

[Reeni Goldin

So this is...

OLOC Zoom called Confronting Sexism, Fighting for Our Lives.

Today's topic is women and anger

And don't mess with me.

so we're

transcribing this, if I can figure out how to do it, does anybody mind if we record it

which will be your image and your voice.

Anybody mind?

All right. If I can figure out how to do it, I'm going to do it.

Rather than have me and my sister spend like 18 hours editing the transcript

Is it okay if we just send around the recording of this meeting instead.

Before I forget, next month

I don't know what date it is. It's in November, is Women and Mother Earth.

That's our topic.

in the sexism series.

Rena's going to start us off and then we'll hear what everyone has to add.

[Rena Grasso]

Okay, so I don't know if you can see this

This is what I'm going to try to be saying, okay? So if I look away, it's because I'm trying to read my my writing.

This thing I put together a few hours ago okay so

Let me start with a simple proper axiom that anger really is a very formidable power.

if you study it, you realize that it is both biologically and physiologically embedded in us.

when people speak about the physiologists speak about this, they talk about it

as the fight and flight

it's worth saying that fight and flight

Because it underscores

that anger really can be about survival,

about self-protection,

And ultimately about life and death.
And I would want to extrapolate that
to our social lives.
to the propositions
first of all, we cannot do away with it. It is part of our human heritage
and our human beingness.
And secondly, I would say
that it has
critical survival role
to our social selves. And what I mean by that
is the ability to realize ourselves, to affirm ourselves and
to be ourselves.
WE create ourselves within a social
cultural realm.
And that's social being
as our physical life. So it's a power. Anger. it is a survival power.
Speaking personally, I will admit
that i have a tiger in my own tank. that I really struggle.
with the beast, this demonic power, I call it demonic,(and I'll say why
later) Because I have raged. I have put my life in danger raging, actually.
I have certainly offended many others quite unintentionally.
And therefore, I have to be very vigilant With myself. It's an ongoing
thing for me. On the other hand, and this is why I call it a daemon.
Anger
connotes a kind of holiness.
And I do see my anger
as very vital.
to my creative work
to my writing, and most importantly, to my ability to defend myself
When I have been hurt or diminished,
are discriminated against.
most importantly, to my value system.
my life as an activist.
So from that point of view.
This tiger in myself is truly a two-faced
Being.
The second thing I want to do
Coming off of the maxim that we all are so familiar with, the personal is
the political

is to connect anger to sexism
Which is after all the framework
for this discussion.
And to my own personal life.
By telling you that as I was struggling with my anger, I realized
become problematic
Until I had become conscious of sexism and class.
That was like a big realization to me. As I was thinking, oh my god,
I realized...
that it had not been an issue to me
until the late 60s.
Whereas my life experience would have it,
I had a simultaneous awakening to sexism and classism.
Those of you who are as old as me will know
how revolutionary
the creation of the word sexism was
because we know what it meant to live in a world
where we experienced it and had absolutely no name for it.
Well, the simultaneity
of realizing that I had been living with sexism
And also my class experience
Growing up, especially in New England.
In the shadow of Yankee
America and Harvard and Yale and all of that
And being the child
of Italian immigrants
who were working class
That simultaneity was absolutely explosive for me.
And it's led to my problem.

I want to segue
to you and to the bigger issue
by the proposition that
Women's oppression,
Like all oppression,
would logically lead us
to be angry as to protect ourselves.
Oppression is an assault
on our being.

As women, low wages, insults.
Violence, violation of our sense of selves, lack of recognition.
All of the things that go along with sexism
should make us angry and want to protect ourselves.
In fact, I would go so far as to say
That's the genius of the second wave.
And we have to remember during this time of backlash.
that it was an age of genius.

That genius rode on a tsunami wave
of women's anger
as we collectively awoke
to the realities of sexism and what they had meant to our lives.
And it brought about
this enormous creative upsurge
Music, cultural, social, the outpouring of publications of new ideas and of
books and theory, everything. It was such an explosion of creativity.
And as I was reading through some volumes of women's poetry, let me
tell you the early poetry in the late 60s and 70s, the anger just explodes
out of those volumes.
And I thought about Alix Dobkin, after all, she's one of us.
And remember that, and I remember how I used to love that song of hers
from Getting Ready. Let me quote one of the very angry lyrical passages.
"White men rule with institution, racist criminals in charge, but women
who have learned, but women have learned to play by the rules of men.
Oh, yes, we've learned to play along, pretending not to notice while we
get fucked over again and again and again. And it's so outrageous to
think about it".
there could be so many of those poems and lyrics that we could quote.
We could have a whole session on women's poetry and the anger that
infuses it. And just listen to this from AOC. "If we do not demand, not only
demand, but win, unions, healthcare, wages, and ending the endless wars
then we will condemn ourselves to barbarism. I refuse to give up. I refuse
to submit myself to that future. That's not a life."
And that kind of anger
is, I think, essential to all movements for social justice.
But, you know, there is a negative pole to all of this positive
as I reflect on the women's movement.

