sexual manner? Yes. So an asexual person is not, um. I don't want to say not interested. There is a specific term for somebody who's only sexuality is masturbation. That might be scoliosket, skeletal, actual. Don't get up. But asexual just kind of means they don't have sexual feelings. And there are more folks that identify as asexual than you would realize. And I do. I will get to that. So some terms having to do with trans folk, trans man or transwoman. It seems as these words evolve that that space is important, so putting them together can be seen as problematic. Don't really understand why. I just know that as I listen to the trans community, that's what I see. So somebody's a trans man or a trans woman. People might. So if somebody is trans, there's no goalpost. There's no. Line in the sand that one has crashed across in order to be trans. So, you know, if a student tells me they're trans, I say, thank you. What are your pronouns? And we all move on because people seem to be really curious or assume that somebody has to have surgery, or there's some need for surgery or hormones for legitimacy. There's no, there's no magic line where suddenly somebody gets to be trans. Like if somebody says they're trans, they're trans. So I put, I'm saying that because I see a chat. Um. The gent. So gender affirming surgery is a surgery that a student might have or not just, I mean, I'm talking about students because I'm thinking about a teach as teachers. But, but anybody might have the term that would have been used when I was growing up was a sex change surgery. That is not a term we use. Gender affirming. Surgeries can be all different kinds of surgeries. They can happen at different times or gender affirming medical care. Somebody asked about medical terms. So gender, gender affirming is the, you know, if somebody says they're having, like, gender affirming surgery, it might be somebody having top surgery, having their breasts removed or having breasts. You know, there's all different kinds of surgeries. They are very expensive. They are not required for somebody to be trans. Somebody is just gender creative is another term. You might hear, again, that's that idea of. Seeing right. If somebody's creative, right, you see beyond what is in front of you. You see, beyond what everybody has told you is a thing so that somebody might say that they are gender creative. Or you might hear is seeing an article, somebody talking about gender creativity. These terms are all. They're all, like, really important. Some of them are hard to explain because they get so bump up next to each other. But I wanted you to hear these words, at least and know that they're out there. OK, so gender fluid. So this is another one and you'll

see here, right. These little arrows, actually, like, break apart. So this is traditionally the man woman. This is traditionally a symbol for man. But then, like, you know, they all look different. This is that idea of things shift and, and move. Fluidity is the thing, right? The, a binary is either or fluidity is both. And it's, it's movement, it's change. It's that people's gender isn't necessarily fixed. You know, I hear a lot about, you know, when kids might come out as something in their teenage years and people will be like, it's just a phase. You know, that seems really reductive, but I, you know, I think it's more productive to think of that as fluidity, right? It's trying things out. It's being fluid. It's being creative. So maybe it is a phase in the sense that it's not forever. But gender fluidity is about the fact that these things evolve and change with our genders, and sometimes they don't. You know, this is, I've never felt this way. Sometimes they don't. But I think they do more often than we've ever talked about and why this young generation is so exciting in what their play, you know, play, It's, to me, it's like play and identity and creativity and love it. So this was a term I said I would make sure I would get to to spirit is a term within Indigenous communities. It is not sexuality. It is a term having to do with gender. And a two spirit person is who within Indigenous communities would draw from both. So that's the two. So feel masculine and feminine and hold it together at the same time instead of either or. You now that you've heard this term, you might notice it more, but it is a term specifically to indigenous spoke. How am I doing? OK? I think we're doing OK. So now we're going to get to the terminology about sexuality. So that was all about gender. And now sexuality is like what we want to do with others. For the most part, gender is really our ourselves and how we feel about ourselves. So sexuality can be made up of a lot of different things. Some term, there are some terms for all these, But, you know, we, I think culturally, immediately think about the body, but it can be our thoughts and our feelings, our relationships, our values and beliefs. And of course, gender is going to be a part of that as we bring it into the sexuality equation. OK. Oh, my gosh. And I use this slide in the last presentation as well, because it is, it's very overwhelming. But I wanted to put this here because. So this is how I knew my student was coming out as something because I knew it had colors, right. And I was like, OK, so, I mean, I know, or you might see a student wearing a pin of one of these. So I wanted to put on your radar that all, you know, you can look this up and, and find. All these different things. But I'm just looking to see if there's anything on here. I like. Really? I'm not gonna. I think I'm gonna talk about these. Yeah, Gray, romantic was the one that I didn't know that my student came out as. And we'll get to that with asexuality. It's a gradation of asexuality, but they're scoliosexual right there. I think the last time I looked this up and then I didn't. I don't remember what it is. So hopefully you're seeing that as that. This is hard, right? It's hard to

keep track of all these terms. And even though it's part of my job, I forget to. So I put a slide here on pan sexuality because this is a term that I see more and more students identifying as pansexual. Like, you'll hear this a lot. And I I would say, like, three years ago, I had, no, I did. I never heard it. I didn't know what it meant. So pan sexuality. I wish I could remember the line from Schitt's Creek. There's a great line in Schitt's Creek where it's about why I'm not. I'm not going to do a justice, but. Is that people who are attracted to others, regardless of their gender, so follow their heart and their sexuality follows is a reductive way of thinking about this. And it, it falls under that bisexual umbrella. But somebody might be pan and not necessarily have any kind of sexual relations with somebody of the other gender. Make sure I said it. Right. So two things that it's not, it's not polyamory. So polyamory is multiple partners, um, with consent. That's the difference between polyamory and cheating. And. And it's not being attracted to everyone. It says it's not like somebody's right. Pan. Sexual is the same route as pandemic kind of across and abroad. So, but it doesn't mean they're attracted to everybody. It just means like their heart. Their heart and their feelings. And then their, their sexuality follows person to person as opposed to some kind of construct. So if you watch Creek, David is is pansexual. I think you might say it. Like he said, he says it really nicely in one of the episodes where his it's his heart, and then his sexuality follows it. So this is one you you might hear a lot, like when students know that you're open to these conversations, you might hear this a lot. So asexuality is something that people are talking more and more about. So, Demis, sexual. Right there at the bottom to no sexual attraction. Unless there is some kind of let me move my little thing here. Oh, sorry. So sexual or right. You can be a romantic or asexual. So a romantic would be, again, the head and the heart to be reductive and asexual would be no sexual, like physical activity. More and more folks are recognizing this as a sexuality. So it is. It is certainly something to have on your radar. But like I said, I had to look up Demis sexuals. Like I don't. I don't know what that means. Oh, no, I'm sorry. She identified as gray sexual sexual attraction to a very minor degree, right? Like a really small degree. But it's there. It's not saying I never have it. It's just, I like, very rarely have it. So, and then if you're in academia, you probably heard people use the word queer. It is certainly a term that is used for, like, queer studies. Um, but I want to honor the fact that that word is should be used cautiously. It is. It is a word that causes has caused a lot of pain, especially for folks who, like, during the eighties, during the eighth crisis, when queer and before was used as a slur, and it can still be used as a slur. So this would be a word that I wouldn't necessarily use unless I kind of got the sense, but my other dog is here, too. Go ahead. He's allowed out to heal. This is not a word that I would just throw them out, but it's also a word you will

see, especially folks within the queer community will use. So it's this kind of big, broad term that is folks who aren't straight and folks who aren't this gender. So like everybody who falls outside of those two like really rigid things. And so we just, it's been reclaimed, just like other slurs are often reclaimed by the group that has been marginalized by that slur. But just, I'm hesitant to use it. So I think just, you know, it's a word that's out there, and it's a word that you want to be mindful of when you use it. If you use it. This is a reminder to all take a breath because it's a lot, right? It's a lot of stuff to try to digest. So just to wrap up and think about why all of this matters, I want to remind you that often classrooms are the safest space for our students with marginalized identities and that supportive teachers make a critical difference in the lives of LGBTQ students. I cannot emphasize enough how often you, as an educator are the first person that that student may talk to. And again, it's OK if you kind of greet that with love and humility and admit, maybe if you don't understand something that that is OK because our classrooms are the place where our students often feel safest. And so. They do a school climate survey every year, and I see there's a bunch of Q and A. I'll just get through this, and I don't know that they did one for twenty twenty, and I feel like part of my job, right is to read these things and then bring to you the things that matter in for the, for something like this presentation. So I put a big star next to the thing that I think is most important is that ninety seven percent of LGBTQ students could identify at least one staff member supportive of the LGBTQ students at their school. And that is tremendous. I mean, it gives me chills, just thinking about that. Ninety eight percent of students at least know where they are. Someone is supportive of maybe the way that they want to live, that no one else is maybe in their household or in their place of worship or in their place of work, or, you know, and I'm not saying all those places aren't inclusive, but just that student specifically. So that is really wonderful. And I hope that, you know, you being here makes you want to be one of those people that students know they can come to, and that doesn't mean that they're going to come out to you or, you know, anything like that. It's just that they know that somebody is have their back in the school. So this makes students feel safe. And as we know, if students feel safe, then they can learn. And that's why we're there. So we want them to feel safe so that they can do the things we want them to do in our classes. We should assume that there are trans students in our classroom. And I am, embarrassingly, I was surprised by someone I knew for half of their life coming out to me as trans. And I saw that person all the time and would have never had an inkling of it. So students are watching. Assume that there are trans students in your classroom. Almost two percent of high school students identify as trends and that safe school safe schools help. Right? That number here, thirty five percent of trans student. And this is from the CDC,

right? I'm not pulling information from any kind of like rogue, unthoughtful sources. This is the CDC saying thirty five percent of trans students attempt to die by suicide, and we know that that is a significant issue in our teenage populations right now. So just knowing students, knowing that someone is there and that makes them feel safer is is it will. It may reap rewards and benefits that you will never even know. Or maybe ten years later, a student will come back and tell you and our kids are watching. Our students are watching. And I'm not going to talk a ton about allyship because I had done that presentation before. So, but they're, you know, they're, they're way they're looking and watching to see. The thing that teachers can do to most effectively support LGBTQ students is just to love them. And I put that slide there because I want to remind you that it is OK to make mistakes. It is OK to ask students questions. It is OK to have humility and to admit that you don't understand something. But it is also, um, students know that we students know that they care about you. I see Jeffrey raised their hand, and I'm not sure. In fact, I'm almost done, but go ahead. Oh, I see it. But all of a sudden I'm seeing a bunch of raised hands. Are they able to unmute and ask their questions? No. If if they can, they can put the questions in the chat or they can put one into the Q A. But the don't know if I I guess we could allow them to talk with me. I only, I only have two slides left, so if they can, I just, all of a sudden, like three hands went up. So I either didn't explain something right or so if they can put it in the Q A, I will totally address it. I have just these. I think two slides left. So one thing I know, I said I wasn't going to talk about allyship, and I just did it there, right? So I used they. I saw a name come up traditionally masculine name. I did not make an assumption about that person's gender. And they can. They raise their hand. So pronouns really do matter. Our language matters. There's lots of ways that you can. Think about and get students to think about pronouns. But just reminding you that the pronouns do matter. This is a great way to show allyship. And really quickly, there's no such thing as a preferred pronoun. It's not their preference. Gender identity isn't a preference. It's their identity. So, you know, we use it used to be correct to ask people their preferred pronoun. Now it's just pronoun. There's no preference about it. And that was a transmitt, an educator who was trans that came and spoke to a training I was at, and they, they really helped reframe that for me. And so that was a great lesson for me to hear. You saw a bit mode earlier. Just, you might see students using all these different bitcoins. If you use it, you might you notice all the flags? You might consider using them in your classroom, but I wanted to put them there. I believe so. This is the other thing because I would, you know, I would like to do. I know people are, are really wanting this knowledge. And so working with hawks, I had asked what other, what folks want. And if you have ideas for other sessions, if you put it in the I

think Q and A, it'll keep a record, and that'll help us plan and think about what else folks might want to talk about. And it doesn't just have to be about LGBTQ issues. It could be about privilege and talking about that in the class. But, um, you know, if there's other social justice oriented programming that you want, it would be great because I'm willing to do it for a hawks, but we're not quite sure what folks want. So if you have something that you're like, I really love an hour on this, just go ahead and put it in the chat. And I think that that's it. Yes. Thank you. There's my email at the bottom. So I'm gonna turn off my screen. Share. Does anybody else do that? Like, just narrate what you're doing? It's ridiculous. All right, maybe I'm not gonna turn it off. I've blissfully not erase. I've blissfully not been on zoom for a few weeks, OK? Like the wine, not the label. Thank you, Elizabeth. He likes the wine, not the label. That was it in Schitt's Creek. I so appreciate that.

Man Speaking: Okay, I said I saw there's a number of the questions coming in. If you want me to read through some for you or you want to go...

Colleen Clemens: I will go. I see there's a bunch on chat, too, but let me just, if you give me a sec, I'll just grow and make sure. Yes, David says I do drink. We red wine, but I also drink white wine. And I've been known to sample the occasional rose. And a couple summers back, I tried to merlot. It used to be chardonnay, which got a bit complicated. I like the wine and not the label. Thank you so much for putting that there, because that's exactly the little speech that I wanted to remember. So, um, so Ashley asked a really good question about why somebody who's this gender hit would use pronouns. It's important because it normalizes that practice, and it takes the onus and the labor off trans folk to have to do all that work. So if it just becomes part of the air we breathe that everybody has their pronouns. Like on my zoom, I have my pronoun and my email signature. I have my pronoun, then it doesn't other so deeply somebody for whom their pronouns might be different. So to me, it's really. And I talked a lot about pronouns in the other program. I did. And I don't know if I don't know if, like, hawks repeats programming or whatever. But like, if there's a bunch of people here and they're like, no, I want to do that. I'm not sure if that can happen. But, you know, there's a lot to think about with pro. With pronouns. It's really important to just normalize it so that it doesn't look weird and odd. And now that person is even feels more weird and odd because they're, like, immediately outing themselves because of pronouns. Yeah, that's a big question, Elizabeth. That might be. That might be a whole. That would be really good. That's a good one for. OK, um, yes. There was no non binary flag just on the just on the badges it was on there. And I'm so glad it's real quick.

Man Speaking: I put a link for your last presentation to the chat. If anyone wanted to watch that, you did not see the last one.

Colleen Clemens: Oh, good. Oh, so it's there. So you can just go watch it. So there. And so this will be also recorded. So you could go back and do that. Yeah, it's okay that you can't. Oh, they can't see the chat. That's right. It's only to panelists. Why do you think that? I hope that. And I know these were earlier. Who is LAUREN BOOKER, CNN. Oh, that was just the source. That's who made that beautiful image. That's all. I just want to. Well, you know, and I, I, you know, I do love my students, right? And so if care is a verb that feels better, that's totally fine. And, but I think, you know, I'm certainly not talking about, like, romantic love. Oh, wait, what is, I've seen some comments. I suggest terms identifies. Yep. So some folks it identifies can be the same as that word preferred. I don't use identify very much. You may have seen what I think are really rude memes. Like I identify as a narwhal, like, swear to God. I saw that once, and it was making fun of that idea that somebody might identify something. So, yes, Jeffrey, you asked about they, I would circle you back to the link because in that I talked a lot about singular day. And also, Jeffrey, if you google just my name and singular singular they, you'll see an article I wrote for Teaching Tolerance, which just changed their name. And I can't remember what it is now that helps on helps think about they because they, Yeah, I'm an English professor, right? So good is, is a tough term when I see a student, have they in their pronouns? What that signals to me is that they are. Fluid in some way. And I should not make any assumptions because I'm human and we all make assumptions. So they like, if they do like she day or something like that, that's a signal. I that's to me, more a signal. It's not necessarily a grammar issue. When I'm writing, I don't use the singular. They. That's not true. I do. When I'm writing. What I will often do is look up the person and see if they have on, like their Twitter handle or something. Their pronouns, which is pretty common these days. Ok. Gender, queer and gender fluid. Um. That's one of those ones that I was talking about. The butts up against. I don't have a great answer to that question, and there is a good answer to it. Gender. OK, so gender fluid is somebody who? Will move about. Gender queer. To queer something is to complicate it. So a gender fluid person isn't necessarily, and I'm, I know I'm getting jargon here. A gender fluid person is not necessarily queering the idea of gender. They're just being fluid within the construct of gender, whereas gender queer is going to be complicating and undoing and perhaps tearing down the idea of gender. Aaron asked a good question, and I again. I would circle everybody back. Oh, thank you for putting them in there. Learning for justice. Yep. Thank you. I know it just changed. I talk a lot about pronouns and ally. So the, I kind of

did this backwards. And so the first thing I did for Hawks was how to be an ally. And then I kind of realized what I need to do is be foundational first. And just like, what do these words mean? So in that link that's there, and it's there now, I think everybody can see. I talk a lot about pronouns. I don't specifically ask students about pronouns, but in I demonstrate like I have it in my email signature. But one thing that I talk about in that in that presentation is a survey I do at the beginning of the semester, and all the survey is, is like, what name should I call you? Right? And that can be a nickname as well. Like, it's not, it's not like, focused on gender. And, and I do it as a survey tool on our, on our D2L. And then what is, what is your pronoun and the feet? And that's it. So I just, I see, you know, I write down on a piece of paper, a cheat sheet. Anybody that I, you know, that has indicated that their pronoun is different. I've never had a student being angry at having to do a thirty second questionnaire. I do it on the computer instead of in a classroom, so students don't feel necessarily, um, looked out or, or looked upon, but, yeah, I would. I would definitely. Go back and watch that. Just talking specifically about pronouns. So that's interesting with the email signatures, you know, right? Like everything's changing, it can be cumbersome to have it in the email. Uh, your your. Honing in on the fact that identity is a bunch of different things. I think the reason pronouns in an email signature might matter is because now you're writing back and directly addressing them, and I've seen people do really interesting things. Oh, you're welcome. Ever again, every school climate is different. Every person is different. Yeah, I again, I hate email. I would. I wish we could just discourage email in general, but, yeah, it's. It's, it's putting it in the. It's a Band Aid, right? It's a thing. It's like it's a, it's more of a signal of allyship for somebody who's looking for it. And I think that Steve is asking, right? Experts who have experienced and overcome discrimination. It's a good idea. Like somebody who's. You know, speaking from that position of identity, and I think. Who want to do justice? Oh, that's a So somebody asked a really good question about quantitative researchers. I think you know what we've talked about today with really good, specific spot on terminology is the best thing you can do. I don't do quantitative research, so I don't want to pretend like I know the answer to that question, but hopefully you have better language to ask specific questions.

Man Speaking: I think, I mean, I'll make it easier for you to look through. I love seeing all those questions come in, though. It's great to see. Um, I did see a couple of questions earlier about the slides and sharing them. Um, are you, if you're, are you fine with sharing them so I can have our team reach out so that can be available as well?

Colleen Clemens: Um, so what I did last time is, um, I just asked if people asked for specific slides, like what they were looking for. I don't want to share my whole thing, but I'm happy to share, you know, like, "Hey, you kind of showed this slide about all those different badges for like 30 seconds, and I really wanted to look at it." I'm happy to share those things specifically. So, and it's nice that I didn't realize that folks could go back and watch this again. So, is there a website where people can go see all these things?

Man Speaking: Yeah, so it's just blogboxlearning.com. All of our learning growing webinars will be hosted there. Um, so sometime after, probably later this week, this one will be available. So those links are there in perpetuity for now. So the last one you did, we have that up there, and then any of our other ones from our series for this year and the ones we did last year as well are all available as well to go watch.

Colleen Clemens: That's great, and I really, and I didn't say this at the beginning and I should have said it, I'm really grateful that you wanted to spend an hour of your summer thinking about this because I think just showing up means that you and your students are lucky to have you already if you want to spend summer time doing this. So, I'm grateful for you, and I hope that something makes more sense now after the time we spent together.

Man Speaking: So, well, on that note, we are running right up on our time,

Colleen Clemens: Always, I'm always running up.

Man Speaking: No, we, that was perfect. We got one minute. Noon. So, um, it looks like we are just at that time, though. So, I will say a quick thank you to everyone who attended. Um, as Colleen said, really appreciate you taking that time during the summer to come and join us. Um, and thank you to, uh, Colleen. Really do appreciate you posting another one of these for us today. I was happy I was able to help with the last one too, and this was just as good. So really did enjoy that.

Colleen Clemens: Thanks for all your help. It's nice to present and not have to do all the other things.

Man Speaking: Absolutely, I'm happy to. Um, so I did want to mention to everyone who is still here, um, if you or any of your fellow instructors are interested in presenting for any of our learning and growing webinar series, um, you can submit proposals for the learning and growing on the Learning Growing website, and I'm posting that link in the chat right now. So, anybody who has

any proposals, please do send those. Really do encourage you to do that. Um, now separately from this, if you have any other questions, you can direct those to marketing@hawkeslearning.com, and we will be sending out a link with the recording of this webinar once it is available to everyone who attended, just so that you have that full reference. Um, on that note, um, hope everyone has a great rest of your day. Enjoy your week.

