

OLOC Confronting Sexism Session September 19, 2023

Cultural Power of Language

Rena Grasso: The framework of this series is that we are looking at sexism as the politics of patriarchy, realizing that sexism is systematic and what that means is that each of the things that we look at do not exist in isolation. Rather each thing such as language is part of a whole and it has its power as part of that wholeness. We can talk about that power in terms of how each part reinforces other parts, such as language reinforces male supremacy. The corollary of male supremacy is female inferiority, so it is very important that we as we talk about language that we keep in our minds that we allow language to resonate, to resonate to other parts of this system. Once we talk about language as a cultural phenomenon, I just want to designate some of the ways of looking at language that can help. For example, one of the things that we want to look at is the semantics of language and that is the meaning of words.

To participants: What are some positive words for men?

- Verile
- Very manly
- Strong
- Powerful
- Brave
- Problem solvers
- Overbearing (not quite positive)
- Confident
- A ladies man: (positive? According to them. Well, even when somebody uses the term, he's a real ladies man. It is meant to imply, you know, he really has a lot of power. He's a fox.
- Assertive

To participants: What are some positive words for women?

- Gentle
- Pretty
- Sexy
- Compassionate
- Kind
- The best
- Emotional (positive? But generally, it is used to say that women are too emotional to be good whatever)

Yes, one of the things that we are going to confront is that many of these things that in common language are negatives. Kindness, gentleness, as feminists we claim them as positives.

- How about a homemaker, is that a positive? I would say it is because a woman is usually thought of taking charge of the house and the children. In society, I think if somebody says a woman is a homemaker, they think that is a good thing for her to be. In the larger society that is seen as a positive thing but is not a thing for any man to be and it is very poorly paid.

- When women are referred to as smart, I think that is positive. Publicly that that is a good thing. Senator Elizabeth Warren is smart and that is not a good thing, right? But when the public says it, it is not necessarily a good thing. If they are smart that means they are no good for a man.
- Another word that comes to my mind is saying that a woman is sassy, which in some circles might be seen as good, but I think that generally when people say it in the patriarchy, it is a negative, critical thing.
- If you say a man is assertive, that is a positive thing, but if a woman is assertive, they call it aggressive.
- Here in New Zealand, we have two words: one is bolshy which can be negative as in pushy, but also positive as she stands up for herself. The other is stroppy which is a fighter, fiercely protective. It could also be seen as angry by some, or I am here, I am going to get what I need. Those two terms are never used for men, they are only used for women. It is not a positive for women. No it is not ballsy. These words come from England and the British language. So, when I am called bolshy or stroppy, I take it as a comment.

To participants: How do we talk about a woman who is powerful?

- She's a firecracker.
- She's intelligent.
- She's a ballbreaker.
- She's aggressive, which is fine for a man to be aggressive, but not for a woman. But it is a good quality.

When you ask how do we talk about a woman, do you mean we us, or do you mean society?

Society.

- Powerful women are often called bitches. Gayle used to say when she sang with Sapphire Uppity Blues that she had learned when she was singing in the South that the word bitch stands for being in total control of herself.
- I had the experience being at meetings that were run by men that when I came up with something that I thought was a poignant and clever idea they would go, oh, isn't she cute to totally diminish my contribution and it has happened to me many, many times. It also happens when we are old, we are called cute, dear, and honey. They do not call men that. Many of you have talked about this all the time such as in the classroom where a woman would make a comment and nobody would say anything and then a couple of minutes later, a man would make the same comment, and everyone would agree with them.

So now we're getting into language behavior. Have you ever watched a table of mixed sex people usually heterosexual and watched the speech patterns at those tables?

- The guys are always yelling, you can hear him across the room.
- The guys take over the conversation and the women just nod, assent or make a little comment, but the men are the ones that run it very frequently.
- That is the point that I was getting at. I often sit and watch heterosexual couples when I am at a restaurant/bar and I see the men dominating the conversation and the women are listening, deferring. That whole relationship of the men dominate and the women defer.
- I see it a little bit different sometimes.
- The men talk about themselves; they are egotistical maniacs; it is always all about them. Not only do they dominate the conversation, it is usually all about them.