One of the things that certainly contributed to the ebbing and to the ultimate retreat of the women's movement was that we handled the differences amongst us ineffectively. Those differences that are, after all, rooted in oppression We handed them very poorly. I speak as a working class woman and i know that the working class women in my groups did handle our anger against more privileged women poorly. Not that there wasn't a validity to it. But we did not handle it to build bridges. And I have certainly seen women, black women and Hispanic women. who I would also recall handle their anger in ways that I would consider very non-constructive. I bring this up not only to acknowledge that anger can be negative, but because I truly believe that if there were to be a future of the women's movement. that we would have to put this upfront, out front And deal with it as something that was essential to deal with. for if we were to maintain a women's movement. The other thing I want to share is that One of the things that happened to me This is the women's movement changed my life. And instead of becoming a straight out academic. or a therapist and going to School of Psychoanalysis in New York, which I intended to do. I began a women's center, a women's counseling center, which I operated for 20 years, And during that time, I quickly learned, that many women had great difficulty with anger, they had difficulty acknowledging it. They had difficulty expressing it. And for many years, I ran women in anger groups. And you know found how important it was to facilitate ways in which women could own their anger And to find ways of expressing it and yet it embedded their lives, embedded their relationships. one of the reasons that anger is of a great challenge to women is because

many women are very afraid of their own anger.
And they're afraid of hurting others
Those fears go with with the socialization, terror of I'm going to be
hurtful,
Or I'm going to lose, or I'm going to be rejected.
And the connection between women's inability to express anger and low
self-esteem
is a huge connection.
I want to kind of make it
really give you a real specific
And then I'll close because I want to give you all a chance to
to speak. Yesterday
My partner and I were going to meet up with another couple.
And I asked her what she would want to contribute to this discussion.
Well, she works in an all women's clinic and she said
one of the things that I notice about women at work
is that so many of them cannot express their anger. And so they take it
out on each other indirectly.
So if they're angry at somebody.
Instead of dealing upfront with it,
The first time that person makes an error
they will make a huge issue of the fact that that person made an error.
So the fact that women did this in her clinic
made her constantly on guard
to prevent this indirect anger behavior from developing into a toxic
environment.
So the funny thing was:
While we're on the way to meeting with this couple.
We get a call from Janet, one of the women, who says to Karen, my
partner,
" I want to tell you, you suck at returning your phone calls."
And Karen responds to Janet with
whole song and dance about how she'd shut off her phone, et cetera, et
cetera.
So we go to dinner, da-da. After the dinner,
I ask Karen, so how did you find the event? Was it pleasant? She said,
actually, " wasn't pleasant at all." I ask why. She said, "I thought that they
were both really very unwarm".
I said, oh, really? How come?

And she said, I don't know. I just felt that they were really unwarm.
So then I'm drawing her out,
and finally, I get her to say
that she was really angry
at Janet.

For Janet saying that she sucked.
So even after our discussion on indirect anger
she was totally unaware that the warmth that she was telling me she
didn't feel from Janet

was really what she was projecting. I didn't tell her that yet.
But I just bring it up
to underscore, you know, the mind is a tricky thing
And we do very tricky things.

I'm going to end by saying
We could be talking about the issue of fear and anxiety
And how these relate to anger.

And a huge issue
that we could have a whole session
on is the issue of women and fear of their own power.
I saw this in the groups that I used to facilitate.

And that issue of women's power has actually been immortalized by the
Greeks in the figure of the Furies.

those demonic powers, the goddesses of vengeance
for injustice
whom the patriarchal Greeks
exiled to the underground.

I end with that provocative myth, and I look forward to our discussion.

[Renee Harcum 1967] 15:24:53

I just want to get some clarity on
what you were trying to convey when you referred to Black women's
anger?