Colleen Clemens: Thanks, everybody. Have a nice summer.

Return to ["Terminology"](#)

“Gender according to the Cis, based on their cakes” Transcript

[this video is voice-over narrated by one person] A cis person promised me cake in exchange for a 3-minute talk on this topic, so this is it.

Gender, according to a cis, is a deconstruction of cis people's concept of gender based on their cake. cis people love cake, and they love talking about the sex of a baby, and we're going to break that down today. I conducted a full hour of exhausting research on the topic, and as an outsider, I am the person who's best able to see what cis people believe about gender based on the writing that they do on their most important pieces of material: Cakes.

And from here I've been able to determine that cis people have very little experience with the concept of gender. They are the gender that they were assigned at birth, and so they never really had to think about it very much and it shows. Practically everything is about gender to them though. They care about this to a phenomenal degree. People have died and gender reveals, and they have burned down 46,000 acres in gender reveal parties. So, this is clearly something a phenomenal importance to them. So, from the root we have baby.

All genders start from baby, and all the specific genders can always trace back to baby. From here, we diverge and to sport or bow. A baby can be a sport. More specific sports are possible, and a bow is not a sport. They diverge always from sports. These are always mutually exclusive. From here we have basketball and bows; we have baseball and bows, very common splitting. After that, we have additional bow divergence, and this is where the taxonomy really starts to branch out.

[in a questioning tone] Bow is the most common predictable gender; specific alternatives vary wildly, so we have boots or bows, we have burnouts or bows (I guess that's tires), and then we have badges or bows. Is Cop a gender? I've heard ACAB, is that a signed cop at birth?

Okay, from there we have sparkles. Sparkles are kind of like the Australia of gender. This is a very big branch, and it's kind of all on its own. Sparkles are not sports. And so, from that we get sparkles down there at the bottom. It is its own little thing.

And then, we find out that shoes mean something. We talked about them a little bit earlier, but then it started to really hit me, this is very frequent iconography. It's probably a base type, and so additional divergences can be shown from here.

We have wheeler shoe is a very common thing. We have the touchdowns or tutus, wheels or heels. So, tires are shoes for cars, and then we come back down to burnout. So from here, sports can branch from shoes, because you have to wear shoes while you're doing in sport.

[in a questioning tone] Cops still up there, I guess? Cop doesn't really fit those, kind of all on its own.

But then it hit me, *[with emphasis]* GUN. GUN it's the opposite of glitter. And this is a very common split, gun or glitter, gun or glitter, gun or glitter.

And so, from there, it all makes sense. This is full and complete. We have the taxonomy of gender awareness according to cis people, based on their cakes. And this is 100% complete, and it explains everything. It is all there.

Shit, I don't know where this goes.

Return to "Have You Ever Been Invited to a "Gender Reveal Party"?"

“Girl Up: The Power of Youth Leadership” Transcript

Melissa Kilby: Thank you for joining us at this event. It's a big moment for Girl Up, and it's a really important moment for the world. So I'm just excited to get to talk to you more about what this all means for all of us.

Tara Abrahams: Well, I'm thrilled to be here, as you know. I mean, I've been to the Girl Up summit in previous years. It's always one of the highlights of the summer. And so even though we can't join one another in person this year, I'm sort of feeling that spirit and energy so thrilled to be here. We've known each other for a long time. You've led this organization for over a decade, which is, I believe when we first met you and I, and that entire time, you've been just steeped in the lives of girls. So we know we're at a critical moment in really the history of the world coming out of this pandemic and sort of entering a new phase. So based on how much work you have done with girls and all the conversations that you've been having, how are girls feeling right now at this moment? Sort of zoom us in, if you would. What is the most pressing issue set of issues that are top of mind for girls?

Melissa: It's interesting. I think that there is an energy that I feel right now that is stronger than I have felt in a decade. I think, you know, we just heard from some of our, our girl at alums who, who started this journey ten years ago, and it was about education, awareness, fairness, right? And even those experiences just drastically transformed to these girl leaders. And then we fast-forward to today, and it is those actual leaders who are now facing their rights being reversed, rolled back, a climate crisis that we saw coming but weren't really talking about ten years ago. They're still dealing with trying to come out of this pandemic, and now they're at work, right? Our alums are at work, our younger girl leaders who are in school trying to figure out their path and their next step. And they're watching the Me Too, movement. And they're watching, you know, the world. It kind of feels like it's on fire and there's an energy, I would say. I think they're really, really mad. I think they're fired up, but I think that they're really committed to each other. And I think that what I really get from our young leaders is that they are in it and they're in it for each other and they're in it for everybody, right? So they care about all these issues deeply because they impact them, but it isn't about them. It's about the rest of the girls, the rest of the world, the younger girls coming, right? Their future daughters, and we heard our alums talk about their future daughters!

Tara: Yeah.

Melissa: So I think it's just, there's this urgency, there's this energy, but there's a fight and there's a spirit there that I think is really important for us to really stay focused on, too, that can help us drive our spirit and our energy, especially in in this moment.

Tara: I think there is a sense of solidarity and sisterhood that grow up has always cultivated right since the time of your inception, but that, I think, is particularly urgent and real and relevant right now as girls think about coming out of this particular period of time, entering their careers and working for the first time, putting those skills that they've honed over many years as part of this incredible program to test in the real world. And I think that's created the fight in them, which is amazing to see. I imagine we agree that we maybe wish they didn't have to fight so hard to be honest, and that the world was a different kind of place where their leadership and their skills and their brilliance were already valued in the way that they should be. But here we are. And so the need is no less great. And so it's just incredible to see girls just take on this moment because of course, we need them to. And so, given what you've described, what, what are you seeing as the most important interventions that need to be put in place to support young people and girls in particular, of course, as we head into this next period of time, what do we need to do to help girls today?

Melissa: They should already be in positions of, of equal influence. They should already have this power. And I think one of the things that really resonates with me is like there is not one specific tool for one specific intervention. And we know this, right? We know this from, like, so many programs and initiatives globally that that focus on all the different things impacting girls' lives specifically. And I think at the heart of it is really their agency, their rights, their voices, them being able to tap into their power, wield their power, and for us to all pay attention, listen to it and respect it. I think if we can, actually, if the intervention is to look to girls to be our partners, then we can actually solve all of these problems, right? Because they are both the tool and the solution. They will be impacted positively by it. And they are very uniquely equipped to, to help us solve it. And it's the value of that contribution that I think is the most important intervention. So, you know, with Girl Up, that's kind of always been where we have stayed focused. Let's, let's build their leadership. Let's really solidify their identity as a leader. Let's capitalize and, and really amplify the fact that they came to this because they wanted to make the world better in some area of injustice or inequity or unfairness that they saw. And we want to equip them to go out into the world, to be the better leaders, to solve the problems that will benefit the most people. You know, Tara, I'd love to know from your perspective, like you

have been around so many incredible female leaders. Now you're at the Meteor, which has just this incredible storytelling platform. When you look at our Girl Up leaders coming into the world paired with these amazingly committed women who have been on this fight, where do you see that potential?

Tara: I think there's limitless potential in that. I love that you started out, frankly by talking about the experience of alums and the conversation that you've been able to have with them ten years on plus, and how now they're entering their careers, going on to continue incredible heights of education and having them look back. I mean, it sounds crazy. You and I are both mothers. It sounds amazing for them to be so reflective and only ten years out of the Girl Up program. But it's so true. And I think that that intergenerational piece is so important to building what you described so aptly as girls' power, because I think if we can make those connections between the generations and learn lessons from one another, and I truly believe it's lessons from one another, right? It's not just about girls who happen to be younger, learning from us who do happen to be older just by virtue of just more years on the earth, but that there are, it's multidirectional, always. And the other thing that you said was around really listening to girls. So for me, it's not as simple, which it never is, frankly, as investing in girls. We talk about that a lot, investing in girls. What's equally important, and perhaps more important, if we actually want to get these things done, is listening to them, but also truly hearing them, hearing them when they talk about their vision of a future and a reality that is much more inspiring, frankly, than what we're able to give them today. And that's what I think is starting to really build is this sense of being girl centered, girl focused and really led by girls. I mean, you all have been doing this for so long. That's where you started. And that's what I see, really being taken up by so many of the movements that are out there, whether they come at it from a very girl specific perspective or from a women's specific perspective, from the LGBTQ community, right? From people of color. It's really about how do we center the voices that for so many years have been silenced and underrepresented? And how can we lift those up? Because the reality is it hasn't been working.

Melissa: Exactly.

Tara: We know it hasn't been working. So let's try something different. Let's actually listen to the people who are affected the most by these crises and these emergencies that we find ourselves in, and that really does come down to listening to and hearing girls for sure.

Melissa: Yeah.

Tara: Well, so we know because of where we are and we've been in this space, that gender inequality persists, continues to persist. We've made some headway, but we haven't entirely chipped away at it and knocked it down. So I want to hear your thoughts about how leadership and activism are going to help actually create the change that we want to see when it comes to gender justice, which I think is a slightly different idea than, perhaps what you and I were talking about ten plus years ago, which I think is a really good thing. And and how will you know, when a program like Girl Up ten years on now, twenty thirty, however many years, how will you know that you will have that you have succeeded? How do you know that the program has been successful?

Melissa: I put all my money on the youngest Girl Up leader coming in, or the ones that are waiting in the wings to be ready to take up the flag because they have lived in a different world. They have experienced a different reality with more information, more exposure, but also like more reality, more realistic understanding of what justice actually is, right?

Tara: Absolutely.

Melissa: It's not about my privileged position and the injustice that I experience. It's about what is the rest of my community, my peers, my friends, the people I've connected with on the other side of the world or from a totally different background and experience with me. And I'm more fired up about their injustice than anything that I just experienced. And that's like across the board, it almost doesn't even matter what their internal and personal experiences are. They're fired up for each other. And that's where I see this shift towards justice being so central to our young leaders today. But it's rooted in empathy. It's rooted in understanding. It's rooted in appreciation for each other. And that's why I think that they will actually solve some of these equality and equity huge challenges that, that I think all of us adults have just been grappling with because we had to learn, I had to learn that, right? I had to be educated on my privilege, on my experience. They know it. They live it, their lives are so intersectionally aware, and that piece and of itself tells me that they will solve this faster, that they will be more effective, that the ways that they approach collaboration and partnership and decision making and activism is already more open and inclusive than anything that I could even do today, after all of my learning from them. So to me, that's why they will do it differently. Because they've just lived in the world differently. And they've had these burdens placed on their shoulders from birth. They're standing in a moment where, especially here in the U.S., but in many countries around the world, they have less rates than you and I did at their age. So we need their different approach, right? And I think when, when I look

into my crystal ball, you know, ten, twenty years down the road, I want them at the decision-making tables. I want more of them in the places where the decisions are mean being made about them. Right. So whether that's elective office, if that's in corporate boardrooms, if that's working their way up through management and leadership, if it's starting their own businesses, going into tech and science and research and creating solutions for all of these problems. But I believe they will be there because they're starting at sixteen, knowing that they can. They are leaders that they do have value. They will not sit and wait for some manager or director or VP or old person to tap them on their shoulder and say, Tell me what you think. Like they will be present and participatory on day one. We actually, we heard that from our alums that they have the confidence to do that day one of whatever that job there is. So I really do think that they're going to be in those positions of leadership faster. That's one of the biggest motivators that I have is like none of us have time to wait for them to have decades of experience. They see the world different. They lead different. They include people differently, and I want them to lead us as quickly as possible. I will stand next to them. I will partner with them. Nobody's passing this off on them, right? But we need them now. So how do we accelerate that trajectory so that we all don't have to wait another couple decades for things to be even worse for them to have a say in what's happening.

Tara: I love what you've said about. Well, first of all, the activist soul just gave me chills, right? I think that's, I'm just picturing in my mind just a flood of these activist souls kind of going out into the world, fanning out into so many different industries and areas of, you know, the places that we know need so much support from girls leadership to kind of get to where we know we need to be. And, and the other thing that you said so powerfully is, or just around this idea that it's almost the, this consciousness is theirs, right? It's theirs. And, and they're leading on it. It's not theirs alone. But they've sort of grown up breathing this air that's very different than the atmosphere that we found ourselves in, again, even ten years ago. But certainly when I was growing up, when I was the age of a Girl Up advisor, there is no way that I had this sense of sort of ownership over what stamp I wanted to make on the world, let alone how my contribution would be connected to so many other girls and leaders around the world. And so they're sort of coming up that in an environment where that's almost, it's an expectation. It's a matter of course, right? And that's not to put undue pressure on them, but I almost feel like it's a challenge that they rise to naturally. It's just something that they come to. Yeah, we're here, Girl Up is here to provide them with the skills and the training that they need to recognize where there is an opportunity to make profound change. But at that point, then

they got it. They got it. As you said, we'll be standing beside them, behind them, supporting them every step of the way. But it is amazing to just watch what magic happens when you can just let girls step into their power and then just let them go.

Melissa: Well, and let them lead us, right? That has been one of the greatest gifts that I've had over this last, you know, decade plus with Girl Up is that every every interaction, every new new year, every global crisis, the girls lead me. They show me how to help move this movement forward, right? And so I've been led by them. I'm a totally different person, literally transformed human being from the last, you know, ten plus years of my time with Girl Up. I want that for everybody. I want that for the world, like...

Tara: Right. How do you scale that? How do you scale it?

Melissa: Right? Exactly. I'm living it. And I want that for everyone. And I really believe in that.

Tara: I mean, I think we are, there are many ways that we share a lot of the same privileges in our life. But I think that's one of the most - that is the most important one. I think you and I have been changed and profoundly affected by the work that we've been able to do with girls. And, and the work that we have done that lets us see the power of letting girls lead us to where they want to go. Right. I'm just along for the ride. I love it. And I think that you're right, that if we could scale that experience, if we could introduce more people around the world to what it's like to really have a girl led world and you live and that you live and breathe that every single day as part of Girl Up. And I do that as much as I can as well. It's just incredible. I mean, it's also a lot of fun, you know.

Melissa: *[laughs]* Lot's of joy, right? Lots of hope, lots of optimism.

Tara: Absolutely

Melissa: Which I know I relish that...

Tara: That you feed on it, right? It really gives you the sense of energy to, to keep going. And that's been important over the last, you know, two months, slash, two and a half years forever.

Melissa: Slash always, right?

Tara: Slash always. But, I mean, again, you and I both have daughters. And so thinking about this idea of hope, right?

Melissa: Yeah.

Tara: And recently at a media event, we had the extreme honor and privilege of bringing together Brittany Packnett Cunningham and Tiffany Cross in conversation. And one of the things that Tiffany said was, was joy is an act of resistance, right? And so it's just that idea I think of joy is not an insignificant one. It's really important and powerful to remember that there's joy in this work, and that's, that's also what the girls bring to it. They bring a critical eye. They bring their smarts, they bring their anger. But they also bring joy, and I think that's also what's kept me going for so many years in this case.

Melissa: Yeah. I'm just, I'm so grateful for your partnership and friendship and that we've been able to do this work together for so many years. And again, it's a moment and with a lot of momentum for Girl Up. And I appreciate your support and your appreciation and definitely your solidarity and partnership. And thank you so much for chatting with me today and really reminding me of all the things that I get from this, that I get to help be a part of and just the incredible people we get to do this work with. So thank you so much.

Tara: Thank you so much. I am grateful for you. I can't believe it's been so long that we've gotten to do this work together, that I have a feeling that we're going to be in it for the long, long haul and just watch these girls just take off and lead. I mean, I think as I reflect on this conversation and this moment that we're in, I still come back round to what I've always believed, which is if you support one girl anywhere, you're supporting girls everywhere. And that's, I think what I'm seeing in the space and the movement is the growth of those movements and the folks who are really leading the way around recognizing that the work that they do in their community, in their country has global implications. And so I'm just so excited to see where Girl Up goes next. Thank you so much for this conversation.

Melissa: Thanks, Tara. Back to you, Halle.

[Return to "Leadership"](#)

“The Mask You Live In - Official Trailer” Transcript

Each line of this transcript indicates a new speaker:

[Intro Music]

“Stop crying,

Stop with the tears,

Don't cry it yourself,

Stop with the emotion,

Don't be a pussy.

Don't let anybody disrespect you.

Be cool and be kind of a dick.

Always keep your mind right.

Nobody likes a tattletale.

Bros come before Hoes.

Don't let your women run your life.

What a fag.

Get laid.

Be a man.

Be a man.

Grow some balls.”

[Music 0:19-0:25]

The three most destructive words that every man receives when he's a boy is when he's told to be a man.

We've constructed an idea of masculinity in the United States that doesn't give young boys a way to feel secure in their masculinity, so we make them go prove it all.

Within their peer group culture, each of them is posturing based on how the other boys are posturing, and what they end up missing is what they all really want, which is just that closeness.

[Transition Music 0:53]

In good times, guys are like really close to each other, but when things get a little bit worse—you're on your own.

From middle school I had four really close friends. Once I kind of went into high school, I struggled finding people I can talk to, because I feel like I'm not supposed to get help.

Our kids get up every morning they have to prepare their masks for how they're gonna walk to school. A lot of my students don't know how to take the mask off.

[Talking to students] What is it you don't let people see? Almost 90% of you have pain and anger in the back of that paper.

If you never cried, then you have all these feelings stuffed up inside of you and then you can't get them out.

They really buy into that a culture that doesn't value what we've feminized. If we're in a culture that doesn't value caring, doesn't value relationships, doesn't value empathy, you are going to have boys and girls, men and women go crazy.

I had anger issues in high school. I felt like an outcast.

I've been suspended at least once, every year here.

We would just look for trouble and just like try to fight.

Boys are more likely to act out. They're more likely to become aggressive. Most people miss that as depression, or see it as a conduct disorder, or just a bad kid,

[Music 2:03-2:06]

I felt like just giving up on life you know I see had suicide thought to my head at sixth grade.

I felt alone for, for a long time, and I actually thought about killing myself.

[Music 2:17-2:20]

Whether it's homicidal violence or suicidal violence, people resort to such a desperate behavior only when they are feeling ashamed and humiliated or feel they would be if they didn't prove that they were real men.

If you're told from day one "Don't let nobody disrespect, you" and "This is the way you handle it as a man." Respect is linked to violence.

if I can man up, why step down from that, you feel me?

It's like instinct.

[Music 2:46-2:50]

[Outro]

"Man up!

Man up!

Man up!

Man up!

So, man up!

Grow some fucking balls!

Act like a man, be a man!

Be a man!

Act like a man!"

For my kids, I was gonna end this hyper masculine narrative here.

[Music]

Return to "He Does That Because He Likes You"

“Drs. C. Lutz Clemens and A. Morris D'Agostino: Toxic Masculinity” Transcript

Jason: Welcome Amanda Morris and Colleen Lutz Clemens. I got a little intro here for you. Sorry. *[Speaking in the background]* Did I say it right? *[Speaking in the background]* But when you do, they do Lutz. But it's right. Very good. *[Speaking in the background]* Very good. So is it Stoltz Fuss instead of Stoltz fuss? *[Speaking in the background]* Okay. Colleen Clemens, Ph.D., associate professor of non-Western literatures and director of Women's and gender studies at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, earned her Ph.D. in post-colonial literature at Lehigh University. Her dissertation focuses on issues of veiling in literature and studies, the intersection of women's issues in art and politics. Amanda Morris D'Agostino, Ph.D., is a member of the KU English departments CRLS Team. *[Speaking in the background]* That's the important part. Composition and rhetoric. And she teaches courses in composition and rhetoric. Her research interests include contemporary indigenous rhetoric, specifically, Native American rhetorics, creativity in the classroom, and the power of stories. That's so very, very awesome calling. And Amanda co host the podcast Inside two hundred and fifty-four, where they share conversations they have when they close the door of their office. Two hundred and fifty four Lytle Hall at Kutztown University, where they love to talk shop in a fun and approachable way. And I'm sure today's program is going to be fun and approachable, or you will get your money back. I guarantee it. *[Laughter]* All right, So please welcome them to the stage.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Hello. This is. Where's the other microphone?

Colleen Clemens: Hello. Thank you.