- In my experience, I have had it different with me being the only female in the room with maybe a dozen or so males. I will come up with a suggestion on doing something and everybody else had their own disciplines that they were in charge of. Something that needed to be done, which was in conflict with somebody else's work. They tried putting me down and by the time I got done describing what I needed to do and how I needed to be done they backed off because I knew what I needed to say and how I needed to say it, but I wasn't forceful with it. I was saying that, instead of doing this, we need to do it this way and by doing it this way, we can save so much money. Once you bring money into this situation, then their eyes pop up and they start listening. Are you saying that first you had to develop a strategy? Yes, I had to develop a strategy before speaking with them and with the many young women that were coming up in my profession, I used to have them come to my office because they would be crying due to the guys walking all over them. I would have to teach the girls how to talk to the men, because it just is not upright speech. You have to be very dominant in a soft way, so that they are understanding what you are going to do and how it is going to benefit them.
- I see what you were talking about in a restaurant and you are watching all these heterosexuals, I see it just a little bit different. I see the men definitely taking over and taking over the conversation and I do see the women backing off a little bit. But I equate it to the same thing that women would do with kids. When the kids need all the attention, they let them have it and so when I sometimes I see that, the men have no idea that they are being looked at as kids.
- I took longer to come out than maybe a lot of people sitting here today, but I was a radical feminist before I came out as a lesbian. I can tell you that when I was in heterosexual groups in public or in private, we did not do any of these things you are describing. I think it's a mistake to just say what heterosexual couples look like, sound like, etc. I do think that, and I am talking some decades ago, when the level of political women in Cleveland, Ohio would get together and there was no question who, and their husbands were there, was running the show. Whether it was at a cocktail party or out in public. I've had a different observational experience for my own participation. I am wondering where this conversation is going to go, because I feel like we are spending a lot of time talking about how the patriarchy behaves versus how we women are going to eradicate the patriarchy. After the next speaker, I would like to hear where we are going with this today.
- How I got my message across was that I did not placate, never have. I do not kiss anybody's rear, and I do not care who they are or who they could be. My way was, to get up, put my steel toe boots on, walk out the door, and remember that I am soft and show up with 200 guys, all basically white, bigoted, sexist pigs who the last thing they want to see when they go to work is a woman. One guy: "My wife does not drive, you know, so how can I let you drive the truck?" I say, because I am going to the Union representative and you are going hear about it, because I am the highest level paid woman in the state of California and I am going to drive this damn truck. So, he transfers out. I had a guy where I was a senior plant mechanic which they did not tell me that the guy's wife used to beat him up and that he committed suicide. So welcome, we wish you could be more like Joe. Well, I am sorry you had a guy just off himself. Weird things like that would happen and at some point you do have to push on. I can tell you nothing has changed, but my life changed, and I changed the lives of the men and the women that I came in contact with.
- We are talking about an anatomy of sexism in this series and how it works and that is one of the things that we are doing today. I am going to talk about other nonverbal behavior. There have been psychological studies regarding who touches who. The superior touches the inferior. Notice how much more willing men will touch women and I am not talking about intimacy, and not talking about familiarity. I'm talking about people outside in the world. I cannot tell you how many times I

have gone to a city council meeting, and I will say hello to a counselor, and he will put his hand on my shoulder. I would never do that to him. That is a message of who is superior. Or what about who interrupts who? I watch business shows and they will have businesspeople, stockbrokers, etc. mostly men and it will always be the men who will interrupt the women and never the other way around. To look at these things - how we are surrounded in our world by behaviors that are constructing sexism, and we are not even necessarily aware of them, but it is how sexism gets reinforced. I just have to say as a woman who also speaks up for herself, I do not do it without being punished. I can remember being a graduate student at graduate students' parties and I would speak powerfully because that is how I feel. I was called Lady Macbeth behind my back. Women are often not powerful without somehow paying the price, and if you listen to women in politics, you know that they are torn down in the media/social media. It does not come without a price. Let's think of words. What is the opposite of master? What's the female version of master? What are you if you are not the master of the house, the mistress? Think of that word – remember that words can have two levels. One is called the denotative level; if you look it up in the dictionary, mistress of the house is she who is the head of the house, but it has a connotative value too, meaning a tone, an undertone. What is the connotation of mistress?