[Rena Grasso] 15:25:06

Sure, I have been in circumstances where I've seen
women express anger that was not done constructively, not certainly done
with the

RENA FEOZE ON SCREEN

[Renee Harcum 1967] 15:25:51

I want some real clarity on it. What I heard is that black women's anger has not been productive

And that's all that was said. And then it continued. And I would like to back back up and be really clear.

about what she was trying to say and what she meant by that.

[Reeni Goldin 1948 Upstate NY] 15:26:11

Got it. She's still frozen. I think she just...

got off. She'll come back on.

And we'll address that.

[Retts & Bonnie NY] 15:26:31

My experience has been

And for myself in particular, it's very difficult for me to express anger.

I think a lot of women

Rather than being overtly angry, internalize it and become depressed.

And for me, that's

It's very difficult having lived with

one person who was so angry that

when the voice was raised, I powered and i had a get away. My defense was being sarcastic.

And afterwards being

depressed because i don't know

If it's that nice Jewish girls aren't supposed to be overtly angry.

But I have never

been able to

express anger as my first emotion.

[Ruth Debra] 15:27:41

Thank you. You know, there's so much to say on this topic that I think this hour and a half that we're given is like

At 10th what time we need.

I have one friend that

She's an amazing black woman

who feels that whatever she does, she cannot fit into the stereotype of an angry black woman.

And so she doesn't express that anger
whatsoever. She's got to be compliant and pleasant and et cetera, et
cetera, et cetera. And another friend
who rages that door. Well, she's dead now, but she raged at the world
period and was extremely effective in her expression of anger.
I'm not sure what is meant.
the negativity about black women and anger and how they express it
Or maybe it's young people where it turns internally. I'm not sure about
that.

But that's one thing is the topic of
Black women and angers and other
Huge, huge issue.

I kind of remembered

The 60s and 70s, going through it and peeling
enormous amounts of rage.

It's like, how the hell did we let this happen?

How do we let men take all of this power? You know, and it was like a
a rage feeling of impotence

Which probably stems back to childhood and feeling impotent against a
powerful father.

an abusive father

Or...

whatever but i i'm just wondering if everybody else felt that
you know like simmering below the surface, always, always, always of
of rage and

of not really having the vehicles to express it.

Until we started learning about the women's movement and then we
were given more

tools but

It just, it always was there.

Which probably is why half of us have high blood pressure now.

But anyway, thank you.

[Tina Minkowitz]

Okay, here I am. Sorry it took so long.

So first.

This is a really good topic and I really appreciated Rena's introduction
talk.

And while I know she can speak for herself to answer what Renee said.

I also want to say that the way I heard what she was saying
It started out by talking about herself and other class oppressed women
saying that she and other class oppressed women didn't always express
Their anger constructively in the women's movement and that she had
also seen that with black women
So I didn't actually hear it as being specifically
you know calling out black women but you know of course she can speak
for herself. And I had a couple of other things to say from my perspective
So first.

I used to struggle with anger a lot. And it's funny for me to say I used to
because it was really not that long ago.

I've gone through a lot of stuff this past year about some self-awareness
We're...

I now feel like I'm able to

Identify that I'm feeling anger

And like sort of put it in abeyance a little bit or not act on it immediately
without thinking

And I can also express it but

See, I guess what I've had to learn one thing

a couple of things is a couple of

I grew up

in a way that

you know, we didn't really censor anger and I didn't have a strong father
in my

household. I had a strong mother. The father was there but

He was pretty weak.

as a personality as a personality

did not exercise a lot of power.

at least especially in relation to me

I remember my mother

accusing me of being angry when she was angry at me. She was being
angry at me and like i would say

And what? And she would take, you're angry. You're very angry. And she
would say that in a disapproving way. And I would say, you're angry. No,
you're angry. And she would say.

See, you are angry. Well, yeah, now I am angry, you know?

But so I was sort of both being, and this was as a teenager. So I was sort of
both being taught

that anger wasn't okay

but also

like I was never actually really punished for it or anything. So I was sort of taught that it was like maybe a privilege that you have when you're a grown up woman

And...

or just the privilege you have when you're somehow powerful enough to shut everybody else up around you.

And...

Because I identified that with my culture, I also kind of had a little bit of defensiveness around claiming my anger

In my adult life.

So I was like, you know what? Yeah, I'm going to be as angry as I am, please.

And, um.

And you know, like you're bigoted if you are going to say anything to me about it.

And there's aspects of what I encountered that I still think are true in that way like being

Jewish from New York City, being a dyke

All of the above, speaking out on issues that nobody wanted to hear about

I got slammed.

And sometimes people try to make it about manner

like, oh, you're angry. And I hate it. What I actually think

And what I try to do

is that if somebody's expressing themselves in an angry way

And...