Amanda: The microphone wanted a bagel. Thank you. OK, before I introduce us, which actually, Jason already did. I want to ask you to that card that I gave you, get a pen and Apollo was kind enough. Does anybody need a pen who needs a pen? He needs a pen. And I want you to write. Don't think too hard. Just off the top of your head. I want you to write what words come to mind when you hear the phrase toxic masculinity, write

Colleen: You don't. You'll never have to share it. We'll see it.

Amanda: Yeah, it's anonymous. I'm going to collect them, but you will not be identified. So write really, truly, honestly, because the goal today is to have a real good, honest conversation. So we need to know what you really think when you hear these words off top of your head and whatever it is, no judgment.

Colleen: We've heard worse.

Amanda: We've heard much worse, so don't even worry about it.

[Pause for participants writing]

Amanda: They're being very good students. They're writing. We love that. We ask our students to do something, and then they do it. We're like, Oh, my God. That's tremendous. You guys are great. Everybody done. Oh, I'm sorry. That's why I gave you a small card. Because I figure some of you probably have a lot to say, which is great, but let's limit it because, you know, we only have an hour and a half.

[Pause for participants writing, while Amanda whistles Jeopardy tone]

Amanda: Good. OK, everybody. Good. All right. I am going to ask my esteemed colleague here to move aside for a minute because we want to show you a clip, and I'm going to collect these cards from you when it's over. So can I have your attention to the screen, please? It's only three minutes.

["The Mask You Live In - Official Trailer" playing on screen: [read the trailer transcript again.](#)]

Amanda: Hello. It's no big deal.

[incoherent speaking in the background]

Amanda: I'm sorry. Okay, so thank you. Thank you. Do I have everybody's cards? Yeah. All right. Here. Just hang on to this for a second. All right. So thank you very much for participating in the writing portion of our presentation. We do believe in some interaction. We don't really like Sage on the stage. And yet here we are, sages on the stage. Go figure. Thank you for your attention to that. A documentary clip. I believe my friend and colleague would probably recommend that you watch that documentary. Yes?

Colleen: So that is from, Yes, that is from a clip from a film called *The Mask You Live in*, which was done all about masculinity. It is on Netflix, and you can watch it, but I think just even that little bit gives you a taste of what it might present and do a deep dive into how we talk about masculinity.

Amanda: And it is still available on Netflix.

Colleen: Yep.

Amanda: Okay. So like you can go home, keeps hiding from the heat this afternoon and watch that documentary. Okay, You won't need to after us, right? You'll be. You'll be good. Okay, so let's start with a basic definition. What is toxic masculinity? Because we hear this word bandied about a lot. And let me just preface this entire presentation by saying, unfortunately, we are very well aware that the concept of toxic masculinity, that phrase has a lot of controversy attached to it. There's a lot of discord out there on the interwebs. There's a lot of anger from certain quarters. There's a lot of defensiveness. And I think there's also a lot of confusion over what it is and what it isn't. So I just want to let you know, again, we're here in a role as educators. We are educators. We are professors. We're here to teach you something. We're not here to judge you, and we're not here to attack you. So if you start like feeling, because I think a lot of this, the phrase toxic masculinity, and when we start talking about it might raise some emotions. You might start having the feels, whatever that is. Anger upset, hopefully not joy. But, you know, you're going to have feelings. I would just ask you to breathe through it, sit with those feelings. And then when we get to the next interactive portion of our of our presentation, we can certainly have a discussion because we want to talk to you guys and maybe clear some things up, help you understand. So I just wanted you to know we're aware this might cause just breathe through it. OK, with that said, tell us.

Colleen: So we're going to do this as a conversation.

Amanda: Yep, that's our plan. So, my friend, what is toxic masculinity? If you were going to tell us a basic definition of what toxic masculinity is, what would that be?

Colleen: Toxic masculinity is a brand of masculinity. And we need to go a step back really quickly and talk about the difference between gender and sex, because very quickly, when people hear the frame phrase toxic masculinity, people think you're saying men are bad. So masculinity is gender. Sex is biology. This is super reductive, but it's Sunday. So when we're talking about toxic masculinity, we're talking about gender constructs, which we'll get to in a second, not biology, not sex. So very quickly, like when Tucker Carlson is yelling about me on his show on Fox, he is saying that I say I hate men. And actually, I think when people are willing to be here on a Sunday morning having a conversation about toxic masculinity is because of a deep love for humanity and a deep love for trying to figure out what is not working in this particular brand of masculinity. So we're going to talk a little bit soon about gender constructs and what that means. But toxic masculinity is one way of wearing the mask, like in that of masculinity. It's not the only way, right? The word toxic is in front of it.

It's not just all masculinity. So let's just be super clear. And if you don't buy into the idea that sex and gender are different, this is going to be a really long hour for you.

Amanda: Buckle up,

Colleen: But that, to me, is that's non-negotiable. So in order to have this conversation, at least for an hour, you need to come on board and understand the difference between sex and gender.

Amanda: OK, so now that we've got the basics, what is toxic masculinity? So toxic masculinity is a type of mask, right? It's a type of masculinity. So it's not the only type of masculinity, but what type is it? Could you maybe give us an example?

Colleen: All right, So toxic masculinity would be the idea that there's only one way to be a man. You heard them bring that up. That the three worst words you can say to a boy as they grow up is is be a man. And you heard a bunch of other variations of that in the clip as well. So the idea that there is only one way to be a man in this country because gender constructs change throughout cultures, the only one way to be a man is to not show emotion, to think that you must be heterosexual. To think that you have, if you do have a motion, you should be ashamed of it. So that's a deep seated shame that you cannot express or share, because if you do express or share that you are a pussy or a fag or any other derogatory word that we hear bandied about a lot, or at least you're not a man, right? You're not a man. So the toxicness of this gender construct of masculinity. Again, one brand of masculinity.

Amanda: Not all.

Colleen: Not all because can you tell I've been willfully misunderstood throughout my career, and it's probably repeating so right, that one brand of masculinity and that there are consequences to this, that the toxicity is not just to the person who feels those things, but that often that toxicity is then manifested in action toward women, towards strangers, that that manifestation of the feeling that you are not enough, then becomes almost like an aggrieved belief that you are owed something. So at some point, by the end of this talk, we'll talk about how toxic masculinity may have connections to men acting badly. And again, because of a construct, not because men act badly because of their sign. I always say like a penis doesn't make you a bad person, right? It doesn't. And I get, and that is said out of kindness, right? Because if we want to believe there's this rigidity about sex, not gender, then there's no space for change. And we just all need to

throw up our hands and say, boys, we'll be boys, which we'll talk about in a second. And then we all shrug and we move on. And we don't have conversations about how we can change things for the good, first of all of those boys, and then also for the rest of us that may be affected by that type of masculinity.

Amanda: Yeah, that's good. So, you know, you mentioned this, but is the phrase toxic masculinity and attack on all men? Because when my friend here was attacked on Twitter for actually tweeting in November, toxic masculinity is killing all of us, everyone, killing us all. And she repeated it three times, and the, the far right picked up on that. And they started attacking her. That's how Tucker Carlson ended up knowing who she was and attacking her on his show. And so the idea that toxic masculinity. But I think what a lot of people hear, and I say people, because I don't know it could be men. It could be women because there were men and women. And whoever else attacking you is the phrase toxic masculinity the same as attacking men? For just men are bad, right? So that's a fundamental misunderstanding, I think bears repeating. And is that a phrase that's the same as an attack on all men like men are bad?

Colleen: No.

Amanda: No, just not to put up too funny.

Colleen: No, I'm married to a man, not legitimizes anything.

Amanda: So am I. No.

Colleen: I'm fully capable of being in room full of men and liking them. But again, if I circle back to this is done out of a concern for men.

Amanda: Yeah, so it's limiting. It's limiting, right?

Colleen: Something I hear about is what about toxic femininity?

Amanda: Oh yeah.

Colleen: So I actually believe there is such a thing as toxic femininity. And as feminists, we worked through that shit in the nineties,

Amanda: Right.

Colleen: And toxic femininity, things like eating disorders or the beauty myth, or those are often enacted on a woman's body on their own.

Amanda: The internalized.

Colleen: So it's not that Am I not allowed to curse? [*incoherent speaking off screen*] Okay. Do you want me to mention turfs? Oh, no. Yeah, that's another. That's another talk. Maybe I'll come back in. [*Amanda laughs*] So toxic femininity is a thing, but we just tried to figure it out in the nineties, and we in the feminist community did a decent job of that. Not that things are all better. But I think you have seen an expanded idea of what girls can be. Thanks to first and second and third wave feminism. Girls can be more than one path. But now feminist scholars were like, Okay, so how do we open up those spaces for boys, too? Because this, you know, feminism isn't just about women. It's about everyone. It's about equity for everyone. So how do we open up this space now? So I, I think toxic femininity is absolutely a thing, but I feel like that's been done like we did it. We did it in the seventies, eighties, the nineties, the odds, like we have beaten that everybody knows at this point that there are oppressive ideas about femininity. We did a great job. And now I feel like we're kind of at the beginning of another conversation. That is, how do we bring boy children along, too, and not force them into a limiting role. Even if that limiting role meant access to more power? For, for example, how do we, how do we take away the shame of a boy maybe feeling like he has to be one specific thing? So did I answer that?

Amanda: Yes. Thank you. OK, so that's good. So now, okay, don't run away. We wanted to pull some biblical quotes. Y'all are humanists. So there is a reason why we're pulling biblical quotes. So take a breath. And you want to talk about this?

Colleen: We were invited here to talk about why this might be an issue to you as an audience. And we are rhetoricians.

Amanda: Yes.

Colleen: We believe knowing your audience is important.

Amanda: Language matters.

Colleen: So this is right. So we wanted to pull some quotes that might be about the rigidity of gender roles. And again, it is a dangerous game to cherry pick from any book. So I'm not not going to be flipped. And I purposely didn't pick any from the Koran because I feel like we have dragged that book through the mud enough. And I'm not going to do anything to have a, you know, facilitate that reification of everybody's belief that the Koran is filled with sexism. I'm not going to participate. I'm happy to participate that with the Bible because it doesn't seem to have that marginalization. So can you read them? Because...

Amanda: Yes, I'll read them. So let me. Sorry, camera people. OK, so the first one is from 1 Timothy 2:12 And the quote is, "but I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The second one is Ephesians 5:22-33 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." The third is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." And the final quote we called Ephesians 5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body."

Colleen: So we, we picked those to talk about how gender roles are super inscribed in the ways we move through the world, that this would be an example. Frankly, this is an example of toxic femininity, right? That women are only to do one thing. But we wanted to talk about how the belief that there is only one natural way to be a woman or that there's only one natural, and that'll be an important word in a second way to be a man, and that if you push against it at all, in this context of religion, if you push against it at all, you are a heretic. You are not following God's word, right? So this is one inscribed, prescriptive, narrow path that that many people, right, believe in. So this would be an example of that rigid, one line way to be a woman, in this case, to be a wife, for the most part.

Amanda: And it's super relevant not only to today, to this group, but also just to our culture in America. We hear a lot about how we are founded in Judeo-Christian beliefs. Well, there you go. Right. So it's almost like our culture with that foundation in Judeo-Christian beliefs is suggesting that this, this is the attitude that should hold sway and it feeds into that. So it's a whole, like nothing exists in a vacuum. Nothing exists in a vacuum. You hear us? It sounds like we're going on tangents, but we're not. All these things are connected and related. And you almost can't have this conversation without at least bringing in some of those foundational beliefs that we, as Americans are supposed to be holding to. This is one of them, right. So we're not just fighting against biblical beliefs. We're fighting against the foundations of what people, some people say, that our country is founded on these kinds of beliefs. It's a big hill to climb, right?

Colleen: Yeah. And this is just one example. We're going to show you some other examples. But since you're humanist, we wanted to make sure we brought in how religion can often prescribe this as well and be really problematic and how it might contribute to the conversations and the responses that people have. You know, I understand if somebody believes that man was made in the image of God or something like that, I understand why they would be upset when I start

to bring up the idea of masculinity, because now I'm questioning not just an idea, but I'm questioning a deep seated belief. So these are not easy waters to tread in, I think, is what we wanted you to realize that as we talk about this.

Amanda: So thank you for treading water with us. Moving on. I'm going to ask my friend, she is a feminist scholar. So she has done a lot of writing and thinking and studying about this. She writes about it herself, and I wanted you to give us sort of a walk, a basic walkthrough, like, don't beat us over the head with the academic language. I know you won't because we pride ourselves on being public intellectuals, making it accessible to people. So you can tell us later if we succeeded. But a couple theories of gender. One is biological essentialism and the which you kind of touched on a little bit. And then the other one is social constructionism. So can you walk us through the idea of biological essentialism? And just so, you know, the examples that I have up here are quotes that you might hear a lot that sort of suggest biological essentialism. When you hear these things, that means someone who ever sang them is basically a biological essentialist. Boys will be boys. Let's just locker room talk. He does that because he likes you, right? That's biological essentialism. But, friend, can you explain to us what that really is?

Colleen: So we, we are always trying to have better understanding of how we move through the world in these gendered bodies. And biological essentialism was much more popular in, like the seventies, where the idea that your biology determines your gender in the sense of if you think about it, like women are naturally more peaceful. I don't believe any of this, but women are naturally more peaceful. If the world were ruled by women, there would be no wars. That's biological essentialism, the idea that women are somehow biologically, essentially different than men, which they're not, except for their biology, their parts, and that boys are biologically, essentially geared toward violence, which I also don't think is true. So biological essentialism believes that you, your biology determines how you move through this world, and that is the only way you should move through this world. And if you veer from moving through the world that way, you are abnormal. Something is wrong with you. And you are to quote the Handbags tale, "a gender trader", right? That's what they would call it in Gilead. So let's talk about these three phrases. "Boys will be boys." So when we hear it, when somebody says that to me, first of all, try not to have my head explode. Second of all, what I do is say, no, I actually think boys can be better than this because when you hear that, it's being used as an excuse for a boy doing something that's poor behavior. That's the only time you hear that when a mother of a little boy and her little boy knocks over my daughter on a

playground says to me, "boys will be boys." No, boys can be better than that. So that phrase, I mean, that phrase is super popular. You'll start to notice it now when people say that or if you think about, they're called gender reveal parties. But they're not really gender reveal parties. They're sex reveal parties. Do you know what these are where people, like cut a cake in its pink or put blue balloons in a box, Right? Those folks are, sometimes they're like the imitations would be like pearls or pistols, Right? Pearls, girls are soft pistols. Boys are hard. Go Google gender.

Amanda: Google it.

Colleen: Yeah. I mean, gender reveal invites their sex reveal parties. But you have to google gender reveal. They are very telling about how we are very committed in our culture to biological essentialism. Saying something is locker room talk, which is just the equivalent of saying boys will be boys, except they're older now, and they can be in a locker room. That locker room talk is somehow, naturally, boys are innately going to dismiss girls.

Amanda: And can I interject, that was the favorite defense of our current president when during the presidential campaign, he, the video came out with him on a bus with Billy Bush, and he was having a private conversation that he did not know was being recorded. And he talked about, I don't know if I can say this looking at Jason and he was talking about, you know, grab women by the pussy because he can. It's great. And his defenders, I believe both men and women.

Colleen: I was on a TV show where a man directly said this to me. So go ahead.

Amanda: Yeah. And this is the thing I don't want to say. It wasn't just men. It was women defending them, too, like the less than half the country voted for him. But still, there were a lot of women who voted for him. And there were men and women saying, well, that's just locker room talk, no big deal.

Colleen: So anyway, that's biological essentialism. That's normalizing it, because that means what we're saying is to me, all of these things are, are insulting to boys. I'm not sitting here on a Sunday morning talking to you about this because I have some deep seated hatred of masculinity. I'm talking to you about this because I think that this is a deep seated hatred of boys, that we allow them so little and give them so little credit.

Amanda: We put them in a box and we say you're only allowed to be this one thing. And this is who you were, like defining them. This is who you are. This is

who you are. You are the bad behavior. You are the locker room talk. You are all these things. I mean, I can't imagine being a boy because I'm not a boy. But imagine being a boy and having that be the message. That's all you are. And thinking, what if I want to do something else and our culture doesn't allow it? Because toxic masculinity. Thank you.

Colleen: And the last one, he does that because he likes you. That's, you know, what I was told walking down the hall when a boy would like, snap my bra or harass me or does that to me, right? Or he does that because he likes you. Well, that's an example of by a lot, like, no, he was taught that he was taught that this is the way you teach women or to talk to women or treat women, that you, again, a penis does not automatically make you a harasser, does not automatically make you say terrible things about women, right? Biological essentialism is not, it's not a, it's not manifest destiny of a boy's humanity. So what I and most feminist scholars ascribe to now is that gender is a social construction that mostly other than biological parts. When kids come out, they're pretty much the same. And that from before they were born, however, through gender reveal parties or that they have already had gender inscribed upon them. So I was pregnant once and was asked a lot of times what I was having, and my answer was always, I'm having a feminist.

Amanda: I love that answer.

Colleen: And they're like, Oh, then you're having a girl. I'm like, Well, no, OK, but people get really upset when you don't tell them what you're having. And the reason I did that is because I didn't want to construct my daughter. I knew she was a girl. Just didn't need to tell anybody that, You know, I knew she was sexed a girl. That doesn't mean I knew what her gender was. Again, this line. So I don't know. I mean, I think her gender is girl. Now she's six. So I have a sense. And I tried really hard not to socially construct her gender for her. But I always tell my students I didn't tell anybody I was having a girl because I didn't want the tide of pink wave at the shower because the moment you tell somebody the sex of a child immediately, they want to buy stuff. And the answer I got all the time was, well, it's not fair. You know, how do I know what to buy for you now? Think...

Amanda: It's all about them? Not about you,

Colleen: but also. But just think about that for a second. Just think about the need. Our culture has to gender, this tiny little thing that really just thinks about eating, sleeping and pooping for a good six months. Just think about our, like, angst, the anxiety that was caused by me, like withholding information. So the

reason I did that is because I think that gender is socially constructed and that we need to allow children, boy children as well, an opportunity to really look around and see how they feel that gender roles and gender identity are something that is put upon us that is not necessarily always innate. So you'll hear if somebody's trans, and all that means is, you know, the line from sex to gender isn't a straight line, cis. It just goes across, right? That's all. That's where that language comes from. Trans, the line from sex to gender. Like I line up, I'm cis gender. What that means is my biological sex and my gender line up cis line. If somebody's trans, it just goes across, right? The word has become so loaded. But you'll hear somebody who's trans and they'll talk about this as if they were hiding who they had, who they were for a year. They, most folks I know who are trans knew by the time they were five, that they felt not OK in their bodies. But for another ten years, twenty years, they lived a life that did not allow for their authentic cells. And they lived a life of shame. If we want to circle back to the ideas of toxic masculinity. That they believe there was one way to move through the world, and I have to, God damn it, move through the world in this way, even if it kills me, which happens a lot.

Amanda: So so can you talk about, like, the idea of performance in social interactions really related to this idea that we as a culture construct gender. So the idea of those social interactions, the performance aspect.

Colleen: So if you caught that in the video, they talked very quickly about being in a locker room in that three minutes, in the, in the masculine, it goes much more deeply into it. But the idea that, like one kid learns how to front, and then all the other kids learn how to front based on that fronting, and then nobody's actually doing the thing that they actually feel like in their hearts, they want to do because everybody's so busy with the mask and they're fronting or they're posturing or whatever words you want to use for it. They're, they're enacting gender. They're performing it to use Judith Butler's right. They're performing gender instead of, like actually being who they are. So...

Amanda: And how you perform it, Does that depend on your relational position, to the people around you, to your family, to your culture?

Colleen: For example, I have had a bunch of men now through they made it, made it through puberty, tell me that they felt obligated to try to get some or they felt obligated to talk about girls in ways that didn't make them feel good. But they felt like they had to do that because if they didn't, their masculinity would be questioned. What are you, a pussy? Right? Because the worst thing you can call boys male or female part. What are you, a fag? That. And I taught high

school for many years. I'm not talking about, like Saturn here talking about here. And so the idea of performing and social interactions. When I spent all that time with teenagers, it was very clear to me how much people feel, like they have to posture. Like my daughter said to me the other day. I hate my bangs. Now she doesn't have bangs, She's six. And I was like, who taught you? Where did you even learn that? And she watched some stupid YouTube video, which is a bunch of girls, and she heard girls saying, I hate my bangs. And now she thinks that's something she's supposed to say, right? Like these little things, like my daughter has never heard the word fat in our house. I always joke. I'm going to write an article about the time my daughter said the f word, but therefore...

Amanda: You totally should.