- Sexualized.
- Remember the cartoon the lady in the tramp? The tramp was the male. Can you imagine it being the gentleman and the tramp? The male dog, tramp he is just a rough and tumble little guy. But what if you call the woman a tramp?
- I think the power dynamics in language are also in racial dynamics and the word that comes to mind is that men assume their privilege, but if a woman is assertive, she is called dominating, the men assume that they dominate.
- This connects with one of the things that feminists have analyzed about people. Women who have written books on this say you really have to think about the way the whole language works and that male is the norm and female the unknown. Female is male minus. A perfect example of that was how Johns Hopkins defined a lesbian: A non-male attracted to non-men.
- The word master, like the master bedroom. The master bathroom. Well, some people are now calling it the owner's bedroom.
- I have heard it is called the main bedroom or primary bedroom, getting away from the word master.
- "Hey guys, how are you doing" is a very common greeting that people say or the brotherhood of man meaning the whole group of people. And there is a million of those kinds of examples where man is substituted for men and women, very, very common throughout our whole language. We know that it does not mean men, just male gender. This is ingrained into our language.
- Where I grew up, it has always been "you guys" - you guys for a group of men or if it is just a bunch of girls together it is you guys too. But regarding the master bedroom, I have an adult suite in my house which is two large bedrooms and a master bath. There is an adult side of the house and there is a children's side of the house.
- The binary focus of male and female that is embedded in patriarchy is why the trans issues are so controversial is that we use the language saying mankind, he and all the God images are male. The pervasiveness of that is in our language, in the history of our language - European languages, French language, and others that are gender based with masculine all of which supports dualism, it is artificially power-based to serve those in power. This is going on around the world. We who were in that second wave of feminism back in the 70s, we questioned what that image of woman is and fought through all sorts of stereotypes and boundaries but we still have to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed, which was one of the outcomes of that work. In the LGBT community, the

younger people are beginning to really look at, do I identify as a woman or as they or do I have to buy into that at all? I think that is very threatening to people. It is a real wedge issue and here in rural Western North Carolina, the libraries are facing major issues around some of that, it is all over the country. I think when we are talking about language we need to understand that basic division of male and female with its deep roots in patriarchy and in how it is embedded in our language. The challenge of that is something that is very pertinent right now. I think it is really important for us in our local situations to lend support to those people. I know that is controversial, and as someone who is identified as cisgender, I have been one all my life and a woman loving woman all my life. I still think it is very important for us to support anything that helps move beyond that dualism because dualism directly supports patriarchy.

- The many examples of where man is substituted for men and women has really serious negative results for women. For example, all the research that has been done for so many years was done only on men. The results were supposed to be applicable to us too and that was just assumed but never tested. Women are different from men and there is more recognition of that these days. But for example, seat belts and cars were designed for men's bodies, not women so there are really drastic incidents that have happened because of that where women were severely injured. There are a zillion examples of this in the medical world where a dosage given to men was designed for men but are not appropriate for women. Women's bodies reacted differently, and they never tested that out, they just assumed that we are the same as men because it is convenient for them, they don't want to spend any extra time or money and there is that word - money. There is more research being done for women now.
- I have been seeing a lot of this recently in the news where because of the Roe versus Wade decision and the way men and the Republicans have taken to abortion, a lot of the women in our country now are starting to fight back. They are starting to sue the state governments and so forth over the abortion problems because we are finding that these abortion problems are really women's health problems that need to be taken care of. The men do not pay attention to that stuff and it is really getting to be pretty brutal out there at times.
- We are talking about generics, man and mankind being used as a generic and the excellent ideas about how damaging that has been for women. Think about when you were in college, about education and you are reading mankind did this, mankind, fraternity and justice and the psychological studies have shown that when people hear the word mankind they get an image in their head of man, of male not women. We are made invisible by these generics which makes you think about how lesbians are calling themselves queers and not lesbians.
- There is a wonderful folk singer named Judy Small who is from Australia, and she has a song called the IPD; look it up and listen, it is totally wonderful. IPD stands for interpenial device and she says, "It's the I P D, the I P D; It may not feel too good to you but it's not hurting me." It is a parody on the IUD. There are jokes that I have heard where often women are put down. This joke is partly a Jewish shtick - The first woman president was elected, and she is up on the stage with the vice president. Her mother is invited and is sitting in the front row, and she taps the guy that is sitting next to on the shoulder and says, see that a woman up there and they say, yeah I see her and the mother says she married a doctor. So, what's important?
- There is dualism, but dualism is not the problem. There are sex differences, but sex differences are not the problem; differences are interpreted hierarchically as male is the superior and female is inferior, that is the issue, not dualism. And that is a very important distinction, especially in terms of what is going on right now.