You know, I guess it doesn't really

bother me unless it feels like a real attack but i also

I also just think

Like, it doesn't really matter. What matters is what they're actually saying.

What matters is like the communication and not trying to shut somebody down because of how they're communicating.

That's really important to me. It's a strong value I have

And it's also a concept of like giving each other a little grace.

I think that's something we need more of in the women's movement

because I have experienced a lot

of shaming around anger in the women's and lesbian movement

Wherever it comes from, like I sort of identify it with middle with with Midwest waspy myth.

That's like how I feel like I've encountered it.

And one more thing I wanted to say about anger is like when i when i feel anger, it's usually a sense of immediate threat like

Somehow my boundaries were down and

something happened that like got inside my boundaries

And that makes me angry. It's a more immediate and intense feeling

When it's more general, like something's wrong, I get a sense of unease, like the unease is like in my lower belly and the anger is more in my chest and my heart.

So that's just another experiential aspect. Okay, I'm done.

[Rena Grasso] 15:36:54

I just want to say that in the early women's movement, Tina, vis-a-vis what you were saying.

that we talked a great deal about how women

could not, if they tried to express their anger

at men at some, you know, oppressive behavior that the discussion would immediately go

to the manner.

why are you so uh why are you saying things like that?

So, you know, it was a common topic

to point out that

that ignoring the issue

and going to the manner in which it was expressed.

So common.

topic. Do you want me to respond to Renee?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, because I'm sorry, my, you know, I've been having these problems with my with my router

So what I said was, and thank you uh was

that I as a working class woman saw

I'm ashamed to say it

that we did that my peers and I often behaved in ways

to take out our anger and oppression.

add more privileged women.

As I said, in many cases, you know, the more privileged women had said something that hit a button

So it wasn't like there wasn't a truth.

But the way we did it was not
going to build bridges amongst us.
And yes, I have seen
Black women, in my experience, do that too. And why wouldn't they?
They're human.
As I said in my introduction.
Oppression creates anger.
It does, because it's a threat to yourself.
to your sense of esteem. Audre Lorde has a wonderful thing
that essay relating to exactly what Tina was saying about grace.
When she said that women's groups
have got to learn to deal
with women's anger at their oppression.
And I think that she was saying that
a kind of a combination of what I just said about expressing anger and
not necessarily the way that we'll build bridges among sisters. And if that
is our goal.
then that is what we want to do.
And Tina's comment about grace.
How do we deal without anger in a graceful way?
that enables it to be transformed into understanding.

[Naj McFadden]

Yeah, I grew up really angry and uh
I am still very quick to anger
Not so much in my interactions with
individuals, but more like
Oh, if I see somebody do something that I think is really stupid, like in
driving
And I think that I'm real quick to be angry and I don't, it's not necessarily
a situation where I can express it
to that person to that person
But I think that it's really, I suspect that it's really drawing back into the
source of my anger as a child.
And in my family.
It was okay to express your anger if you could do it sarcastically
And make it um
humorous or uh
Otherwise, you might get smacked.

So, um.

Yeah, just, and I also wanted to reiterate what Tina had said in that I also heard what I heard Rena say is that it's just that the anger was

expressed

inappropriately or in a way that did not

bring people closer together or or

diminish whatever divide there was, but increase it.

And although that can

feel very satisfying sometimes it is not productive.

And the one last thing I wanted to say about anger is I think that

Even though I've always been very free to express my anger to others, I think that I have also turned it on to myself.

And taken out my anger on myself and my own body and situation. Thank you.

[sandy covahey]

I have high blood, uncontrolled high blood pressure, which is why I have this very red face. And last week I was at the hospital for this thing.

And they said.

it's still uncontrolled and it's a long story. But anyway, they said

You can't get angry.

You can't get really happy or excited about anything.

And I'm like, well, that leaves a lot of different things. Anyway, I just thought I'd bring that up because I think it's funny.

But, um.

I've spent, when I was younger, we didn't really yell in my family. And when I would go to someone's house where they were screaming, I didn't like it.

But in my family.

Anger was totally accepted. You know, if someone wronged you in some manner.

Then you were supposed to stand up to them. You might be four feet tall and they might be six feet tall, but you went right nose to nose with them and you fought them if you needed to.

But it's a funny thing. I had so much rage and so much anger when I was a teenager

And then when i

tried to deal with that and in junior high school, thankfully my

the woman who became my best friend and lover really helped me a lot with that.