Colleen: And I was driving and I almost pulled off the road when she said she was fat. I was like, what? Where are you learning this? Because no girl child comes out of the body of its mother, programmed to think it's fat. But somewhere along the way, she learned that, I don't know if it's from a YouTube video. Clearly, I'm not parenting, I don't know.

Amanda: So, you know, it's culture conditioning,

Colleen: That gender is cultural, the gender that there's no man behind the, there's no oz, right? There's no man behind the curtains saying we're going to do this to women and men. It's just through religious texts, through cultural texts. It's the way we think about gender. And now it's kind of become the wallpaper in the back of the room and nobody thinks about it. And what we're trying to do is get you think about it when we say these things.

Amanda: And question it.

Colleen: Yeah.

Amanda: And question it. And don't just assume that that position is the right one. OK, would you like to talk a little bit about the idea? *[Colleen speaking to Amanda quietly]* OK, we talk about this a lot on our podcast, and we actually talk a lot about it in the various classes that we both teach. The difference between structural and individual. That actually plays a big, big part in helping people to understand that when you talk about difficult things, like talks like masculinity or other issues, that it's not about a personal attack on individuals, and it's also not about individual. Well, it can be about individual behavior. It's within the context of a larger structure, Right. So our culture is a structure, right. So we have these structures in place. Masculinity as a concept is a structure, right. And it's not

about the individuals like each of you is an individual, but we are all part of a larger structure that we live in called America, right? Want to add anything to that?

Colleen: Sure. Okay. So, so the reason that we think this is this was an important thing that we wanted to talk about today is because people who immediately kind of draw inward to themselves and get really upset when toxic masculinity is mentioned. I understand that urge. If you think it's about you personally, nobody wants to. It's the same conversation about privilege, right? Nobody wants to feel bad about. So I understand that inclination, but we're talking about, but when the conversation is happening, it's really talking about much bigger pictures. It's not. I have never pointed at someone and said you are toxically masculine. This is about how do we have conversations in a culture that still privileges, even though spaces are being opened. But that's still privileges, cis, gender, white, heteronormative, capitalist structures. How do we have a conversation? It's true, Christian. Sorry. Yeah. I should have added that. I kind of do with the Bible, I know. But, and Christmas, right. So how do we, how do we have a conversation about something that doesn't feel good on an individual level? We have it on a structural level because I sit in front of you with tons of privilege, right? I am white [*Amanda affirming*]. I have a PhD [*Amanda affirming*]. I am cisgender [*Amanda affirming*]. I am heterosexual [*Amanda affirming*]. I am upper middle class [*Amanda affirming*], like I'm sitting in front.

Amanda: I'm doing seconding everything she says because it applies to me too. I'm very well aware. We're aware.

Colleen: Actually launch the privilege. And also, though, I could be at home with my family right now, right? I want to use that privilege to some good end and push conversations about how we can all be better people. And I think gender has a lot to do with how we be better people.

Amanda: Right. So when we talk about toxic masculinity as it exists in the world today, one of the things that we talked about on our podcast episode about this issue was what are some, Well, there's both the extreme examples that you see it being enacted in the public. But there's also the everyday, regular daily examples, which I believe "boys will be boys," lock room, talk. Those kinds of phrases are part of that toxic masculinity structure. But when we see toxic masculinity in the world be a man that sort of things. But there are also extreme examples. And the question is, so what kind of man is that, like when you're saying, OK, so if it is an individual an example.

Colleen: So the boogeyman of toxic masculinity is having your masculinity questioned as if that were a bad thing. That is the the basis and the reliance on the, on this toxicity to exist. That's the nugget, right. So to question somebody's manhood, and therefore, by virtue of that, is trying to bring them down a peg, which is counterintuitive to me. When Amanda was talking about the more egregious things, the reason I had tweeted that toxic masculinity is killing us all is because I think all of us are bystanders to this kind of violence. So the hyper example would be INCeLs men who INCeL stands for in celibate men who will purposely go out and kill women to, because those women refuse to have sex with it. And these are strangers, right. But just the...

Amanda: Involuntarily celibate, involuntarily celibate.

Colleen: So the idea that means that I am owed something. Women don't give it to me. And so I'm going to, like in Santa Monica or in Canada, mow down women because all women are the enemy.

Amanda: And again, not at all, not all men who enact masculinity do that. That is a hypertoxic, masculine example.

Colleen: I'm talking about ranges. Yeah. So that's like the high range. But what we really want to talk about is that kind of low cessating range of toxic masculinity device. That's where I see space for boys and thereby I can see my third device and try to get on that if we create those spaces, always. So that's why we had to have these up here, right? I man is like, the number one thing. That's to me, like if somebody says that you're like the toxic masculinity culprit for a second, like you just like if you are pushing. Against someone else's masculinity as a wage, but I have it laid down to insult them down. No sound. So that's an example that you might hear in language for questioning men. I'll just use my. Yeah.

Amanda: So these are, there's this guy who tweets. So you might know him.

Colleen: This is toxic masculinity being enacted. Oh, I care who you vote for. But in this moment, I don't. If you just came along for the ride with you and see the problem with insulting somebody's manhood as a way to try to raise yourself up, then you can, at least I hope. See the problem with these very public texts of our president shaming other men. Oh, that's my questioning their man coverage.

Amanda: So, yeah. So I'm going to read for the benefit of those of you. She's always like those who might be watching on YouTube.

Colleen: And these weren't twenty eighteen. I didn't go deep into the archive.

Amanda: This was so, oh, literally, like, wow. Okay, so why did? Yeah, two days ago. So let's start with that. It was a little bit earlier. So that, besides, this was from February twelve, twenty nineteen, six fifty p m. Donald Trump tweeted "Shister Joe Biden. He wants me to resign, because he knows he catch beat me in 2020, what kind of man is that question? Biden is missing a few brain cells and a few other things too! #KEEPAMERICAGREAT."

Colleen: So there are all kinds of interesting things happening there. But what I want us to just talk about is the questioning of the manhood. What kind of man is that to me, that is enacting a problematic brand of masculinity. That means that if you aren't a man, then you are less than, and I think even after this, then Joe Biden was like I'll get in a fight with you, just weird, just gross. And then you're just gross, Just gross. I think it just became this really gross thing, but it started with this questioning. Now this one just happened last week, which I thought was fabulous, right?

Amanda: So the other one happened on June twenty four, twenty eighteen at 8:01 pm. Donald Trump tweeted "@Jimmy Fallon is now whimpering to all that he did the famous "hair show" with me (where you're seriously messed up my hair) and that he would have now done it differently because it is said to have "humanized me"—he is taking heat. He called and said, quote, "monster ratings" be a man, Jimmy!" Would somebody else like to explain why? Yeah, you get it now.

Colleen: So here's the thing, right? Wouldn't that right? You'd probably get better, Really? If I were talking about thinking structurally and about where power goes and who has power to have. Yeah, a president who is willing to emasculate and shame, Right? Using masculinity as his club. And this is very common to use the masculinity as the battery. This is a problem, right? This is toxic masculinity in action. Aside from the egregious grammatical mistakes of these tweets,

Amanda: Right. And caps and exclamation points, which I have to reveal my friend hates those. All caps and exclamation points, don't use them.

Colleen: This happens all the time. Be a man. The conversations about you can just let it send. Right? Like that's as aware this morning was like, I'm gonna get talking about locker room talk. I haven't as if that's an excuse. Like we're talking about sexual assault. I'm like, Well, this person wrote this email. Those are insulting. Finally, I'm gonna reply, like, I can pretty much move on. I know how

to live in my world and and not they're working for participate in a lot of this. But this is a serious problem if we're trying to expand the ways that boys can be boys, but then we keep shrinking it back down in such a public forum, I would argue, has deep and serious ramifications for us culturally if we're going to move the bar. So these just happened like this when this happened this week, because "be a man" is the quintessential way to know that someone is kind of asserting the hyper masculine living that I would argue. Sometimes I can get you done on the weekend. These are both insults to other men. This is not to me. There are many insulting things that happen, but these are, these are directed to men. That's why I picked these, right? [*Amanda affirming*] Because this is insulting another man's value because he's no longer a man.

Amanda: And let's be honest, when you have the president of the United States, a very high profile, probably the most high profile person in the, like, doing this kind of thing in a public for all to see. What would it be like to? Just not, as I usually feel like, I feel like language is what you say and the higher your profile, the bigger your problem, the more it matters. Something messing. I am not Chris Elizabeth, which is, let's be honest, all of us. It's sending a message that a man is the standard. That is where we want. And what we're trying to do is say, no, no, no. So we need more voices pushing back against us. Okay, so speaking of voices have to do it again to reevaluate. So now we're going to, actually, and obviously, you didn't write your name, so I don't know who wrote what, And it doesn't matter. We don't want to know. So we're going to get to who said I asked you guys to write what words came to mind? Yep. When I said, When will you hear the words or the. So I'm going to give my friend here the option of picking a card. Yeah. Likes to deal with ideas, but not a problem. Yeah, problem.

Colleen: These have similar words. In fact, I just said the word misogyny. We can solve this, major. And I think what you'll notice that was like, beholden. I was like, that much goes dark. This is that we did not focus your violence against women. Thank you. But more as this girl, we raise our boys never to have a better opportunity. Being anti feminist, weak, pussy. Right. So these words, I think we've probably talked about.

Amanda: Smart class, pick again.

Colleen: Even if you didn't write that, you're smart.

Amanda: I know that.

Colleen: Okay

Amanda: So I'm just impressed. Always impressed when my students say something other than Trail of Tears, when I teach about indigenous rhetoric, when someone says, Oh, you know, I went to a museum and they had these displays of this, like modern attire. Yes, that's amazing, gold star!.

Colleen: So this. Okay, again, interesting that this card has the word "power" on it, Right? Because this is all about power, boss power. And I think that may be a really great way to think about this. Right, Boss driving Donald Trump frames himself that way, that very forceful, like, I know, the dismissiveness of that could be. And that would be, again, Toxic masculine being enacted. Again, it's not a natural. At least I argue that it is not, right? So, yeah, burying emotion. They didn't need us today.

Amanda: See!

Colleen: You have to ignoring male rape. Oh, I'm so glad somebody wrote that boy talking about that for a second, right? The idea that it's toxic masculine, the belief that a man cannot do from sexually assaulted you didn't. That is why so many men. I don't know what Billies who are sexually assaulted or raped, that will not bring it up. Well, there's so many, because there is, it's like an extra added whatever of their masculinity, or perhaps, or even their sexuality being questioned. So that's a really, Yeah. Ignoring male rape. That's a really great thing to bring up. In theory, so, well, sexual assault, right? Yeah. So if we want to talk for a minute about rape, right? The first thing that we need to talk about is that rape is about power, not about sex. So if we are willing to all go along with that, if we're talking about power, and if toxic masculinity is teaching boys that they need to assert power, even when somebody doesn't want it asserted upon them, that would be an example of toxic masculinity. Of course, of course, sexual assault, partner violence, INCEL movements, all of that type of misogynistic violence . They all fall under this umbrella. I think what has happened is that we in the feminist community are trying to find language to get to everybody else, to come along with us like they did about girls. I think eventually most people understood that, like maybe Barbie's problematic and that maybe the way we talk about our bodies is a problem. Like, I think most people are willing enough to go along for the ride with that and so make now this language is, is in hopes of people having more. And I will tell you right now, people are having way more conversations about this, I don't know.

Amanda: It's showing every year. It's showing up in my last news stories and things, right. You actually see, this word talks masculine being used in news stories when sometimes reporters are talking about that, something that's

happened, at least some hypothesis, if I could, just so, I mean, I think definitely the conversation is changing, but I think, especially nowadays, a lot of us feel this, but my people are so devastating level of despair. Oh, my God. It's bad news. It's almost like you always call whack a mole, which is, there's something bad happening every day, which is so much, this is a hard topic. So what can we do about it? One of the things on our podcast, we really try to end every episode with an act of action. What is it that we that as individuals in this larger structure, What, And so if I can, so hopefully to end on a little bit of a pause that I don't think after this, there are things that all of us can do a little small about this. It's not about, the tsunami is not just going to happen, little moves, little glass moves that each of us made. This does create the wave of change that we eventually want to see. But it's not going to happen overnight. Just have to accept that breath through it and then make two little moves. So these are some little moves. Maybe one of them is stop saying, boy, she's going to go, stop saying, lock a room, talk. Stop saying be a man to your friends, your family,

Colleen: Boys don't cry And these are things like even I have, right? Like when I'm with my six year old, I have not sending her. I feel them come all over here, but I am able to stop them coming out, but even still have these combinations. I don't know.

Amanda: We are still a part of that culture. We were raised with that language. We were raised with that expectation. So when we're sitting up here so confidently, going well, just do this. It's not that we don't still fight those urges because it's so embedded in here and in here it would be less. But it's worth fighting against. Right. And our own language is a great first place to start. Another thing is, if you are comfortable disrupting your own language coming between the earth and the thing coming out of your mouth when you hear somebody else say it, I am not encouraging anybody to go have a conflict or something, I'm not. I'm saying, when possible, when you feel safe, when you feel like that person might be receptive to the comment, try morning and feel strange about how does she feel she liked that person might be receptive to respectfully, now that you have some more information, respectfully disrupt that language in a social interaction Hey, I, I don't really think, I think boy can be more than that.

Colleen: that is exactly the line I was going to give you.

Amanda: I was trying to like of something with the locker room talk, not all boys talk like that in the locker room. I mean, something even that simple.

Colleen: I think it is just shifting that for kids, because they don't know. The world, They see they have the world up until this point, and sometimes we just have to put into their imagination that there is a different way. Again, these small moves. But honestly, if somebody says boys will be boys to me, I always say, I think boys can be better than that, that's all I say. I do not launch in an hour-long talk about that, I just say boys can be better than that, that's it, and that's enough. That's enough.

Amanda: We all love a good rally, right? We all love good protests, but sometimes it's just the little, it's those little daily, small, quiet moves. If we all start doing them, that that goes...

Colleen: Especially in the space of parenting well or grandparent-ing, or auntie-ing.

Amanda: and then also the discussion with friends. I mean, you're all here. You can talk to each other over lunch about this, but then maybe expand it out to your friend networks that are outside this group. Take it to your book club. Take it to, you know, when you go to lunch with your friends and that's all of you, men and women. Have you ever heard phrase toxic masculine? What are you doing about student? And now, you know, a little bit more. So when you ask your friend that when they say something that maybe you're like, Yeah, that's like then you can have a conversation. This conversations are important, too, can change things, because now you're spreading that net out just a little bit and using your network do it. Another thing that you can do, that's actually pretty low key. And low stakes is sharing stories and articles on social media, those of you who are on social media, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, whatever other things that are out there that I'm not aware of yet. *[Laughs]* You know, you can follow hashtags and follow scholars who are doing this work and then sharing stories when you see one and maybe putting a comment or even just sharing it without comment and see if people read it and say anything. I mean, that's another way to get some information out there,

Colleen: Not plug my own work, but I have three really good pieces on teaching tolerance about this that are very much meant for a non scholarly audience. Right? How do we make this a conversation with right to me right now, I miss how long get into this right down, having the conversation.

Amanda: It has to go outside those bounds. And then, obviously, Colleen mentioned, you know, parents of young boys in particular, I don't know if they're already here, but parents of young boys in particular can really having, like their

by making those different choices in how you speak to your young boys. And then I wanted to open it up to the audience, and I'm going to come out here and find out. So what are your ideas to disrupt this kind of idea of toxic masculinity? What are some ideas that you have? Because I really want us all to understand what our options are. So here we go.

Person 1 *[Off Screen]*: I think having a positive example also can be helpful. And I'm sure a lot of people here are familiar with Fred Rogers. My husband and I just saw his new documentary about him called *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* It's in theaters now. And so I don't know, I don't have kids, but if I were in that position, I might just say, hey, remember how Mister Rogers was and how he treated people? You know, if I had a boy, I loved my boy to grow up with that and just offer a positive example. So that's just an idea.

Amanda *[Off Screen]*: That is an incredible idea, thanks for bringing that up. I haven't seen the movie yet because I feel like I grew up with Fred Rogers, right? I was like, kid in the seventies, and it would be, I think that would be. Don't you think that's a great example? Good, good job. Yes.

Colleen: You may see a piece about me seeing that movie and writing about how it disrupts toxic masculinity.

Amanda *[Off Screen]*: Exactly.

Person 2 *[Off Screen]*: So I'll give you. So as our speakers know, I come from an Native American community, and it's something very common that I did not think about until literally today, I'm listening to Colleen speak that we don't gender our children in terms of how we speak to them. It's never girls do this. Boys do this. It's always, this is how to be a good person. So I think if you can consciously make that choice of saying good people do this, good people don't do this, you know, and correct behavior without gender. That's what I do with my son. I think he said to me the other day the most strange thing where I was trying to help him deal with an emotion. And I was like look, if it's not against the rules, then you can do it. Don't listen to other people saying that you suck at a game because you, you know, you, you chose something that they didn't do. You chose a strategy that they didn't do. And he goes, God, Mom, you're such a counselor *[Audience laughing]*, and I'm like, what does that mean? *[Audience laughing]* And it came to me in terms of, like, I'm talking about feelings, and I was really appreciative that he didn't say, you know, you're such a girl or something because I'm talking about failing. You know, I'm a counselor. So I think that's just kind of a...

Colleen: I think that's just such a, Terran, that's such a safe thing, right? Never start a sentence with "girls don't" or "boys don't", unless you're talking about, like, how to treat others. But, yeah, to, to de-gender it and just person, it just like pronouns. We could do that to the power too.

Person 3: I think it's also important to make the distinction between impulse and action, because I know, or at least my experiences with young men and my age is that we will all or many of us will have bad impulses, or we will have the urge to be, you know, very aggressive or reasserting or dismiss others or be overly stoic. And it's important to let people know that when we say, you know, toxic masculinity, then we're not talking about, oh, if you feel this, you're bad. You know, it's that men should be able to learn to understand these things and control them, so that they don't come out in unhealthy, in unhealthy ways that I would describe as toxic masculinity.

Amanda: Excellent suggestion.

Colleen: And I think maybe part excuse me is, is, I don't know. I feel like there was a lot of talk about how to be a girl growing up and very little, and in safe ways, like in good ways that we're meant to protect me and protect me from those things that you just mentioned. And I think because, it just seems that the conversation that people are having with boys about the idea of masculinity and how to beat different types of men are just starting, like I feel like I benefited from a lot of it. And now, right, and now we want to have those conversations with young boys if we're in the classroom or if we're parenting or, you know, wherever we are and not not like you're a terrible person. Like, right. OK, let's talk about why that happened. And let's talk about what might be a play and never about it being because you were a boy, that weird connection between biology and and action.

Person 4: I think we need to look at when this comes up, especially boy to boy, and a lot of the times it is a lack of social skills. And so teaching our kids conflict resolution, how to listen, all that basic stuff is kind of getting lost. And I would like to see that. And I think it would replace a lot of this.

Colleen: Yeah. And that, and that, I think impulse is, is right and good. Having taught in a public school, I know that they're often a controversial idea. My daughter goes to a pipeline school for that reason, because teaching conflict resolution is such an important part to me of education. But there is, there seems to have become some strange connections between, not in my mind, but like, as if you're, you're brainwashing kids when you do that, Like, that's the line.

I don't do that, but that's kind of the school board, the school board line I hear. I think you're absolutely right, but I can see why public educators might be like "Oh", I get it.

Person 5: So, for me, over the last couple of years have been studying emotionally healthy spirituality. And this whole issue just really feels, you know, so close to what I have recently learned, which has been life changing in a wonderful way. For me, it's really about feelings.

Colleen: Yep.

Person 5: And, and about, first of all, you know, we stuffed our feelings for for so long and, or we're told that we aren't allowed to have feelings, to even get to the point where we can figure out what they are is a huge challenge. And then to figure out what to discuss without, you know, blowing up and, and, you know, having meltdowns and so forth. So this is, I think, really, at the root of to be our authentic selves, we need to get in touch with them.