- I have a difference of opinion about dualism. Dualism started with Cartesian dualism and is an either/or, either this or that and it is very limiting. From my perspective, it has harmed and shaped eons of human behavior. It has certainly shaped my particular profession in ways that were harmful to extreme. I am an RN, so I actually wrote something about this briefly as background in my dissertation that I did at Case Western Reserve University, so I have a respectful disagreement with that. But the other thing that I wanted to say when we were talking about disappearing - this is from a different book that is not about sexism per se, though it does have things about that in there. Some of you may be familiar, those of you who are actively doing anti-racism. It is a book that came out about two years ago called "Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019" by Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain. One of the contributors Deborah Douglas has a piece in there where she talks about that there is a difference between erasure and de-presencing which is a word that she created. She says that unlike erasure which requires one's presence to be recognized so it can be obliterated, de-presencing never acknowledges presence at all. I think that is what words like mankind have done, they have de-presenced us, not even erased us.
- Making women invisible - how do we fight back? Women did attempt to fight back. Remember when we created the word herstory, to put women back into history. Has it caught on? No, it is only used by certain women and not in the outside world. We do use some generics, like when we decided to call people chairpersons. I guess you can see that is a bit of progress. But if we were to ask ourselves the question, what would it take to change? Sexism. Certainly, we cannot simply start with language and that's what I would say about what is going on with using *they and them*, because language is not going to change the fact that men and women have different political and economic realities. You do not change that by saying they and them. That is giving a power that language in and of itself does not have. What women have said is that in order to change sexism we need to change society, and that needs to be a political movement to change it, not a change of words to *they and them*, all that does is create confusion. Somebody came to my door and said "they" are running the office. I said who are they? I need to know who they is because for me it matters whether somebody is a woman or a man running for office. You cannot make language deny a political, social reality.
- I recently had a run in with the word lesbian, our most famous word here at OLOC and some work that I had to do with OLOC. Her reaction was avoidance of the L word but reacted a woman using it in one of her blogs, using the word lesbian more than she ever did in anything that you will ever find on the web or any of her sites. The other day I had to ask someone, are you a lesbian, and I have not heard back from her. For this other woman it was how she started using the word lesbian and how she had a negative experience. I did approach an older gentleman in line at the grocery store and he had a blue ribbon on. I said, excuse me can I ask what your ribbon is for? He said prostate cancer and I said, thank you so much, now I know. So, words work in different ways. Asking a question about a total stranger and finding out something on the internet can help heal.
- If we as feminists and I assume we all are feminists, want language to change things like no longer using the words like waitress or saleswoman or anything like that, then we have to accept other people's changes of language too. I think in our community, I am totally happy with the word lesbian, I am totally happy with the word dyke, I am equally comfortable being called queer. I think that if we want language to change, we have to recognize that it does change. In our community, it has the term *they* which has been taken by trans people because there is nothing in our language yet which that means somebody who is neither male nor female, non-binary is possibly the closest, but most trans people use the word *they* because there is not another word. So that is language

that has changed, and I think that we live here in 2023 and that we have to accept that language changes. If we want it to change, it cannot just be for us.

