

## **OLOC Confronting Sexism Series February 21, 2023 Notes**

Rena Grasso gave the introduction: Systemic sexism – a fabric made of many different threads, a very oppressive political force on our lives across all spectrums.

### ***Comments/Statements:***

- Athlete in college; Title IX – progressed for years but has been infringed upon over the years; sexism in women’s sports throughout the years; experienced herself as an athlete; all girl’s and women’s sports.
- 1945 small Jewish community; tomboy; could not attend the Jewish boy’s school to learn the Torah; oppression/pervasive from the start at birth with pink blankets, etc.; transgender issues now; it is a biological component...
- Females lives have been destroyed from birth; was asked all the time if she was a boy or a girl; participated in sports and wanted to be a boxer, but “not for girls”; told that “you are trying to be a man, supposed to be a man”; everything is about the men; and now the trans issue is a backlash against women; it exists because women bring life to the planet and men hate that; women are not thought of as human beings – property; no rights.
- Victim of sexism; hung out with boys in grade school; not in high school; but yes in college; at library job – same old, same old sexism; practiced sexism on soft fems as a butch; did not care about the women.
- As a kid saw everything that wasn’t fair but did not know the word sexism; pervasiveness; overnight found it and whole world opened up and changed; inbred sexism occupies all men – all men are guilty.
- When around 10 years of age saw mixed sexism and heterosexim; boys were a different species; in the 1940s though she was in control of the “neighborhood” boys; then couldn’t be a friend of boys as she got older because then they were your “boyfriend”; horrified about the violence against women – still going on around the world; men act like they own women; it is infused in everything in the world.
- Throughout life – sexism; wanted to do what boys got to do.
- Sexism is going to be here forever... she is guilty of sexism; we are put into categories; judgmental; in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the females had to stay after school to knit items for the soldiers; didn’t fit in; sports – girls could only play field hockey; need an earthquake to change people?; restrictions on females.
- Had a different household growing up – parents were members of the Communist Party - “red diaper baby”; but as a girl, could not attend the science school that was only for boys; experienced cat calling.
- There was a group in New York City that did guerilla tactics; if experienced sexist acts they would hand out business cards and walk on which said “You have just insulted a woman... think about it if it was your mother, sister, daughter...” turn over and it said, “This card has been chemically treated

and in 24 hours your prick will fall off.” Mother was a role model – out in the world, strong woman. Maybe when someone says something sexist to you, you could do a 2-minute sexist rant.

- Mother was not an “alternative” role model – traditional even though at the time she was the center of the household but still felt she was not important; tomboy; first damaging experience was wanting action toys – erector set especially and electric train, brother got those and she got a doll and doll carriage; suppression of your spirit, damaging suppressing messages; Italian version of sexism – as she got older, “you cannot hang out with boys any longer because the family honor is at stake,” but it was really shame... comments like “if anything happened, your father will kill me.”
- Boys are encouraged to have sex, girls not to; dishonored, shame; double standards everywhere; different standards.
- Internalized aspect of sexism – compete with sister for father’s attention because he had the “power” in the family. There is POWER of women when we all work together, but there is always division. “Can’t use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house” Audre Lorde; We need to be truly sisters together to make change.
- Had not mother in the house, father got custody because she was “unconventional”; experience sexism when puberty hit/breasts made fun of; male supremacist culture – you became an un-whole person; women had a natural tendency to worry of leadership and power (even women) – who has it; every generation, every culture women fight; spiral “we won”; things we created and then lost them – backlash each time women gain anything; trans is a manifestation of backlash against women; keep fighting as hard as we can against hatred and fear.
- Women for years have been told they are “less than” and then they put down other people around them to make them feel good about yourself; take what we learned and transform to make it better... erase all the sexism we have been taught to make the change.
- Graduate school – only “placement for young bright men” not for women; judgmental; not able to follow your dreams; sidetracked everything; there was a sisterhood movement which is fragmented now – what is a lesbian now – we have been put on the backburner.
- If you allow yourself to think – everything we might have been will not be; all those women everywhere with overwhelming grief of not living their dreams, potential. New study: 1/3 of teenage girls are suicidal, 13% of them have tried to commit suicide; they are awash in sexism in many ways, a virulent form.
- What helped was becoming a lesbian separatist; being with lesbians and women is powerful energy! best thing; do the work any way you can – the world is not fair, and it should be.
- Driven by male supremacy, the system, classism, racism, etc.; a journey to look at and see what is fair and not fair.
- Teenage girls get those ideas online (websites, social media) that tell them to inform their parents that if they don’t let you transition that you are going to kill yourself.

- Females not being told they are of value; it is in all professions; males get all the credit and awards even if the females have done all the work.
- Policy level – try to change education; the power of recognition is a currency and NONE of it is for women; Men take over to speak as “the experts” about girls and women; invisibility of the women doing the work; all the values that are lost; need action.
- Book: *Tomboy* by Lisa Selin Davis
- What if you were a tomboy and was told back when you were young that you could become a boy? What would you have answered...
- OLOC was a really, really strong feminist actions group and now it is gone...
- Academics: “post-feminist”, post-modernism; cultural climate; sexism; then backlash
- The women’s movement disintegrated; went back to self-hatred – not important now, but everywhere still; an attack on the women’s consciousness – self diminishment.

**From the Chat:**

My biggest regret is not being a mother

"Tomboy" by Lisa Selin Davis

Trans=sexism on steroids

Male violence is wearing me out

Agnes Varda: Black Panther movie

**Post February Session Comments**

- All this brings back so many memories: at 2-1/2 told I was too dirty to touch the new baby brother; at 13 informed that I needed to dispose of Kotex, not in the trash can under the kitchen sink but directly into the incinerator in the back yard, and to do it surreptitiously, because men would be offended by it, that I was a “young lady now,” and couldn’t wear jeans when we were visiting people, and to keep my knees together, sit properly. Forever being told that I read too much and should wear lipstick, must wear a bra—no more undershirts, have boyfriends. Sorry to go on about this subject, and that’s only my childhood—out in the world of work, a lot more problems.
- Just wanted to say that it might make a difference in our discussion and thinking about it all if we eventually address how oppressions overlap and feed each other and also address the difference between sexism, as it oppresses all of us, and racism, which also does but not in as direct a way for white women. The issue keeps coming up and the complaints that OLOC is too focused on racism. Our focus on it is not likely to end because we want OLOC to be open to and welcoming of all Lesbians. I see it as two different ways of approaching the ism. And racism is not the only one.