Colleen: So I love that you said that, because just this morning in The New York Times, there's an opinion piece that is written by a male psychotherapist when he talks about working with men, since the MeToo movement, and how men have changed the way they talk in their therapy sessions and how he made a comment about, you know, he'll ask his patient. Well, how does that feel? And they'll say it's frustrating and how pointless that word is, right, because these young adult men don't even have the language yet for the emotion they feel. They default to frustrating and how he pushes them to actually not be ashamed of having an emotion. So you might, if you can. I think that piece would very much speak to you because as I read it this morning, I'm like, this is exactly what I'm talking about. But then by the time they get to their twenties, they don't even have names for their emotions anymore because they've been wearing this mask. They've been forced to wear this mask for so long, so now you have to do this, like all this unshed work to realize that, No, I'm not a terrible person. I am allowed to feel feelings. I do not need to feel shame. These are all the opposite of this toxic masculinity. Now, who's getting now or like getting, if you think about, like, what a cow has to run through, you get one shot such as one shot that you don't know where that line. You can still be a man. You don't have to have your manhood questioned because you expressed regret, right? For example, it was on the New York Times opinion section this morning. It had for, like, we give us something that was like working with men in the MeToo movement or something like that. It was all about what you just mentioned.

Amanda: So I. What I wanted to do is that is what I want to open the floor now for any, for five minutes, for questions, anything else that maybe we didn't cover? You have a question about something. So hold on. I'm coming *[Laughs]*. I'm a coming. Yeah. We talk till the food gets here, OK? *[speaking in the background]*.

Person 6 *[Off Screen]*: Speaking of language, a few years ago, this became a really popular term. And I remember the first time I heard it. I'm not a man, and I was horribly offended by it. And thank God it's starting to wane "man up".

Colleen: I didn't bring that one up, but that's really bad.

Person 6 *[Off Screen]*: Yeah. I mean, every time I hear anything will horror. What is that supposed to mean?

Colleen: Grow a pair, grow a pair, I classify.

Amanda *[Off Screen]*: Excellent example. Yes, yes, yes.

Person 7 *[Off Screen]*: I just was going to say, I really like how you explain how this is is trying to let men out of that box. And I, and I think it made me think of my husband, we've been together twenty years, he's a bit older and had a whole like before me. I hear stories of his younger years. You know, we'll get together with people who he hasn't seen in thirty/forty years. I try to pick things. They'll all be telling me about what a badass he was. And he did this, or you remember when you put the principle in the cooler? Yes. And things like that, and I always look at them and I go, who is this person? I don't know this person they talk about. And now he was a marine. He is still very, he's still very, I mean, honorable and protective and strong. There are all the qualities I like, very, you know what I mean? But he said to me one day and this just says it. He says I don't have to be that person with you anymore. He said you are so different than anybody I knew in my past. And when I met you, I didn't have to be that person. So it literally, it was a mask that he wore. Even little things like he hunted and did stuff, that he doesn't like he liked. I mean, he said, yeah, you know, you ate the food. If you shot it, you ate it. And that's how I grew up, too. If you hunt and you shoot, you eat it. But he said I hated killing animals, but I did it because all the other men did it. And he didn't. He couldn't just say,

Colleen: And if he didn't, he'd be mocked.

Person 7 *[Off Screen]*: Yeah

Colleen: And that's it, not only that, he had to opt in, but also opting out wasn't even an option, right?

Person 7 *[Off Screen]*: So, you know, not going to say, you know, one way or another, you hunt or you don't hunt if you hunt and you eat, did you watch somebody else? He did you have the. So the fact that he could say now, No, I don't do it. And we actually just have five dogs, three cats and thirty, some chickens that we would never eat.

Colleen: I'm coming to your house

Person 7 *[Off Screen, laughs]*: It just show he can be who he wants to be now.

Colleen: And what this conversation is about, is to spare my six year old nephew that experience. Where he has to wait, I don't know how you old your husband is now, but how do you, until he's at that point where he can be, like they wanted to do, right. How do we spare children running through that gauntlet of masculinity, when they don't want to. Oh, it's called "What Men Say about #MeToo in Therapy" by Avi Klein. It was published yesterday.

Person 5: Thank you.

Person 8: Hi I wanted to ask to what extent, if any, Do you think that biology does influence our behavior and tendencies? Because I do think that it sounds like that's where to an extent, influences our behavior and our tendencies. But it is, I found it difficult to balance that, basically saying that, you know, between them, you know, I have a certain body, and I'll have certain levels of, you know, chemicals in my brain, adrenaline and such. But at the same time, you know, I, I don't want to try to prescribe a certain type of behavior to anyone, as as they grow up but balancing those two things.

Colleen: So most of the research that's been done on gender and brains or sex and brains, I should go shows very small differences. So when we're talking about ability to have emotion or intelligence, that a girl brain and a boy brain are very different, Of course, other parts of biology are very different. Hormones are very different. Like, right. Right. What are they saying?

Person 7: Women in terms of having emotion or intelligence...

Colleen: Girl brains, boy. No, they're similar. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. No, no. Girl brains and boy brains. Like, I'm trying. I know what's happening. No, I heard there. I'm like, wait a minute. What's happening is in my brain. I'm trying to remember the woman's book. I know her name is Jill, and I'm like. I think the

over belief that testosterone makes you harsh, crude, or violent is the problem of, right. The testosterone is different. There's going to be a difference in maybe somebody's a lot of testosterone, and moves through the world. However, behavior is not prescribed by testosterone.

Amanda: Well, it's back to what you said about impulses and what we were talking about the idea of that urge, or that language in the back of our head of when you see a boy crying. In the back of your head, you might, the phrase might be like, "man up". But you don't want to say that, right? That's the urge. But you are going to be aware now. You are not going to say, even those the phrase might be there. But you're gonna restrain yourself. So, in other words, if it was truly biological, you wouldn't be able to restrain yourself at all. I mean, if it truly were that simple. And you have a lot of testosterone, therefore, you're violent. Therefore, it wouldn't even be possible to control it, right? But that's not the case for humans, right? Right.

Colleen: If that were true, there would be no space for change. And we should all just go home.

Amanda: Yeah, and that's not OK, here, hold on. I'm coming. Good question.

Colleen: But you would get miss out on your pizza.

Person 8 *[Off Screen]*: So I'm just having a thought about something you said, right? This is sounding like it could be a spectrum of kind of disorder, if you will. How much you might be influenced by toxic masculinity. And I expect it applies to just about every male who's ever been, you know, born.

Colleen: My hope is it's not...

Person 8: To someone agree. I mean, we've all been exposed to it, as you say, but I just think it's a real hard sell when you mention the example of the INCELS. Who is more of a psychopath, I don't think...

Colleen: But that is based in gender. That is a psychopathy. If that's a word that is directly based in one's experience of gender, there's no...

Person 8: I don't understand the movement so much. But I guess specifically when you made the example of an individual who hates women so much that I hope remote incidents where they actually include homicide, I'm saying that person doesn't even belong on this toxic matter. They're like the hyper. Exactly. That is a psychopath.

Colleen: That is the hyper. But, you know, here is the thing...

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: but it is on the spectrum

Colleen: No, no, no I want to talk about this...

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: Go ahead.

Colleen: because I think it's a super important, because that is not all about mental health, right? And this is the thing, why I have started being on Fox News' radar, because I am sick and tired of hearing the conversation that it's either mental or what's the other side, you know when there's a shooting. Oh right gun control. So I'm sick of this...

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: We're all for gun control.

mental health and gun control...

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: There's a third option and it includes gender violence...

Colleen: So what I did, and it includes a gender violence question. What I did is said, what if it's neither? And it has something to do with masculinity? Because it's always men who are doing this. And you can name me the three anomalies. That's fine. But for the most part, is there something else to this conversation? Because this conversation of mental health, gun reform, mental health, gun reform has worked for none of us. It's not working. So that's when I started getting so interested in this topic is, well, what is okay, so what is what is shared with these experiences?

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: So what are some of the cultural, again, cultural foundations. And that's, again, that's not to say that all men, right? Not all men will become violent because you've been conditioned under this sort of toxic masculine agenda.

Colleen: I'm not say most, or all.

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: But they do exist

Colleen: We cannot deny that there is a gendered element to some of these mass killings. If you go back in their record like the Gazette guy, he was stalking a woman. If you go back to the guy in Canada, he was an out INCEL. If you go back to the shooting of the girls, remember all that years ago. [*Amanda affirms*] No, the Amish girls.

Amanda [*Off Screen*]: The Amish girls, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Colleen: That was rooted in misogyny, that there is a gendered element that if I don't start, we can't this circular about mental health. And I agree that dude is a psychopath. I completely agree with you, but I also want to point out, I think it's, and if we don't acknowledge that there is a gendered component to that and that, trying to use it. What is it, psychopathy if they're, if we don't talk about that gendered element of psychopathy, then we're missing a part. And that's all I want us to do, is not miss that part because I don't believe men do that because they have premises. No, I don't. They're not doing it because of reality.

Amanda: And part of the problem with missing that part is that if we missed that part, if we looked past that part, we reject that component. What we're doing is we're possibly missing an opportunity to solve the problem. Because, like you pointed out, I'm not going to hold mental health versus gun control, that's a binary. And something I do a lot is rail against binaries. It's not about binaries, our culture, our educational structures, our everything you see, it's everything you see in our world. It's about binaries. It's this or that it's either or. And the thing is, that's not really how we live. It's not about binaries. It's not about mental health or gun control. There's more to it. And this is part of it. So you have to, you have to, as uncomfortable as it is, you have to embrace that and start talking about it as it's part of the problem so that we can try to reverse it. But again, that it's very uncomfortable, right for us, because we've all grown up with that, those attitudes and, well, that's like the most part of it. Because "oh my god, I'm not like him." Right, "Thank you, that's good" but it is part of it. So I think we are going to have one final, maybe our last one. OK, she's going to add something. I think the, is a pizza here?

[Speaking in the background]

Person 9 [*Off Screen*]: I wanted to add something because I'm in a very unique position to answer that question. Oddly enough, I just returned the week before last from Toronto for the Canadian Writers Summit, where we had a panel to discuss INCEL attacks and masculinity in the classroom. And I think one of the main problems that we had is absolutely is someone who takes action and murders other people or injures or does anything, you know, out in the world to, to physically harm other people is a psycho, like they're taking just extra steps. They have a mental problem. But the true, and I think more profound issue that we need to deal with on a daily basis within our classrooms and within our society is the fact that there are young men who fall victim to this mentality due to isolation and this toxic masculinity who support that person. Who say, you

know, "I'm not brave enough to do anything like that, but good on him. Good for him. Great." You know, and that's where our stance as people, as teachers, as mothers and aunts and uncles and grandparents is to be able to, when we have the power identifying those at risk youth. Those young men who are so isolated and are so angry and are stifled by their ability to express that toxic masculinity. Those people who may very well do have mental health problems because they're like, boys are told they are not to go seek help for it. Those are the points where we can intervene, and we can stop these major attacks as well as just that smaller mentality of yeah, he did a good thing. And the pain within those young men that they're living with every day, it with that idea, because how much pain did that person have to have in order to go out and make that attack. And these young men are not doing that, but still living with that same thing.

Amanda [*Off Screen, moving on*]: So as we sort of have referenced go on, nothing exists in a vacuum. All these things are connected, its, we want to live in a binary world. We want to make it so that it's easy to fix, it's easy to understand. We can solve this if we just do X, but the reality is all of these things are connected. Toxic masculinity is all part of it. So this is a piece of the conversation where maybe we're not going to fix the big big big problems. We're not going to solve the problems of INCELS and and the violence that they commit. We're not going to solve all of it, but if we start talking about it differently. If we start making those live activist moves in our own lives within our own social circles, that actually is enough. I would argue to you that that's enough, and anything that you do beyond that it's gravy and that's great. But not everybody can commit to going to a rally, or you know calling their congressional representative every day, or you know working with you know troubled youth. But we can all have a conversation. We can all post a story on social media and start a conversation. We can all start using different language. We can all think in our own heads when that language comes up man up grow a pair boys we boys just don't say it, and maybe ask other people not to.

Colleen: And I'm really grateful that you were here, and that you were part of this conversation. It's a conversation we care very much about. This is just the tip of the conversation we have lots of episodes about this on our podcast, that is free. There's a whole one about toxic masculinity. There's one about INCELS. We try to talk about gender and ways INCLEs, so this is also the beginning of a conversation right this isn't the end, and if you want more you can always you should have gotten a post card and a sticker and if you didn't we'll get you sticker.

Amanda: You can reach out to us and yeah thank you very much for your attention and coming out today. Thank you.

[Applause]

Jason: So thank you for, I think I have it back on we're good thank you so much for running mikes. I got the week off from running mikes, this was fantastic. This was really great and I want to thank Paula who invited our guests today to come and talk and the timing couldn't have worked out better. Thank you, Paula. She also represented humanism at *Tuesday's with Tumi*, a couple weeks ago and did a bang-up job doing that. So, I'm really appreciative of that and I just wanted to mention it. In the back room there, if you're if you're dining with us today, if you brought food, or if you placed an order bring a chair back there, in the back, and even if you're not dining with us today, walk around in the back. There's an art installation right now that talks about defying gender norms. It's called *Girls will be Boys, will be Girls, will be dot dot dot* and there's one little it's like a coloring book right, and there's one on the on the back corner that says it's a it's a father and son. You would assume, it's a father and son cleaning up the house. You know wearing the aprons, they've got the mop, and the whole thing. And one of them says the other "hey after we're done cleaning up the house let's go dismantle toxic masculinity," so I don't think that the timing could have worked out any better so please do check that out. *[Speaking in the background]* Yeah, so thank you again for coming and as soon as we get August program figured out we will blast it out there on social media, Meetup, our newsletter, and in the meantime just check out our website lvhumanists.org. Thank you so much.

Return to "[A Conversation on Toxic Masculinity](#)" Video.

“October 11, 1991: Anita Hill Full Opening Statement (C-SPAN)” Transcript

Judge: Professor, do you swear to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Anita Hill: I do.

Judge: Thank You. Professor Hill please uh make whatever statement you would wish to make to the committee.

Anita Hill: Mr. chair...

Judge *[interrupting]*: Excuse my friend, I instruct the officers do not let anyone in or out of that door while Professor Hill is making her statement.

Anita Hill: Mr. chairman, senator Thurmond, members of the committee, my name is Anita F Hill and I'm a professor of law at the University of Oklahoma. I was born on a farm in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma in 1956. I am the youngest of 13 children. I had my early education in Okmulgee County. My father, Albert Hill, is a farmer in that area. My mother's name is Irma Hill. She is also a farmer and a housewife. My childhood was one of a lot of hard work and not much money, but it was one of solid family affection as represented by my parents. I was reared in a religious atmosphere, in the Baptist faith, and I have been a member of the Antioch Baptist Church in Tulsa Oklahoma since 1983. It is a very warm part of my life at the present time.

For my undergraduate work I went to Oklahoma State University and graduated from there in 1977. I am attaching to the statement a copy of my resume for further details of my education.

[background noises – people talking]

I graduated from the University with academic honors and proceeded to the Yale Law School where I received my JD degree in 1980. Upon graduation from law school, I became a practicing lawyer with the Washington DC firm of “Walled, Hark Raynor, and Ross”. In 1981, I was introduced to now judge Thomas, by a mutual friend. Judge Thomas told me that he was anticipating a political appointment, and he asked if I would be interested in working with him. He was in fact appointed as assistant secretary of education for civil rights. After he was after he had taken that post he asked if I would become his assistants and I accepted that position. In my early period there, I had two major projects. The

first, was an article I wrote for Judge Thomas's signature on the education of minority students. The second, was organization of a seminar on high-risk students, which was abandoned because Judge Thomas transferred to the EEOC where he became the chairman of that office.

During this period at the Department of Education my working relationship with Judge Thomas was positive. I had a good deal of responsibility and independence. I thought he respected my work, and that he trusted my judgment. After approximately three months of working there, he asked me to go out socially with him. What happened next, and telling the world about it, are the two most difficult things experiences of my life. It is only after a great deal of agonizing consideration and a great number of sleepless nights, that I am able to talk of these unpleasant matters to anyone but my close friends. I declined the invitation to go out socially with him and explain to him that I thought it would jeopardize what at the time I consider to be a very good working relationship. I had a normal social life with other men outside of the office. I believe then, as now, that having a social relationship with a person who was supervising my work would be ill-advised. I was very uncomfortable with the idea and told him so. I thought that by saying no and explaining my reasons my employer would abandon his social suggestions; however, to my regret, in the following few weeks he continued to ask me out on several occasions. He pressed me to justify my reasons for saying no to him. These incidents took place in his office or mine, they were in the form of private conversations, which would not have been overheard by anyone else. My working relationship became even more strained, when Judge Thomas began to use work situations to discuss sex. On these occasions, he would call me into his office for reports on education issues and projects, or he might suggest that because of the time pressures of his schedule we go to lunch to a government cafeteria. After a brief discussion of work, he would turn the conversation to a discussion of sexual matters. His conversations were very vivid. He spoke about acts that he had seen in pornographic films, involving such matters as women having sex with animals, and films showing group sex or rape scenes. He talked about pornographic materials, depicting individuals with large penises or large breasts involved in various sex acts. On several occasions, Thomas told me graphically of his own sexual prowess. Because I was extremely uncomfortable talking about sex with him at all, and particularly in such a graphic way, I told him that I did not want to talk about these subjects. I was also trying to change the subject to education matters or to non-sexual personal matters such as his background or his beliefs. My efforts to change the subject were rarely successful. Throughout the period of these conversations, he also from time to time asked me for social engagement. My

reaction to these conversations was to avoid them by eliminating opportunities for us to engage in extended conversations. This was difficult, because at the time I was his only assistant at the Office of Education. Our office for civil rights. During the latter part of my time at the Department of Education, the social pressures and any conversation of his offensive behavior ended. I began both to believe and hope that our working relationship could be a proper, cordial, and professional one. when Judge Thomas was made chair of the EEOC I needed to face the question of whether to go with him. I was asked to do so, and I did. The work itself was interesting, and at that time it appeared that the sexual overtures which had so troubled me had ended. I also faced the realistic fact that I had no alternative job. While I might have gone back to private practice, perhaps in my old firm, or at another, I was dedicated to civil rights work and my first choice was to be in that field. Moreover, at that time the Department of Education itself was a dubious venture. President Reagan was seeking to abolish the entire Department. for my first months at the EEOC, where I continued to be an assistant to Judge Thomas, there were no sexual conversations or overtures. However, during the fall and winter of 1982, these began again. The comments were random and range from pressing me about why it didn't go out with him to remarks about my personal appearance. I remember his saying that someday I would have to tell him the real reason that I wouldn't go out with him. he began to show displeasure in his tone and voice, and his demeanor, and his continued pressure for an explanation. He commented on what I was wearing, in terms of whether it made me more or less sexually attractive. The incidents occurred in his inner office at the EEOC. one of the oddest episodes I remember, was an occasion in which Thomas was drinking a coke in his office. He got up from the table at which we were working, went over to his desk to get the coke, looked at the can and asked "who has put pubic hair on my coke?" on other occasions he referred to the size of his own penis as being larger than normal, and he also spoke on some occasions of the pleasures he had given to women with oral sex. At this point, late 1982, I began to feel severe stress on the job. I began to be concerned that Clarence Thomas might take out his anger with me by degrading me, or not giving me important assignments. I also thought that he might find an excuse for dismissing me. in January of 1983, I began looking for another job. I was handicapped because I feared that if he found out you might make it difficult for me to find other employment, and I might be dismissed from the job I had. Another factor that made my search more difficult, was that this was a period this was during a period of a hiring freeze in the government. In February 1983, I was hospitalized for five days on an emergency basis for an acute for acute stomach pain, which I attributed to stress on the job. Once out of the hospital I became more committed to find other employment and sought further

to minimize my contact with Thomas. This became easier when Alison Duncan became office director because most of my work was then funneled through her, and I had contact with Clarence Thomas mostly in staff meetings. In the spring of 1983, an opportunity to teach at Oral Roberts University opened up. I participated in a seminar taught at an afternoon session and seminar at Oral Roberts University. The Dean of the university saw me teaching and inquired as to whether I would be interested in furthering pursuing a career in teaching beginning at Oral Roberts University. I agreed to take the job in large part because of my desire to escape the pressures I felt at the EEOC, due to Judge Thomas. When I informed him that I was leaving in July, I recall that his response was that now I would no longer have an excuse for not going out with him. I told him that I still preferred not to do so. At some time after that meeting, he asked if he could take me to dinner at the end of the term. When I declined, he assured me that the dinner was a professional courtesy only and not a social invitation. I reluctantly agreed to accept that invitation, but only if it was at the very end of a working day. On, as I recall, the last day of my employment at the EEOC in the summer of 1983, I did have dinner with Clarence Thomas. We went directly from work to a restaurant near the office. We talked about the work I had done, both at education and at the EEOC. He told me that he was pleased with all of it except for an article in speech that I had done for him while we were at the office for civil rights. Finally, he made a comment that I will vividly remember he said that if I ever told anyone of his behavior that it would ruin his career. This was not an apology, nor was it an explanation. That was his last remark about the possibility of our going out or reference to his behavior.