- Come up with another word, if you do not want to be she or he come up with another where *they* already has a meaning. My friend was approached by her nephew and said I want to be called they and she said you and who else? Because the word they is plural. They has had meaning for hundreds of years. How about using non? Come up with a different word. Are you that stuck that you can't come up with a new word for yourself?
- I want to talk about the word cis which has been applied to me by others and it is not a word I have chosen or use to identify with. I do not like other people naming me. I am the one who names my identity no one else does. When other people refer to me as cisgendered or as a cisgendered lesbian, it's like, no, I'm not cis, which rhymes with piss. Cis is a medical word that somebody else used and I am not that. That is not how I identify or call myself. To be respectful, you need to ask me how I identify which is impossible to ask everybody you meet, especially if you are on a crowd. But I think we need more balance around that word and about other people naming us because that is a really troubling thing when we let other people name us.
- I live in rural western North Carolina, and we have young people who call themselves queer and I really support them. I agree that I need to define how I want to be called and hold to that and let people know the words I want to use. We are building a movement with the those of us who are older and those of us who are younger to try to work together on some political issues here in my county. There is the issue of censorship around the country, and so it is important for me to try and respect how they want to be called. If they want to be called queer, okay, I will call them that if they want to use whatever term for themselves, I will respect that and use it. I will be very clear about how I want to be called. But as much as those words are important, I think it is part of a generational shift. For those of us who grew up in the lesbian feminist movement I think it is important for us as older lesbians to see how we can contribute our wisdom and our organizational knowledge and experience with younger folks coming along to deal with all the really hard important things going on in this country right now.
- Talking about identities, I have often said that I do not consider myself male or female and I was told that I was a *they*. there's no way in hell I am a *they*, I am butch; I can be dyke, I can be queer. I do not get upset if somebody calls me a woman because that is what it appears. And now and then they call me sir, but that does not happen as much now as it did when I was young. But I agree with claiming our own names. I'm Butch. I'm queer. I'm a dike. I am in a female body pretty much but when it comes to my brain it is male and the female, I do not know what the hell *they* is. I have gotten to the point where I am actually going to have it engraved on my tombstone, so that years from now they can laugh or whatever. I am going to just put it up there (butch, dyke, queer) and the hell with y'all, that's who I am and if you don't like it, get the hell out of the way.
- This thing called cis - I had a dear friend and neighbor who started using that word on me two years ago, and it really rubbed me the wrong way. I looked it up and whatever it was some of it fit me and some of it did not. I did see a statement from a male professor who taught something about gender studies and language, and he wrote how he thought it was really problematic using cis, that it was doing negative things by creating this word. I have seen it even in clothing at Target. The word created a category of people called CIS and defined them as the oppressor, This is not coming from the ordinary life of ordinary people in their words, some of the stuff is coming from on high, somewhere with big money or in the university. It is not because poor oppressed people need it to be the same.