In July of 1983, I left Washington DC area, and I've had minimal contacts with judge Clarence Thomas since. I am of course aware from the press that some questions have been raised about conversations I had with judge Clarence Thomas after I left the EEOC. From 1983 until today until today, I have seen Judge Thomas only twice. On one occasion I needed to get a reference from him and on another he made a public appearance in Tulsa. On one occasion he called me at home, and we had an inconsequential conversation. On one occasion he called me without reaching me, and I returned the call without reaching him and nothing came of it. I have on at least three occasions been asked to ask as a conduit to him for others. I knew his secretary, Diane Holt, we had worked together at both EEOC and education. There were occasions in which I spoke to her and on some of these occasions undoubtedly, I passed on some casual comment to then chairman Thomas. There were a series of calls in the FIR three months of 1985, occasioned by a group in Tulsa which wished to have a civil rights conference. They wanted Judge Thomas to be the speaker and enlisted my

assistance for this purpose. I did call in January and February, to no effect, and finally suggested to the person directly involved, Susan Karl, that she put the matter into her own hands and call directly. she did so, in March of 1985. in connection with that March invitation, Miss Karl wanted some conference materials for the seminar and some research was needed I was asked to try to get the information and did attempt to do so. there was another call about another possible conference in the July of 1985. In August of 1987, I was in Washington DC, and I did call Diane holt. In the course of this conversation, she asked me how long I was going to be in town, and I told her. It is recorded in the message is August 15. It was in fact August 20th, she told me about Judge Thomas's marriage, and I did say "congratulate him." It is only after a great deal of agonizing consideration that I am able to talk of these unpleasant matters to anyone except my closest friends, as I've said before. These last few days have been very trying and very hard for me, and it hasn't just been the last few days this week, it has actually been over a month now that I have been under the strain of this issue. Telling the world is the most difficult experience of my life, but it is very close to having to live through the experience that occasion this meeting. I may have used poor judgment early on in my relationship with this issue. I was aware however that telling at any point in my career could adversely affect my future career, and I did not want, early on, to burn all the bridges to the EEOC. As I said, I may abuse poor judgment. Perhaps I should have taken angry or even militant steps both when I was in the agency or after I left it, but I must confess to the world that the course that I took seemed the better as well as the easier approach. I declined any comment to newspapers but later when Senate staff asked me about these matters, I felt I had a duty to report. I have no personal vendetta against Clarence Thomas. I seek only to provide the committee with information which it may regard as relevant. it would have been more comfortable to remain silent. It took no initiative to inform anyone. I took no initiative to inform anyone, but when I was asked by a representative of this committee to report my experience, I felt that I had to tell the truth. I could not keep silent.

Return to ["Third-Wave Feminism"](#)

“Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” Performed by Kerry Washington” Transcript

[Intro]

Man: In 1851 the black abolitionist and former slave Sojourner Truth spoke to a gathering of feminists in Akron, Ohio. The spontaneous speech, only a few minutes long, was a landmark moment in feminist and abolitionist history.

[Kerry Washington performance begins]

Kerry Washington: Well, children, where there is so much racket, there must be something at a kilter. I think that twixt the Negroes of the south and the women at the north all talk about rights. The white men go being affixed pretty soon, but what's all this here talking about? that man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Ha, nobody ever helps me into carriages, over mud puddles, or gives me any best place. And ain't I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm. I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me. And ain't a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as any man, when I could get it. And I could bear the lash as well. And ain't a woman? I have born 13 children, seen most sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief none, but Jesus heard me. And ain't I a woman? and they talked about this thing in the head. What is it they call it? Oh, that's right, yeah, intellect. That's it honey, but what's that got to do with women's rights and Negroes rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and your holds a quart, wouldn't you be me not to let me have my little half measure for? That man in the back there, he says “Women can't have as much rights as men, cuz Christ wasn't a woman.” Well, where did your Christ come from? WHERE DID YOUR CHRIST COME FROM? He came from God and a woman man didn't have nothin' to do with it. [Applause] If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, well these women here together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again. And they asking to do it, the men better let them.

[Return to "Sojourner Truth"](#)

Yousafzai 2014 Nobel Lecture Transcript

Man: Malala, I call upon you to come forward and give your Nobel lecture.

[Long Applause - Standing Ovation]

Malala Yousafzai: Thank you so much. Thank you. *[Applause continues]* Thank you. *[Applause ends]* Thank you so much. *[in Arabic]* "Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim". In the name of God, the most merciful, the most beneficent. Your majesties. Your Royal Highnesses. Distinguished members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, their sisters and brothers. Today is the day of great happiness for me. I'm humbled that the Nobel Committee has selected me for this precious award. Thank you to everyone for your continued support and love. Thank you for the letters and cards that I still receive from all around the world. You're kind and encouraging. Words strengthens and inspires me. I'd like to thank my parents for their unconditional love. Thank you to my father for not clipping my wings and for letting me fly.

[Applause]

Malala Yousafzai *[continues]*: Thank you to my mother for inspiring me to be patient and to always speak the truth which we strongly believe is the true message of Islam. And also thank you to all my wonderful teachers who inspired me to believe in myself and be brave. I am proud. But in fact, I'm very proud to be the first Pashtoon, the first Pakistani and the youngest person to receive this award.

[Applause]

Malala Yousafzai *[continues]*: Along with that, along with that, I'm pretty certain that I'm also the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize who still fights with our younger brothers *[Laughter]*. I want there to be peace everywhere. But my brothers and I are still working on that *[Laughter]*. I am also honored received this award together with Kerala Satyati, who has been a champion for children's rights for a long time, twice as long, in fact, than I have been alive. I'm proud that we can work together. We can walk together and show the world. That an Indian and a Pakistani, they can work together and achieve their goals of children's rights. Their brothers and sisters. *[Applause]* I was named after the inspirational Maalai of Mawan, who is the Pashtun join of arc. The word malala means grief stricken, said. But in order to lend some happiness to it, my grandfather would always call me Malala, the happiest girl in the world. And today I'm very happy that we are together fighting for an important cause. This

award is not just for me. It is for those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frightened children who want peace. It is for those voiceless children who want change. I am here to stand up for their rights to raise their voice. It is not time to pity them. It is not time to pity them. It is time to take action. So it becomes the last time, the last time. So it becomes the last time that we see a child deprived of education.

[Long Applause]

Malala Yousafzai *[continues]*: I have found that people describe me in many different ways. Some people called me the girl who was shot by the Taliban and some the girl who fought for her rights. Some people call a Nobel laureate now. However, my brother still called me that annoying, bossy sister. As far as I know, I'm just a committed, an even stubborn person, who wants to see every child getting quality education. Who wants to see women having equal rights and who wants peace in every corner of the world? *[Applause]* Education. Is one of the blessings of life and one of its necessities that has been my experience during the seventeen years of my life. In my paradise homes, I always loved learning and discovering new things. I remember when my friends and I would decorate our hands with henna on special occasions, and instead of drawing flowers and patrons, you would paint our hands with mathematical formulas and equations. We had a thirst for education. We had a thirst for education because our future was right there, In that classroom. We would sit and learn and read together. We love to wear neat and tidy school uniforms, and we would sit there with big dreams in our eyes. We wanted to make our parents proud and prove that we could also extend our studies and achieve those goals, which some people think only boys can. But things. Did not remain the same. When I was in Swath, it was a place of tourism and beauty suddenly changed into a place of terrorism. I was just then that more than four hundred schools were destroyed. Women were flogged. People were killed. And our beautiful dreams turned into nightmares. Education went from being a right to being a crime. Girls were stopped from going to school. When my world suddenly changed, my priorities changed, too. I had two options. One was to remain silent and wait to be killed. And the second was to speak up and then be killed. I chose the second one. I decided to speak up *[Applause]*. We could not just stand by and see those injustices of the terrorists denying our rights, ruthlessly killing people and misusing the name of Islam. We decided to raise our voice and tell them. Have you not learnt? Have you not learned that in the Holy Koran? Allah says if you kill one person, it is as if you killed the whole humanity. Do you not know that Mohammed is upon him? The Prophet of Mercy? He says, Do not harm yourself or others. And do you not

know that the very first word of the Holy Koran is the word Ekra, which means we read. A terrorist tried to stop us. And it takes me and my friends who are here today on our school bus in two thousand and twelve. But neither their ideas, not their bullets, could win. We survived. And since that day, our voices have grown louder and louder *[Applause]*. I tell my story not because it is unique, but because it is not. It is the story of many girls. Today, I tell their stories too. I have brought with me some of my sisters from Pakistan, from Nigeria and from Syria who shared this story. My brave sisters, Shazy and Kayna, who were also shot their day on our school bus, but they had not stopped learning. In my brave sister. Soro. Who went through severe abuse and extreme violence? Even her brother was killed, but she did not succumb. Also, my sisters here whom I have met during my mala fun campaign. My sixteen year old courageous sister Mozon from Syria, who now lives in Jordan as a refugee. And she goes from tent to tent encouraging girls and boys to learn. And my sister Amina from the north of Nigeria where Boko Haran threatens and stops and even kids just for wanting to go to school. Though I appear as one girl. Though I appear as one gun, one person. With five foot two inches tall, if you include my high heels *[Laughter]*. It means I'm five foot only. I am not a lone voice. I am not a lone voice. I am many. I am Malala, But I'm also Shazy. I'm Kayna. I'm Kana Soro. I'm Mozon. I am Amina. I am those sixty six million girls who are deprived of education. And today I'm not raising my voice. It is the voice of those sixty six million girls.

[Long Applause]

Malala Yousafzai *[continues]*: And. Sometimes people like to ask me, why should girls go to school? Why is it important for them? But I think the more important question is, why shouldn't they? Why shouldn't they have this right to go to school? Dear Brothers and sisters. Today, in half of the world, we see rapid progress and development. However, there are many countries where millions still suffer from the very old problems of war, poverty and injustice. We still see conflicts in which innocent people lose their lives and children become orphans. We see many people becoming refugees in Syria and Iraq. In Afghanistan, we see families been killed in suicidal attacks and bomb blasts. Many children in Africa do not have access to education because of poverty. And as I said, we still see we still see girls who have no freedom to go to school in the north of Nigeria. Many children in countries like Pakistan and India, Eskira Satyati mentioned, many children, especially in India and Pakistan. Are deprived of their right to education. Because of social terrorists, or they have been forced into child marriage or into child labor. One of my very good school friends the same age as me. Who has always been bold and confident girl. Dreamed of becoming a

doctor. But her dream remained a dream. At the age of twelve, she was forced to get married. And then soon she had a son. She had a child when she herself was a child, only fourteen. I know that she could have been a very good doctor, but she couldn't because she was a girl. Her story is why I dedicate the Nobel Prize money to the Malala Fund to help give girls quality education everywhere, anywhere in the world and to raise their voices. The first place is funding we'll go to is where my heart is to build schools in Pakistan, especially in my home of Swath and Shangla *[Applause]*. In my own village, there is still no secondary school for girls. And it is my wish. And my commitment. And now my challenge to build one so that my friends and my sisters can go there to school and get quality education and they get this opportunity to fulfill their dreams. This is where I will begin. But it is not where I will stop. I will continue this fight until I see every child, every child in school. Dear brothers and sisters. Great people who brought change. Like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and a young son, Sushi once stood here on this stage. I hope the sticks that kill us. Satyati and I have taken so far and will take on this journey will also bring change, lasting change.

[Applause]

Malala Yousafzai *[continues]*: My great hope is that this will be the last time. This will be the last time. We must fight for education. Let's solve this once and for all. We have already taken many steps. Now it is time to take a leap. It is not time to tell the world leaders to realize how important education is. They already know it. Their own children are in good schools. Now it is time to call them to take action for the rest of the world's children. We asked the world leaders to unite and make education their top priority. Fifteen years ago, the world leaders decided on a set of global goals, the Millennium Development Goals. In the years that have followed, we have seen some progress. The number of children out of school has been halved. As Kela Satyati said, however, the world focused only on primary education and progress did not reach everyone. In year two thousand and fifteen. Representatives from all around the world will meet in the United Nations to set the next set of goals. Sustainable development goals. This will set the world's ambition for the next generations. The world can no longer accept that the world can no longer accept that basic education is enough. Why do leaders accept that for children in developing countries, only basic literacy is sufficient when their own children do homework in algebra, mathematics, science, and physics? Leaders must seize this opportunity to guarantee a free quality primary and secondary education for every child *[Applause]*. Some will say this is impractical or too expensive or too hard, or maybe even impossible.

But it is time the world thinks bigger. Your sisters and brothers. The so called world of errors. May I understand it, But we children don't. Why is it that countries which we call strong are so powerful in creating wars but are so weak in bringing peace? Why is it? *[Applause]* Why is it that giving guns is so easy? But giving books is so hard? Why is it? Why is it that making tanks is so easy? But building schools is so hard. We are living in the modern age, and we believe that nothing is impossible. We have reached the wound forty five years ago. And maybe we'll soon land on Mars. Then in this twenty first century, we must be able to give every child quality education. Dear sisters and brothers. Dear fellow children. We must work. Not wait. Not just the politicians and the world leaders. We all need to contribute. Me, You, We. It is our duty. Let us become the first generation. To decide to be the last. It has become the first generation that decides to be the last. There's empty classrooms, lost childhoods and wasted potentials. Let this be the last time that a girl or a boy spends their childhood in a factory. Let this be the last time that the girl is forced into early child marriage. Let this be the last time that a child loses life in war. Let this be the last time that we see a child out of school. Let this end with us. Let's begin this ending together today. Right here. Right now. Let's begin this ending now. Thank you so much. Thank you.

[Long Applause - Standing Ovation]

Return to "[Women in Conflict](#)"

“Ep 30 The #MeToo Motherlode, or, Sexual Assault in the News” Transcript

[This transcript is only of the “Table Talk” section of the episode, as it is the relevant information to the eTextbook.]

[Intro Music]

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: Welcome inside 254. Let's close the office door and start the conversation.

[Intro Music]

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: So the talk around the table today is about sexual assault in the news.

Colleen Clemens: And we should very quickly say that there are going to be a lot of things we talk about that could be triggering. So just be compassionate with yourself, Take breaks from listening, whatever you need to do. But we're going to talk about this really? Honestly.

Yes. So if you need to take a break, if you need to not listen to this right now, we're OK with that. I mean, just take care of her. What do the following people have in common?

Colleen Clemens: OK

I'm going to read you a list of names

Colleen Clemens: OK, Is it long?

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: Mm hmm. OK, Daniels Wordling, John Copley, Wayne Parcel, Stephen Wynn, Barry Lubin, Rob Porter, Patrick Meehan, Omid Maliq, James Rosen, Mike Germano, Don Hazen, Morgan Spurlock, Donovan McNab, Mario Batali, Ryan Lizza, Bill O'Reilly, Alex Kosinski, Lauren Stein, Israel Horovitz, Garrison Keeler, Ben Varen, David Sorenson, Matt Lauer, Charlie Rose, John Conyers Jr, Russell Simmons, Al Franken, David Sweeney, Eddie Berganza, Tony Cornish, Lewis, C.K, Ed Westwick, Andy Dick, Kevin Spacey, Mark Halpern, Terry Richardson, John Besch, Lockhart Steel, Harvey Weinstein, Glen Thrush, Roy Moore, Larry Nassar. What do they have in common?

Colleen Clemens: Well, they've, all, most of them have come across my news feed for being accused of some kind of sexual misconduct. Some of those names

were surprising to me. They are names that did not come across my news feed, and I think I'm paying pretty close attention to the charges of sexual misconduct that have been circulating, some things those people have in common, or some of those are people that I have admired and whose work I have appreciated. And people that I have looked up to and thought were voices for equity, gender equity. And that is just a terrible list hearing you read it out loud.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, it's overwhelming.

Colleen Clemens: It's really, it's, it's overwhelming is basically how I feel for the past five months.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yes. And hearing, I think it was important, I wonder. And this is not, by the way, the entire list of men who have been accused of sexual misconduct. This list also represents. These are men who have not only been accused of sexual misconduct, but they have either resigned or been fired or experienced some other professional fallout from these accusations. And the, you know, the process of getting caught.

Colleen Clemens: Although I'm pretty sure Kevin Spacey and Harvey Weinstein are like in a spa somewhere in Arizona that's called a treatment center. So...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: I'm like, please.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right. So I wanted to start by asking you if you could give us just a brief narrative. I thought it might make sense for our listeners to understand how we ended up coming to the way we're about to put this episode together because it started somewhere very different.

Colleen Clemens: So dear listeners, a few months ago, we were going to do an episode on Harvey Weinstein, and that seemed to make perfect sense. And then over the course of several months, stories continue to break. And I kept texting Amanda and saying, oh, we have to add LARRY NASSAR. Oh, we need to talk about Rob Porter. And very quickly, what happened is there was an avalanche of names that we cannot talk about every single story. And while some look different than the Harvey story, and we don't even have, like Quentin Tarantino on there, like we don't have any names that are on the like periphery of stories that we're not quite sure how to categorize those those stories yet. But, boy, we feel a little overwhelmed about how to bring all this together when we thought it was going to be a story about, like one bad actor and the structures that upheld

his sexual misconduct and assault. But now we have this giant web of men that we need to talk about.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right. So we're going to start, and you all have heard us talk about structures before and the difference between the structural and in the individual. But I think in this case, it's really important to revisit this conversation and defining what a structure is and how and why, in this context, these, these men who are accused of sexual assault, misconduct, harassment and how they are supported by these structures. So I just wanted to throw some headlines at you. This is just in the last couple of days, *A second White House official departs amid abuse allegations, which he denies*. That's Washington Post. A couple days ago *After Weinstein, sixty eight men accused of sexual misconduct in their fall from power*. That was New York Times, February eighth, which was, by the way, where I called the list that I just read, quote, another headline. *Larry Nassar apologizes gets forty to one hundred and twenty five years for decades of sexual abuse*. That was CNN, February fifth. And then I wanted to pull out. I wanted to pull out some quotes from this one article that I read by Rebecca Traister.

Colleen Clemens: We love you, Rebecca Traister.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, it was in The Cut in October, and the title was "the conversation we should be having." And so even though it was written in was published in October, it feels super relevant, especially to the point we're going to try and make right now.

Colleen Clemens: And it's a Harvey, right? So this piece was directly about the Harvey Weinstein piece, but it has evergreen quality to it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: It does. And so the quotes on polling are related to the idea of structural and systemic issues. So, quote, "this conversation cannot be just about personal revelation or speaking up or being heard or even just about the banal ubiquity of abuse. It must also address the reasons why we replay this scene over and over again. Part of what we have to come to grips with is that this is not a story simply of individual misconduct but of systemic inequity, a story of nuts and bolts, infrastructure of gender injustice that has permeated generations, centuries of this behavior. And that has worked again and again to beat back any resistance to it." A little further down in the article, "It got worse in no small part because of these big structural protections because of the systems, the powerful designed to protect the powerful from incursions by the less powerful." So you want to jump it in?

Colleen Clemens: I do expand on that. I, I think it's. So if we ever want this to stop and people say they wanted to stop, then we need to have honest conversations about how somebody like Larry Nassar can molest girls in the same room with their parents. And I think his example is the is a perfect way to show the calculated, systemic, if you want to call it structural systems in place and how they they supported a patriarchal notion of power and disempowered women, girls, young girls, an article that missed, I think a lot of people's radar when all these terrible Nassar stories were coming to light was NBC News unpacked eight times that Larry Nassar could have been stopped. And I'm going to talk about each one and point out why that's important. So in nineteen ninety seven, sixteen year old gymnast was taking part in a youth program at MSU, and she told her coach that they were uncomfortable with how Nassar put his hands inside of them. The coach didn't do anything, and friends also did not believe the girls. So here is an example in nineteen ninety seven, where a system that was in place that was supposed to support and protect girls did not listen to them. Now, again, this is not just about individual bad actors. What we're trying to show you is how all these systems in place failed the girls and supported Larry Nassar molesting them. In nineteen ninety nine, another young girl told a coach the coach, she said, had told her he was a respected doctor, and she should trust him. Here again in nineteen ninety nine is another coach who says to the girl who, and this is the other thing that comes up, Amanda, all the time is why didn't they say anything? [*Amanda voicing agreement*] They say things all the time, but there's a systemic disbelief.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, right.

Colleen Clemens: There's like a willful disbelief of these girls. So in 1999 coaches failed the girls. Then in two thousand, a university employee at MSU failed the girls. This another young girl, a freshman softball player, reported Nassar, and she was told he is a world renowned doctor. He treats elite athletes. This girl went on to say she felt like she was crazy. So again, a different piece of that structure at MSU that is supposed to support and protect these young athletes failed a girl. Are you seeing? Right? These are a lot of individual failures. Like people don't fail. This match much without the support of a structure that allows them to fail or it rewards them to fail. But there's more.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Mhm, there always is.

Colleen Clemens: In 2021, an MSU volleyball player went to the trainer to ask about a general complaint about a doctor making her uncomfortable. She decided not to pursue any kind of charges because she was too embarrassed to

share the details. So here, again, we have this silencing of women. Why don't women do anything? Why don't women say anything? Well, she did, and then was discouraged by the system...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: and shamed

Colleen Clemens: and shamed. Right. So this, this kind of systematic shaming and discouraging of women. Then in two thousand four, a twelve year old told her MSU psychologist that Nassar had been molesting her since she was six. Dr Gary Stollick did not report her allegation to law enforcement or to university officials. Instead, and I want you to hear this, he arranged a meeting between Nassar and Stevens's parents, where the doctor denied he abused her. As Stevens said during the sentencing hearing, my parents chose to believe Larry Nassar over me. So this patriarchal system of family and this buying into what is legitimate is this male doctor, and he was able to convince an entire group of people that what he was doing was medically sound. [*Amanda voicing agreement*] That's a mirror. A different woman went to the police. Here is another facet of the system, right? This web of systems around us, this now we're talking about the legal system, the criminal system. She went to the police and made a report against Nassar. They did nothing. In twenty fourteen, after seeing Nassar for an old injury, an MSU graduate contacted an associate of Nassar in his department to say she had been sexually assaulted. He referred the matter to the Office of Institutional Equity, and somehow nothing ever happened. He insisted that this penetration was medically necessary. They also interviewed four experts, all of whom had ties to Nassar, who said they didn't believe what he did was sexual. Again, this is not just one individual acting badly. This is a web of systems that are upholding one person who is enacting these terrible things. The police also failed. The medical world failed them. In that moment, MSU police turned their findings over to prosecutors, but they declined to press charges. And remember the question that I kept seeing on my news feed was how does this happen? How does this happen? Well, until we start talking about how this happened, nothing is going to change. There is more. In 2015, Maggie Nichols, a member of the U.S. National gymnastics team, was overheard by her coach telling another gymnast about treatments that this treatments that this guy did right. The Whisper network girls telling it to stay away, stay away, watch out. The coach reported it to officials at USA Gymnastics, the national governing body for the sport. So we've got the police failing. We've got MSU failing. We've got USA Gymnastics failing. Sadly, we have parental, you know, parenting parent, the family structure failing. We have colleagues. We have the medical system failing these girls. This is not, these are not anomalies. These are all

things working together. So the USA Gymnastics body hired a private investigator instead of going to the law because, of course, we don't want anybody to know. And then they said it did not have a, quote, reasonable suspicion that a crime had occurred for folks' sake, even though for now, now we're talking since the late nineties. Finally, the FBI was contacted five weeks after the initial report. And according to MSU police logs, Nassar allegedly went on to abuse numerous young women from the from the time the USA Gymnastics got the complaint to a September twenty sixteen newspaper investigation that finally took him out of the examining examining room. And the newspaper is what finally got him away from girls. Legal system didn't do it. Family unit didn't do it. Education system didn't do it. Gymnastics' body didn't do it. If you, if you are still clinging to the idea that Larry Nassar is just one bad actor, and we can just eliminate the one bad actor and that there's no actual systemic problem. I don't write really, No, quite. The only thing that's missing from this is religion. I mean, honestly, this is like every structure that was in place that was supposed to be supporting these girls, and they, nobody listened to them. *[Amanda voicing agreement]* And when somebody did, the systems fell flat anyway. And so then we end up with weeks long testimonies of these girls standing up telling their horrible stories. And, I mean, I appreciate that everyone was so shocked, but it is very clear to me how we end up with stories like Harvey Weinstein's, like Larry Nassar's. Harvey Weinstein was the same way once, you know, he had aids that were ushering him in. He had this whole like structure in place, and he was too big and important. Was this weird kind of paternal patriarchal? I have way too much power, right? LARRY NASSAR. Well, he treats elite athletes. Harvey Weinstein. He is the gatekeeper for superstars. These people that end up having way too much say over somebody's lives. And so nobody believes anybody that speaks out against them. To me, it's so clear and obvious that this goes well beyond. And, yes, Larry Nassar is the, is the villain here. He is the individual actor. But if the structures that were in place had worked in the way that people say they work, this would have stopped a long time ago. And it took journalism to finally stop him. What did it take to finally stop Harvey Weinstein? Journalism. People reporting the story. Until then, nobody listens.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Thank you so much for...

Colleen Clemens: It's awful.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: You're welcome because it, I think it absolutely clarifies. I mean, honestly, I feel like if anybody's listening to this, who is just going to cling to the idea that there's no such thing as a structure, you're not our audience.

Colleen Clemens: I can't do anymore. This is so blatant.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: There's no other way. I mean, I think you laid it out really well, especially connecting the dots that way is so clear. I mean, I believed it before, but now I'm like, well, fuck How does nobody see? How do you not see this?

Colleen Clemens: Well, and you can see my note, like my notes, like next to each one I have, like, which structure failed in that situation, Like, it's not just one. No, it's, it is a web of them.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So if we're clinging to the idea that it's just these individuals, we have to start questioning the structures you have to start seeing...

Colleen Clemens: Yes.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: ...the structure. So forget the idea of believing. Start paying attention to the structures of power around you. So you think you can rely on the legal system? [*Colleen scoffs*] You think you can rely on the police? You think you can rely on your HR...

Colleen Clemens: Your HR, or your governing body.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: or your governing body, or you think you can trust your doctor or their medical team? OK, maybe you can, one of those. But what if none of them believe you when you say here's a problem that I'm having? Here's something that happened to me. And every single one of those people looks at you like you're nuts. Questions of the veracity of your statement looks at you like maybe you're just making things up to cause trouble. I mean, there is nowhere else to turn, but the court of public opinion. There is literally nowhere else to turn. You know, I have a hard time when people are like, well, they shouldn't be judged in public. You know, I don't give a fuck at this point. If the whole structure of every single system in place to uphold the power of the powerful and all those structures and systems, look at the people who are saying, hey, abuse, assault, harassment, and they're going, Yeah, no, you're probably just lying. Nope. We don't believe you. Well, then that's it. There's no worlds to turn, but journalists, that's it. That's where you like. That's what. So in other words, if you don't want that to be the only outlet for people who are assaulted or abused or harassed to go, well, then maybe start looking at the structures around you and see how you can improve them.

Colleen Clemens: Right, To see it they are effective.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: To believe the people who say there's a problem. And then maybe we won't be left with just the journalists having to be the ones shedding light on things.

Colleen Clemens: And these are the eight times in the Larry Nassar story that we know about.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: How many more do we not know about how many things there were? Several people who had killed themselves? The one girl believes that her dad killed himself because of the shame that he quote, you know, like, allowed this to happen in front of him and that he didn't believe her. She, in her statement, she directly connects his suicide to how terrible he felt after being conned by an entire system that believed in the elite intelligence of this guy that was doing pelvic. I don't. I mean, I don't even want to call it exams. I don't even. There was molesting girls. I mean, think of the audacity that you have to have to molest a girl in the room while her parents are in the room. And you're just on the other end of your, of her. What we, what, how much you have to buy into the belief that he is somehow smarter and better and superior, that paternalism is unsafe for people. The fact that anytime anybody questioned him, the answer was, well, he's a doctor. Well, or Harvey Weinstein, right? He is a, he's a starmaker. He knows how to do this. Well, I guess they didn't because they didn't do it in a way that was like, safe.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, they didn't do those things without committing crimes.

Colleen Clemens: Right, therefore, not effective.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right, not as effective. It's not as effective. So, yeah, no, we don't have any answers here.

Colleen Clemens: But I think I think about what you just said, though, is like if you're still willfully, like not buying into the fact that this is a bigger issue than one bad actor, then you are now part of the problem, like, honestly, you got to get on board, because also, if you really just believe that, like one person is deeply evil, then nothing will ever change. You just have this belief that somebody is like, naturally bad and nothing will ever change. I am not willing to buy that. I believe that, yes, maybe that person is bad, but also, there are ways to disrupt that badness.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: There are and paying attention and really working to see the structures around you. And you don't have to go farther than look at your work environment, the structure of your work environment, You know, who's responsible for, what if you had a serious problem or an accusation? Who would you go to? And if you're a woman, what are the chances that they're going to believe you? And if you're a man, and if you've been assaulted, what are the chances that they're going to believe you? I mean, look at the medical community. If you're in a university, look at your university community, look at the legal system. I mean, it's, to me, it's not hard to see, but I understand that some people are really resisting this, and I think it's probably because of this. We're in an uncomfortable cultural shift moment right now. So I know that there are also, I've seen, I know men who are worried that this is now a chaotic, free for all where women will accuse any man of sexual assault just because she doesn't like him. Like, right. So I don't like you. So I'm going to accuse you. And my point is...

Colleen Clemens: because it's so awesome to accuse.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Well, and my point to these men is that that's, here's why that's unrealistic. First of all, I've said to a man, OK, have you ever been accused of sexual assault? No. Why do you think that is? Perhaps it's because you've never committed sexual assault, and at least I hope you haven't. Right? So women don't just throw these accusations around. I did look up some false reporting statistics because in that conversation, I was curious, and I found out that it is between two and ten percent of sort of allegations are considered false reporting. And there's all these nuances to what that means and a lot of that false reporting. It is something is reported and then rescinded by the victim

Colleen Clemens: Because they walk it back, right, right, right.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Of reason.

Colleen Clemens: It could be like this in this story, right where she basically got convinced that, you know, if you go through with this, you're gonna be the one that suffers.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right or all the way to. All right, No, it didn't happen exactly the way I was initially thinking it was or whatever. But so there is a reason why there's, there's this range of two to ten percent and two to ten percent is not that high. No, I don't think that anybody should lose their job if they haven't done anything wrong. But I also think that if we are in a moment where everybody in our cultural shift is going to start believing the ninety to

ninety eight percent of women and others who say I've been assaulted, I've been harassed. I've been abused if we're shifting to giving the benefit of the doubt to that ninety to ninety eight percent, and that two to ten percent. So to get swept up in the wave, I'm fine with that. Well, and look, I'm fine, right.

Colleen Clemens: Look at the Larry Nassar story. For that example. Imagine if one of these, if one of these stories and structures had worked, how many women would have not have been molested?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Exactly.

Colleen Clemens: So even if it were, even if out of the eight one, right. Like, that's what, fifteen percent. I don't do math very well. But like, like, if they had just believed, if fifteen percent of the stories had been believed in this situation, it would have ended sooner.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: And a lot more women and girls would not have been sexually assaulted by that man. So, again, back to structures, you have to recognize that, Yes, you know, there may be some men who are falsely accused, but, you know, at least in the high profile cases we're seeing in the media right now, not one of them. It isn't true for not one of them. It's all true. And so you don't have my sympathy if you're saying, well, but I don't care. I don't care. I think if, you know, you should be careful how you talk to women in your workplace, I think you should be careful not to put hands on a woman who hasn't asked you to put hands on her, I think. You should not leer hover, you know, behave like a human being and you won't have to worry about it.

Colleen Clemens: So Rebecca called that the the MeToo backlash.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: So what you're talking about in feminist circles is people calling this the MeToo backlash. And she writes this great piece that says, stop telling us how to confront an epidemic of violence and abuse. And one of my favorite paragraphs is she wrote, "I sometimes think that we are in this extraordinary moment of stories breaking loose." And so that's what you were just talking about. It kind of feels chaotic, however, it's not, and it feels very normal to me. Actually, it just seems like people are actually paying attention "because of the slow, quiet work feminism has done over the past decades to put many women in decision making positions and make far more men willing to hear women's stories and trust the tellers. These stories are, in many cases old, and there are reasons they were not told before that. They are being told now may be because

there are more women and people who believe women and think their rights matter, who are assignment editors at newspapers and producers at television stations, who are judges and juries who are in management and law and congress and news and other positions. This incremental shift made the conditions right at last." So the people who are, like, shocked and flabbergasted and feel like this is a witch hunt have not been paying to this, paying attention to this slow crescendo of these stories. And they basically just reached a breaking point. And now the back, you know, people who are participating in the backlash are like, oh, my God, it's a witch hunt. And we're like, well, it's been leading to this for decades.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I'm glad you brought up that story because that really struck me when I read it this morning.

Colleen Clemens: Yeah, it just came out today. Thank you, Rebecca.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah. The bottom line is men have been given the benefit of the doubt since the beginning of humanity. While women have always been mistrusted, assumed to be sluts and liars and out to destroy men, our culture seems to be shifting for the first time for the first time to believing women and giving us the benefit of the doubt. And it has a lot of men scared and feeling uncomfortable. And I see that, and I hear that, and that's OK. It will take time to achieve some balance. The pendulum is swinging and people are very uncomfortable with that. And that's OK. But don't resist this shift. Don't push back and say no, it just shouldn't happen. It should happen. This has been a long time coming. It's absolutely necessary. If we are ever, ever to achieve parity in our structures, in our systems, with each other as human beings, it's necessary. And so don't resist it.

Colleen Clemens: The idea of surrender and not in a bad surrender idea, but just softening into what's going on instead of trying to be rigidly and adamantly and willfully not willing to accept that this is a bigger problem than just a person and just a bad actor. Until we can soften into that vulnerability, that vulnerable place of recognizing that we all have a state because it's easy to just say it's a bad actor, because then it's like them, not me. And so I think we all need to sit with and feel the vulnerability of recognition that we are all complicit. If we don't listen to women, if we turned a blind eye, if we allow our institutions to have too much power, then we are, we are culpable in a way, and that doesn't feel good. So I understand the inclination, but you can't have it both ways. You can't say you want things to change and then also say, but it's not me. It's them. What can we do to chip away at these institutions to make sure that they next time

some sixteen year old girl or twelve year old girl tells her therapist or her coach or the police that she's being molested, that somebody listens to her and does something about it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I think that's a good place to end the thought today.

Colleen Clemens: I hope to God we don't keep adding names in that list, but I have a feeling we will be.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Well, and if we do, we'll revise well, and they need to be. If they're out there, they need to be at it. I don't want to make it sound like that. And if they do, we'll revisit this again cause I don't think even though we're seeing a cultural shift, it's not going to change overnight again. Like you said, it's been this long, slow crescendo that seems to be hitting some kind of a peak, or it's leading to a peak, which I think is a good thing.

Colleen Clemens: "The shit will out", as some wise person said to me once.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: And we'll see what more shit comes in 2018.

[Transcript ends at 30:55 of 52:21.]

Return to "[Gender-Based Violence](#)"

“Ep 36 INCELS” Transcript

[This transcript is only of the “Table Talk” section of the episode, as it is the relevant information to the eTextbook.]

[Intro Music]

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: Welcome to Inside 254. Let’s close the office door and start the conversation.

[Intro Music]

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: So the talk around the table today is about incels. It's a term you might have heard or seen in the media in a newsfeed in a newspaper or an online news site. What we wanted to do today is actually dig into what an incel is and why they're why we should care about them. But I want to start our table talk. Colleen did all of the research for this episode.

Colleen Clemens: The catchphrase for this episode is Colleen goes down the rabbit hole, so none of you have to. So just so we, I hope that you appreciate the terrible, terrible rabbit holes that we go down often to bring up to the light, the things that you need to know and we dig down for them.

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: We do. And if you've noticed, if you've been listening to us, we kind of take turns going down rabbit holes. So she's taking point on this rabbit hole and we owe a debt of gratitude.

Colleen Clemens: That's just my rabbit hole for today

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: because it's infuriating. And let me tell you, my friend is on fire. She is so angry about this. So I'm excited to see what she has to say. But I'm going to start by letting all of, you know, I think I'm probably in a position that maybe many of you are. I had never heard the term incel prior to the Toronto incident.

Colleen Clemens: Yes.

Amanda Morris D’Agostino: And when I found an article because all these articles suddenly started showing up on my news feed and I read one, and I thought, I've, I mean, I understand the, the idea, maybe the idea behind the fact that these are men who think women know themselves, but that's super simplistic and super distilled. And actually, a couple of my friends were like, Oh, yeah, I've heard about this. I knew about this for years. I'm thinking, oh, my God, Where

have I been? I thought I was fairly well educated on lots of different things, and I've never heard this term. So, folks, I am right there with you, if you're thinking, yeah, I see this, and I'm so confused by it. I don't know what it is. I'm kind of right there with you. So I'm going to try to take the point of the person of being representative for you all in this conversation and let Colleen sort of guide us through the rabbit holes that she delved into.

Colleen Clemens: OK, so this is kind of like an incel primer.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, if you will. Yes, I like it. So let's start with a super basic question. What is an incel?

Colleen Clemens: OK, so I think, Amanda, you are like most folks that never heard that term until April of twenty eighteen, after the Toronto van rampage. And when I and I think we could even go back and check my twitter when I saw that mostly women had been killed. And this is before we knew about the part I'm going to talk about, I had tweeted something to the effect of Here we go again. This is going to be another. This is another focused attack on women. And this is what I meant when I tweeted, Toxic masculinity is killing us all. Like this is the thing that a lot of us in the feminist academic community have been trying to draw to light through different terminology. And for some reason, the INCEL has really stuck. So if this is the word we're all going to use, and this is a word that they've given themselves. But if this is going to give us all valuable language to talk about how this kind of masculinity enacts itself, I'm thrilled. So if you've never heard the word in before April, you are not alone. And the reason that we started hearing it more and more is because after and I don't want to say his name cause I don't want to give him a name. No, but after this person's Toronto van rampage, the left end and fifteen injured, you know, everybody's like what happened, what happened? And then a Facebook post emerged, and it's very strange to read, but I'm going to read it out loud that this person that enacted that terrible act of violence wrote. "So Private Perenn recruit Menacs Infantry zero zero zero one zero. Wishing to speak to Sergeant Forch, please. C two three two four nine one six one. The incel rebellion has already begun. We will overthrow all the chads. Andes. All hail the Supreme gentlemen. Elliott Roger", would you like to ask me some questions about that?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, I'm looking. I can explain my family.

Colleen Clemens: So, I'm going to explain all of those things. OK, Is all of OK, Who's a chad? What's his, ray? OK, what's all the men? Who's Eliot? Roger? And what's the cell rebellion? It's an incel rebellion.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, my God, folks, I feel so not in the know right now.

Colleen Clemens: So those are all terms that are used on the web in these spaces that are focused on masculinity sometimes called the manosphere.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: That I've heard. OK, that I know.

Colleen Clemens: So, please, some of Twitter attackers from November were in the manosphere.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, they were like that acronym for men going their own way and they're part of the man.

Colleen Clemens: Yeah. OK, this is all connected. OK, this is all connect

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Course it is.

Colleen Clemens: OK. So the Southern Poverty Law Center has added male supremacy to the ideology is tracked on the heat map this year.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Male supremacy. Yeah. Wow.

Colleen Clemens: Like literally people who are enacting violence and hatred because of their belief in the supremacy of men.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Wow.

Colleen Clemens: OK, or let's just say that's good language or let's also just say misogyny, which is the hatred of women. OK, so in cells or which is short for involuntary celibates, are part of the online male supremacist ecosystem. So that's the manosphere. Wow. And the SPLC added them because of the way these groups, quote, consistently denigrate and dehumanize women, often including advocating physical and sexual violence against them. On the internet, the male supremacist ideology takes a few different forms. One of the newest forms is in cells. So in cells are wrecked baby of the pickup artist movement that was popular, like ten years ago. Do you remember that? Where was part of the incel movement is an outcropping or outgrowth of that same. So the root of both of those is that women owe men's sex. That's the connection.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, So like ten years ago, this heavy bonus type stuff wasn't violent.

Colleen Clemens: It was. I mean, it was, well, it was coercive. It was coercive, right? But it wasn't violence trickling. It was like tricking women into sleeping with them. Exactly. But it didn't say it didn't like have this, like incel rebellion, like, well, we're just going to kill all the women.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, so,

Colleen Clemens: but both of those movements, and I'm using really loose air quotes here. The core of them is that they believe that women owe them sex. It is their natural right to have sex. And so when women don't give them the sex, that is their natural, right? They have the right to cajole or trick them, pick up artists or kill them.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Wow.