- Going back about being invisible in this world and that the word queer makes me invisible. I do not want to be called queer and I do not have to work with queers. I do not want to be subsumed into a queer movement. I am not part of a queer movement. I do not agree with many things in that movement. I'm a lesbian, I'm proud to be a lesbian. I want to use that word. But the queer community doesn't want to use the word lesbian, The young queers are put into their own category and told not to use the word lesbian. It's a poor choice of words, is what someone told me. In that community, Lesbian is not a good way to introduce yourself if you want to have friends. They work their community that way or not, nobody's cis trans or whatever they are. That's fine, but I'm a lesbian. And I have a lesbian community and even though I'm old there are still lesbians of all ages, all races, and abilities, all of that and I feel like right now we are fighting like hell to keep our boundaries of what a lesbian is. We have trans women who are saying they're lesbians and insisting on that. How does patriarchy keep us inferior? How do they keep on top of us. Well, they didn't make up the word queer, but they're using it against us. Other people here don't have a problem with being called queer, but I do. And even in this group now I can't believe I even have to say it, but I do have to say.
- I agree with what was said about cis. When I first heard it, it just pissed the shit out of me, and I remember going to an OLOC workshop a few years back and I think that Alix was leading it and we were all up in arms about this. This is a word made up by the LGBTQIA communities by males who are dominating and wanting to give me a label. I understand the medical terminology where it comes but I never asked for it and I don't identify this way. I will tell people I'm an XX Lesbian and that is with the capital L. I do this at my senior center gym where I'm the only out lesbian there and I will say that. It is very racially mixed and more men than women. When Pride comes around such as this past one, one of the old guys came up to me when I was on the bike and he wanted me to know that he had watched Wanda Sykes' latest program. He's in his fifties, he's Black, he's probably actively a christian in his church and it was his way of saying to me, he wanted me to know that he was on my side and that's how he chose to do that. I said if there's ever a problem here, I know I can count on you, and he said oh yeah, oh yeah. And so, I try to just say the stuff out loud every place and any time I can. The other thing I want to talk about is the use of the word *they and their*. Back in the late 70s Canadian academics came up a handbook, a guidebook of the language you should use when you're writing a thesis or a dissertation. They were so far ahead of us in this country and were using *they* as the generic. So, there wasn't like a he/she or the way I was writing it at the time s/he. I remember shifting my language right away to try and this had nothing to do with trans people at the time. I understand where it is going and may have gone now. There are words that people are coming up with to describe themselves besides non-binary. I mean there's a whole series of them. But I in my experience about studying language and how it's used, I can't just jump on how it's being used or misused right now. It's up to me to change. How I do it to say it, to stand up for it.
- I think that to talk about what's going on with they, them, cis queer, without history is really to not see it properly. Women in the second wave quickly understood the generic words like mankind, brotherhood of man, etc. made women invisible. Even the psychologists have also said that women really are invisible when you use a word like mankind, what goes on in a person's head is males, that women were not seen as the creators of civilization or being important because it was all men, men, men. When the gay movement happened in New York City, one of my best friends was one of the creators of that gay movement, she told me what an important milestone it was. When women who were in the gay movement were perceived, we were not gay. We are really pretty different from gay men, and we were leaving this movement because these men are really sexist and we

were calling ourselves lesbians, not queer. We are women who are lesbians, and that distinction is important. What does the word queer do? It hides male agency in patriarchy. As queer we are no longer and suddenly, we are just in the same universe as gay men and we don't matter. That was part of our political analysis, and now we are returning to that issue and we can't separate this backlash against women about these words such as pregnant persons; menstruating persons. How can we not see this is part of returning women to invisibility and hiding male privilege behind words. What about using chest feeding instead of breast feeding? We notice that men aren't disappearing from the language. No one's talking about persons with protruding things between their legs. This all targeting women!

- Misogyny. Some of them actually think they are better women than we are.
- I think that this movement is reducing us to body parts. It's men and then the rest of us are body parts, like we are a breast, But they don't seem to have a different word for a woman's brain. You know, brains are everybody. They don't have a different name for a nose because everybody has a nose. But the parts that we have that are different from men, those are the ones that we have been identified with and so when you look at it that way you can see that the part of the population that has body parts is different from the part of the population that has actual words like a man and male. So, when you say non-binary or any of those terms, they says whatever when you say any of those things well okay, body parts. You are saying nonbinary. What are you saying that you don't have any body parts? Oh, you do, well then, you're a man. Because the world is being divided. It's rather than male and female, it is divided into those who have words and those who have body parts. That's what you get and then if they want to make new words for people who don't want to go in that system. Why do they get to do that, and I don't get to do that? Why can't women do that? And they say, well, I want a different word for you so let's do it that way. But instead, non-binary people say, I'm just going to use this pronoun, only this part of the grammar. I'm going to use this when I use this and I'm not even going to define myself. I'm just going to say what I'm not this and I'm not that and this is my pronoun so I'm a non-entity with the rest of the world, but I need to be identified with a particular pronoun and I'll be insulted if you don't call me that. I know other people don't always think the same way I do.
- We do refer to men as they body parts too. I absolutely have referred to them as pricks many, many times. So, we do that, it works both ways too. I do think that I'm very interested in the whole term and concept of being nonbinary because I think the meaning behind it is something that we have fought for a very long time and that is getting rid of sexual stereotypes. I really think that this concept is something I've been thinking about a lot lately and that if we don't have a binary of male and female man, woman, girl, boy, etc. Then maybe we can get rid of the things that we have attached to them, the stereotypes that had been attached to them for many years. I think it's a very, very interesting concept and it also eliminates a hierarchy which we all have lived with since we have lived in this world of male and female.
- Well, it seems to me that yes, in the seventies and late sixties and eighties, we were all about smashing sexual stereotypes. I did that I lived that in the 1980s I had a master's in electrical engineering, and I was the only one and I managed a group of guys and I was a woman. All the way through that I was a woman, and I was a lesbian. I didn't announce that to the world because I knew that there could be some terrible backlash. I was stepping out of those sexual stereotypes the way I dressed, which I didn't even realize, but I was dressed like this little butch with a pocket watch with a gold chain, but I was a woman and there was nothing else I could be or ever wanted to be. So don't put down sexual stereotypes, absolutely because will never make you not what you were born.