Colleen Clemens: In cells, not all incel. I should say that not all incels want to kill women, but they definitely valorize. So can you just. So do you want to know what Chad and Stacey are?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Can I? Can I interject a question? Can you give me an example And you said that there's sort of, it sounds like their language is violent. When they talk about women, can you give us a couple of examples of what they say?

Colleen Clemens: Yes. So I will read to you some of what people wrote within the in cell community after the Toronto massacre. So this is a quote from, I'm not gonna say, I'm just, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna say any of these names except one list, one username, because it's fascinating. So this person wrote, "as someone who visited Toronto at the beginning of the month, I can see how a man from that city could be driven to kill a bunch of people like that. The women up there are in all caps, horrible, even the ethnic women. It would brighten my day if the majority of the victims were young cunts, like the ones I encountered on that trip." Also written was "It's a foig. I have one celebratory beer for every victim that turns out to be a young woman between eighteen and thirty five." Vocal. This is so this is the chatter. This is like within the incel chatter. Yeah. So when I'm going to define foig for you, that is a shortened term. It's a portmanteau word for female and humanoid. So the root of that being that women are not fully human, that's going to be important later. Another user. If you want some more examples of this kind of language, this user's name is Mike Pence. No shit I mean, I know it's not Mike Pence, Right. But like they chose idolize, this is the person they chose to like be. So "please be true. Please be true. Please be true. Joyous day." This is the celebration online after the killing of

these people on the street and the idea of inciting fear and violence. Another user, Right? The rebellion doesn't always have to be violent. It just needs to be strategic and punish norms. And that's another term that I'll tell you what it is. In some way. They need to be in constant fear for in bold every aspect of their life. Killing norms, from my perspective, is kind of pointless, but this is still good. I prefer acid attacks to mass killings, though. Wonder who is going to do a massive acid attack. So, I mean, that's just a few of these. So you want to add some examples?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: That's absolutely horrifying.

Colleen Clemens: This is like the four chan chatter that was on, and this has all been cited by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, so if we go back to what's a chad? What's a Stacey? What's a norm?

Colleen Clemens: So Normie is a person that deserves the vitriol of basically, it's people who are having sex.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Oh, my God. But I can read you if you give me a stack. I have a good, there's so much anger and so much just, that's the only thing I keep coming back to in my mind is there's so much anger that I'm, are these all men?

Colleen Clemens: Yes.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So these, these are, these are all men.

Colleen Clemens: This is like, this is directly related to kind of the manosphere. And these are the people who will say, like, where's the men's rights? When's the men, Where's men's studies? And like, so people who feel like men are now being devalued and I will talk about that in a sec. But I want to find you. So

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Normie is someone who's having sex.

Colleen Clemens: Normies are like normal people.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: And so what about Chad's? I'm looking for, OK, so tell us what, what's a chad? What's a Stacey?

Colleen Clemens: So Chad and Stacey are the, the terms that this population gives to normies or people who represent kind of the beautiful people. So if I can

read to you a little bit from an article from Baffler by Angela Nagel, and it's thirty seven pages like, this is a, for real. This was one of the first articles that really wrote about this subculture on fortune. Chad's and Stacey's are this meme of Chad Thundercock. Go ahead and quote, "Chad is stand in for the young, attractive, muscular football player claiming dominance over the beta world in the contest for sexual success with women." So, basically, like when they say Chad, they're talking about the alpha male, the guy that gets all the chicks and they're using that kind of stereotypical, of course, white varsity football player that gets all the girls. So that's a Chad. And then a Stacey is the girls that would be with him and who are thereby not having sex with these people who are, quote, unquote, involuntary, celibate.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So so is everybody else's problem, not theirs. And everybody's,

Colleen Clemens: Well, yes, yes, great. So Chad and Susie are like the embodiment of everything that incels like seem to want, but also hate. They're often depicted as sports playing, kind of small town mass culture, generic white embodiments of what might be perfect. I don't know.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: It's gross.

Colleen Clemens: It's like the varsity cheerleader, the way blonde varsity cheerleader is dating the football star.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Exactly. So, but this is, these are people that they want, but they're talking about them in denigrating terms, and they want to kill them.

Colleen Clemens: Well, basically, they'll never, basically, I guess they see in this world they see sex as a commodity, which we can talk about now or a little bit, that sex is a commodity. And so Chad gets all the sex. And so because Stacey is withholding sex from these people who are in cells and giving Stacey, quote, unquotes, giving sex to Chad thereby, Chad is like getting all the commodity. And Stacey's withholding her commodity by giving it all the chad and not like distributing it. So the look on your face is priceless.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, so they want to kill Stacey's, but not Chad's or they want to kill.

Colleen Clemens: No, that's the point. See what are okay and not, No, I don't. Yeah, we don't want to go down that rabbit hole, but like, so they want to.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: They want to kill the Staceys of the world.

Colleen Clemens: So what they do is they're basically, I mean, they hate Chad Thundercock, too. But really what they're seeing, I mean, Chad Thundercock is also a guy. So he's part of, he's a man, right? So the problem is the Staceys that won't give it up.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Oh, yes, I can't.

Colleen Clemens: Even so. Do you want to know what more of the words mean from that Facebook?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: You know what? Let's just stop there with the definitions of words, too. This is like a whole new, I don't know.

Colleen Clemens: Because you need to know, you also need to know why he says "all hail the supreme gentleman. Elliott Roger" that's super important. Who's who?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I mean, this is sounding very careful to me, like the supreme leader and all that kind of stuff. And it's like it feels to me like it's a borrowing language for white supremacist movements.

Colleen Clemens: So I, yes. Okay, I will say that in 2014 is when this is when I started making the connections to my work and these incidents, OK, so in two thousand and fourteen, I don't know if you remember, but, Elliott, Roger is the one who went to UCSB University of California, Santa Barbara, went to a sorority house and shot it up.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I didn't know his name, but, yes, I remember these.

Colleen Clemens: So he is like the holy patron saint of Incels because he did this. And part of it is because in the middle of this, he uploaded a video to YouTube and it was called Elliot Roger's retribution. And he specifically said that his desire in doing this was to punish women for rejecting him. So I'm going to read just like a quote from that. Again, I don't want to amplify it, but I think it's really important because his name, right. His name is invoked all the time, like he is seen as, like you just said, kind of the supreme leader, the thing to look up to, the one we should emulate, the one that we do these things in the name of. Wow. So he wrote, because then he killed himself. "Well, this is my last video. It all has come to this. Tomorrow is the day of retribution, the day in which I will have my revenge against humanity against all of you." And he also wrote this, like, two hundred page manifesto, which is horrifying. "I've been through college

for two and a half years, more than that, actually, and I'm still a virgin. It has been very tortuous. I don't know why you girls aren't attracted to me, but I will punish you all for it. I'm the perfect guy. And yet you throw yourselves at these obnoxious men instead of me, the supreme gentleman."

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So to this guy, and these guys have a superiority complex, an inferiority. OK, complex. Like. So here's all right. They seem to think they're perfect, but then they're so, so here they have an inferiority. So which is it?

Colleen Clemens: All right. So the best language that I know to give this is from Michael Kimmel and his book, *Angry White Men*. And what he calls this, and I'm going to define it for him is he calls what you are trying to understand, aggrieved entitlement, aggrieved entitlements. So he gives this. OK, so this is actually a really helpful way for you to think about this because you're, like, so confused because you're just like...

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: It seems to be contradictory to me, like their motivations and their feelings seem to be contradicting each other.

Colleen Clemens: So, yeah. So Kimmel, and I think a lot of us, you know, have been trying to give language to this. And I think Kimmel's language is really great. A grievous entitlement is this idea that you are entitled to things, and when you don't get it, you are aggrieved. So if you are a white boy, yeah. Who has done, quote, unquote in what you think is like all the right things, then you should get what you want and you are entitled to and incels believe that sex is something that you. Are entitled to as a natural born, right? And so when you don't get that, you are aggrieved because you are entitled to it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, so for me, that kind of makes sense. I'm just having a hard time imagining anybody thinking that they're entitled to someone else's body.

Colleen Clemens: Really? You have a hard time imagining young white dudes thinking that because I don't have a hard time at all because they are taught their entire lives that they are entitled to it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I and I agree with you, but to take it to this level, Yeah, I have a problem with, like, what? No self reflection, no parental involvement, no friends saying I'll get over yourself. Be nicer to. Well, this is like, really nothing.

Colleen Clemens: So this is the problem is that in in the nineteen nineties, you just didn't get laid and you just moved on. But now you don't get laid and you go online. And now there's a whole group of people who also have the same feeling. And now you have a collective community. Okay, so. Psychologist Carol Tart Tavers notes that kind of what you're struggling with, that they must both want what they don't have and feel they deserve what they don't have. So think about the, I mean, to me, this is just like make America great again, like these people who think that they deserve the American dream, and so they'll do anything to get it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Well, their version of the American dream.

Colleen Clemens: Well, right. But the American dream is if a man works hard, is an honest and upstanding citizen. And you can hear this in Elliott Roger's language, OK, he will be rewarded. So ironically, an angry white man, it writes that sense of being entitled is a marker not of deprivation but of privilege. So let that sink in. I'll explain that here. Those who have nothing don't feel they deserve anything. But those who already have something believe they are entitled to it. When one feels that slipping, one may idealize aggrieved entitlement can mobilize one politically, but it is often a mobilization toward the past, not the future, to restore that which one feels has been lost. It invariably distorts one's vision and leads to a misdirected anger. That's when you were like, why don't they want to kill Chad? But they want to kill Stacey often at those just below them on the ladder, because clearly they deserve what they are getting far less than you do. So aggrieved entitlement is at the root of incels. The belief that women are denying these men because they are involuntarily celibate. It's not because they're assholes, and women don't want to fuck them, which is what it is, really. But they really see this as like they're being forced to be celibate involuntarily because women aren't giving them what they are entitled to you, which is sex.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, that go ahead. That helps. That does help. I just, I don't. Well, obviously, I don't agree with it. So it seems to me like this, and I've got to go back to the fact that this is not in my, you know, scholarship where I have not encountered this term, this movement, whatever you want to call it until now, and I'm so appreciative that you went down this rabbit hole. But, of course, but here's the thing, the fact that I haven't encountered this, and I think a lot of people haven't. This is like a new, a new quote unquote, new concept for a lot of us. I mean, I like to believe, I hope I'm right. I like to believe that this is a very small segment of the male population in this country.

Colleen Clemens: It is a very simple segment, but they keep an, but they keep. And this is why we should all care. This is why I tweet that tweeted that here. The reason we should all care is they don't give a shit who they take down. So the girls in that sorority had no connection to Elliot Roger. He just picked that sorority because they're pretty, right? This guy in Toronto, he mowed down a street full of people of women. He did not know. This is why we all need to care about these small people. Jessica Valenti says we need to, and I've been screaming this, too. We should be calling this misogynist terrorism.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Right.

Colleen Clemens: Because this is terror enacted on an entire community, right? Like women being afraid to be together or anybody like these are not the, anybody could be part of this. That's the point of terrorism, right? Is that it can be anybody. It's not necessarily focused. It has a focus, but they're not. It's structural, not individual, right? You the idea of all women. So you mow down women. It doesn't matter if I've never met you, *[Amanda agreeing]* So this. So she writes, there's been a lot of writing about this in the past few weeks. But in her piece for when misogynists become terrorists from The New York Times, she is talking about that, what we have been trying to do in the feminist community, and by the way, incels fucking hate feminists. *[Amanda agreeing]* But we can talk about that in another time that, you know, we've been trying to connect the dots between these mass killers and misogynist groups, even though people calling them lone wills or they have mental illness. And people in the feminist community are like, how do you not see how these are? This is a structural issue, And Valenti calls out people that try to see these only as singular instances as opposed to a connection. And this is not like conspiracy theory shit, like there are always white dudes who leave these shitty manifesto. She writes that this is a mistake that ignores the preventable way these men's fear and anger are deliberately cultivated and fed online. And Valenti's no stranger to this. She has had death threats against her. She actually had to flee with her daughter by advice of the police at one point because she was on a target list. She has been, you know, as one of the leading feminist writers, she writes, I've been warning against these online hate groups in their propensity for real life violence for a decade. She was put on a registry of women to target. We have to talk about this, right? That this is gender based violence. Misogynist terrorism is what she wants to call it.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So having better language, more precise language, more accurate language to talk about it, write about it and think about it definitely helps. But of course, I go to. And how do we stop them?

Colleen Clemens: OK, so here's one thing, OK, so this is circles back to toxic masculinity. So toxic masculinity, when we talk about this is we're, I'm always trying to say, like, this is not innate in men. This is not biological. This is something that's taught. She says it, too. Part of the problem is that American culture still largely sees men's sexism as something innate rather than deviant. In a world where sexism is deemed natural, you know, it's old boys will be boys. The misogynist tendencies and mass shooters become afterthoughts rather than predictable and dark warnings. And that's why I think so many of us are always trying to be like, no, this is connected. Like this is connected to ideas about masculinity, that men aren't naturally this way. But if you have aggrieved entitlement and you are taught that women owe you this, then this is a natural outcropping or a natural move that some men, definitely not all men. But within this, you know, internet cesspool, we'll move to. So the last you do want to ask a question before I always get kind of the cherry on top of this.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, I was just going to think like, OK, so what if in your circle, if you're a woman or if you're a man and in your circle of people that, you know, there is a man who seems to have these sort of attitudes. What, what can we, What can we, can we do? Because if you report them to the police, they haven't committed a crime yet. I mean, right. And so what? The idea of prevention is important to me, but it feels like there's no preventing anything.

Colleen Clemens: I think all the prevention to this is undoing toxic masculinity in the beginning of a person's life or doing the hard work of trying to have conversations about what this masculinity is doing. If somebody is an incel, I don't know. I mean, it's just like people who get out of white supremacist movements, right? Like there's an actual process you have to go through. I think it would be the same thing. We might start to see pieces like that. Like I was an incel. I would be actually really interested in that. If you're listening, Oh, my God.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: If you know, an article, send it to us, that would be...

Colleen Clemens: So then. So then if this is kind of the cherry on top, that just brings some of this home, Ross Douthat, who is an opinion columnist for The New York Times. I do not love his work, but this piece really set the Twittersphere on fire. It's called "The Redistribution of Sex." And so he wrote this. His thesis is talking about what if we thought about sex as a commodity and if we redistributed it, then incels wouldn't do what they do. I know the face you're looking is what?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: WHAT?

Colleen Clemens: So he talks about some writers, individuals. He talks about an economist, Robin Hanson, that proposed the question. If we are concerned about the just distribution of property and money, why do we assume that the desire for some sort of sexual redistribution is inherently ridiculous? Just let that sink in for a moment. So he works through that. And my notes are because women are not a commodity. But I will remind you of that again, that sex is not something to be redistributed. And his thesis is talking about how the redistribution of sex - I mean, just the fact that that phrase exists makes me want to throw up how crazy it might sound. The idea is entirely responsive to the logic of late modern sexual life, and its pursuit would be entirely characteristic of a recurring pattern in liberal societies. So what Douthat is trying to say is, well, I think if we just redistributed sex, then every this wouldn't happen again because incels would get what they want because he, he calls what they're experiencing, quote, unhappiness. I shit you not. He uses the phrase to address the unhappiness of incels. And this is way beyond unhappiness, right?

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: He wants to basically eliminate the rights of women and just, what, distribute women to men?

Colleen Clemens: Well, does that tell you is that I will tell you, but let's just, let's just circle back to, we just spent twenty nine minutes talking about - incels don't respond out of unhappiness. They respond out of an aggrieved entitlement that is based in misogyny. Yes, there's a difference between unhappiness and that. So this is not like an individual's unhappiness. This is a structurally embedded problem. So, yes, he thinks he, this is through the last, I will read you the final paragraph: whether sex workers and sex robots puts them together, humans and robots. Wow. This is for The New York Times. He writes every week. Whether sex workers, New York Times pays this guy every week. He was, he's their conservative writer, but I feel like, and that's fine. But he went off the fucking rails on this and Twitter man who, and then he wrote like, a hole explanation on Twitter. And I was like, I'm done with you. "Whether sex workers and sex robots can actually deliver real fulfillment is another matter, but that they will eventually be asked to do it in service to a redistributive goal that for now, still seems creepy or misogynist or radical, feels pretty much inevitable."

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So I guess that's the capitalist lends to the extremes. It's literally saying, yes, human women and sex robots, the act of sex and sex robots are just all the same. And we can just pick and choose. And you can take us and give us to whoever, whatever man, what, who, the government, this

group, somebody decides we're going to distribute you to this and you're going to give them sex. I mean, that this was published as a thing, but this is what feminists are up against.

Colleen Clemens: And he did. I mean, people really did give him a lot of criticism, but as just, oh, yeah, yeah, as they should. But I just, you know, I just want to wrap up because I have said something about feminists to an article like that, Right? Or to incels, feminism is the enemy. OK, so a quote that I, that is terribly offensive. But one of the quotes from one of these four chan channels, "feminists and religious zealots strive to take all sexual outlets away from men, be it prostitution, sex travel or mere pornography for masturbation. Thus, these politicians bear partial responsibility for increasing sex crimes against women and children, and probably for the mayhem created by Elliot Roger." And this was a recurring theme in people that attacked me on Twitter that feminists are the problem and feminists, by changing the way we speak about gender, have taken away entitlements that men deserve. And now men have a grieved entitlement. And feminists are the ones that created this problem. That's how that logic works. Like that kind of strange logic 'cause I remember you were like, what the hell? Like, I am the problem. I am the fascist. I have created this issue. So, and this is why feminists are so attacked on social media because we are seen as the people that have created this mess because feminists have worked to help the world think about gender in different ways. Your face, I'm honest, your face.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: I'm sitting here speechless because I'm trying to wrap my head around. Thank you so much for, Oh, there's more, but we're not doing anymore. Well, it's awful. I'm so appreciative that...

Colleen Clemens: you're welcome.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: through this basic primer on incels and why we should care and what the dangers are. And I mean, I think talking about it in these different ways, naming it and naming it misogynistic terrorism is, that is an excellent term. I think we should all start using. And I know there are a lot of people out there who think terrorism should only be applied to sort of the political terrorism. But this is political terrorism. This is, this is a desire in creating fear. In theory,

Colleen Clemens: They would like women, all women to be afraid or because of it. Well, yeah, but they at least want all women to be afraid unless they're distributed to them, as you know, sex objects.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: So, right, right. We either should be dead or just be in service of, of sex of an INCEL. I mean, that, that this incredibly reductive, dangerous, terrifying vision of the world. I just, I, we need to fight back against this.

Colleen Clemens: And, well, you asked earlier, what should we do? So I would say, okay, for one thing that maybe you could do is if you are in a conversation and somebody says, Well, when's men's History month or where's men's studies department, sit down and listen to this half hour with them. Just ask them if they would sit and listen to this half hour with them and see if that helps that person not make a comment like that again, because when somebody says something like that, they actually think that they are entitled to something. And it's also super ridiculous that they think like women's bodies. I don't know. It shows when somebody makes that comment, they are being entitled. And aggrieved because they think they don't, they can't see that the default is men's studies. So, you know, maybe that's one thing you could do is, and don't be like, just send them sit down and just listen, go for a walk or sit in the car and be like, would you listen to this half hour with me? That might be a little thing that you could do. I don't know. I don't.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Yeah, again, these are, this is a huge problem. And obviously we're not going to, like, we don't have the answer, but it's good that we're talking about it. And I think maybe also talking about it with people increasing awareness about the problem, reading more like you've got reams of paper and talk and all this stuff. So I think we could all be a little more aware. And then, like you said, fighting back against toxic masculinity from an early age, if you have sons, work on them. Yeah, it is true. I do think that's the most important thing that we can do, because these guys who are saying this and thinking that they can just kill all women or just have sex with them one or the other. They're lost, They're gone. I don't think we're gonna get them back. They're done.

Colleen Clemens: And I will. And now that we've had this conversation, I will look to see if anybody's written about, like, hey, I left the in movement and this is what it's like. But, and also, I will put that up to our listeners. If, you know, somebody like, I would really like to write an article about that and share that story because that's important work. Just like we would study somebody who leaves any other kind of supremacist group. I would love to see if somebody has left and has written about it. So I will look for that.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: OK, that sounds great.

Colleen Clemens: Maybe another episode.

Amanda Morris D'Agostino: Maybe another episode. Thank you, my friend, for, well, terrifying, but good information.

Colleen Clemens: Good. I hope that everybody learned a little bit more.

[Transcript ends at 35:33 of 50:41]

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