- We had a word for nonbinary and it's what feminism preached about being androgenous. A much nicer word than non-binary. I also react against it because I know where it comes from because it comes from technology, binary systems. We need technology to say what feminists said. We shouldn't be locked into sexual stereotypes. I think that this is one of the ironies. I hate to get into this trans stuff again, but. It is exactly what the trans stuff does, is to reify sex roles, stereotypes. You feel like a woman, what does that mean? That must mean you have to change your sex, that you must be a stereotype. You feel like you have manly qualities? That must mean you must be a man, It reifies sex role stereotypes, it doesn't get away from them. It accentuates them. There's a great women's football team here in Boston. They play real football, these women are tough, "they have to be men!" This whole trans thing is actually saying, we've got to be stereotypes which is part of the backlash against feminism, not freedom, it's imprisoning us in sexual stereotypes and adding medicine and technology to it.
- I find myself reacting to your idea. It's fine but using the phrase the whole trans thing, Gender ideology that's being promoted around the world doesn't include every kind of trans experience or transexual experience.
- You are right, I should have said the transgender gender ideology movement.
- There are trans people who don't go along with that at all.
- I have to disagree on that too, on what was said about transexual movement. There is a lot more that goes on behind that, a lot of what you don't know about. There's a whole list of medical problems that are incorporated within all of that system. You just don't appear to say, well, I feel female today, so I'm going to change myself into a woman. I feel like I'm butch, so I'm going to change myself to a man. I worked with men. most of my career and I'm still here as a woman. I know people who are involved in that transexual group and there are definite reasons why they are there, there are a lot of them. We can actually blame ourselves for a lot of this stuff because of all the crap we're throwing into the atmosphere and into the foods we eat, in the waters we drink, Because it literally is going to change our biology and eventually one of these days we're going to end up being just one gender all the way around.
- On an entirely different subject, there's a really wonderful new book out that you may know about, called *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus for those of you who have scientific backgrounds is just really skewers sexism in the scientific fields and women's roles. Because I am a word person, a librarian, writer, bookstore, editor, all that, I appreciate, reading books that that are popular mainstream publisher out there about sexism and speaking of words and men who take women's research and publish it as their own and the women are not given credit. This book says something about where we are in this country, what people want.
- I just want to say I just got back the Isle of Lesbos, Greece and give you greetings from all the thousands of women. It is an incredible women's festival there with women's ages 19 years up to nearly 80. There is so much energy and beauty. I went last year for the first time. This is my second trip and that there were women from everywhere, Iran, Columbia, Argentina, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, England, United States, just about any country you can think of. There were a lot of young women with a lot of energy, and they are calling themselves lesbians, the majority, even the young ones. They're having their struggles like a young woman from Indonesia. Parents who were Muslim, not being able to come out because of the whole Muslim thing. It is just good for you all to know the rest of the world is there, it's not just all what's happening in America, there's a lot of good stuff happening.
- That's a nice note to end on lesbians, right?