And help me get through that period of time.

And then when i became

involved in the women's movement quite early

At the time period when lesbians were just parias.

And had to deal with people moving away from me when they found out I was a lesbian. It was like the rage and anger started popping back out.

And I've always had class anger. I mean, it's just always right there.

So I spent a lot of my life trying to deal with both rage and anger

But I think what helped me was

When I found out and really understood how much

Men had destroyed women, had destroyed the earth, had hurt everything.

I was totally freaked out. And then I was just absolutely beyond furious.

So what I have tried to do, which is not always successful.

But I have tried to, when that anger and rage is buzzing about, I've tried to direct that where it belongs and have tried to learn not to push it onto women

And that whole idea about having self-compassion.

Having compassion for other women, having grace, as Tina said.

giving myself and other women a little bit of space, you know, and just trying not to be

totally reactive all the time.

And I think...

What Rena said about anger is true.

It's a great power and

For myself, I feel like a very strong, powerful woman almost all the time.

But that isn't how I felt at some point, but I do feel that way and

I know the power of anger. I think I might have written about this, but a man, I heard a man hit a dog. You know, he didn't see me. I was nearby.

And I didn't think at all. I just was totally reactive. And I just said, what the fuck are you doing? And he ran.

So there is that point where there is

Anger is really important, but I think a lot of what happened, and I know Rena was talking about this too.

I got caught in a horrifying situation. I'm going to make this personal because it relates to all of this in a way.⁷

I had a lover who was upper middle class.
And it happened in about
7172, we ended up living together. I left my first lover for her.
And of course, I was poor. And everyone knew that
You know, I was like the first lesbian, the first poor, you know, all this stuff.
Anyway, you know how it is in the old women's communities. They were
so small, everybody knew everything about everybody.
And there was a lot of gossiping.
So this group of working class women decided that they could no longer
work with middle class women.
Okay. And so here I was in this situation where I had an upper class lover.
And they decided.
that I was being disloyal to the working class by having this relationship.
So what happened was they split off
from the major group of middle class women
and formed Diana Press.
Okay, that's what happened.
My lover and i
couldn't, you know, we tried a little bit to hang out with the middle class
women who were all feminists that we both knew well
and had worked with for a long time
they were uncomfortable with me.
Because, so anyway, what happened in a nutshell is my lover and I
I mean, I had been active in the women's movement since 1969. It was my
main thing after the Vietnam War. I mean, it was the thing.
We left the community because we didn't really feel like we had a choice.
We either had to end our relationship.
Or leave.
That's what I think can happen when marginalized groups
do the wrong thing, as Rena said, or act out and use anger in a way that is
manipulative.
So that's all.

[mariKo 1945]

Yeah, thanks.

It's making me think my mother may have
made her anger into depression in some way, but she also made it into
rage at me

So I don't know how much it wasn't stuffed all the time, that's for sure.

And I wanted to, it's reminding me, I've often reflected, I had an ex from long ago who was very... militant liberationist, female liberation and she would say, our strength is in our anger. Your strength is in your anger. Our strength is in our anger. And I've kind of held on to that. And then she showed up in this amazing documentary called She's Beautiful When She's Angry. I'm sure some of you probably know of it. But it's interesting the name of it because it's Some people say they didn't know what they were going to look at anyway. And I just... reflect a little in more recent decades, I've had kind of tangled sometimes with friends. who are into the viewpoint of talking about emotions as either negative or positive This is sort of the modern way of saying bad and good. you know and anger is bad and fear is bad there's an influence among among some people, some women, some friends who are very progressive in ways but um The influence I see as being that. It's patriarchal to me to be again to be against emotions Like Rena, you're talking about the strength of the reality of emotions and there are physical thing anger is And they pick it up. and promote it through How can I say this? the influence of a certain popular forms of a certain religion called Buddhism. And they... Therefore, anger and fear are these negatives And that's what I think it's a real patriarchal influence for people to cultivate being against emotions in general yeah you want to, you know, I have nothing against trying to find ways to be peaceful in your life but um

I've had tangles with friends about that kind of viewpoint.

[Rena Grasso]

I had a little bit of an angry outburst that there was not met with grace
But I didn't hurt anybody either. I was just angry about what was going on in the world. And I raised my voice.
So somebody recommended to me, this is a group I'm working with right now around the issue of Palestine. So somebody recommended to me this book. They said, oh, everybody's reading this. This is about how to turn your anger into liberation.
And that's exactly what it was. It was this absurd pop psychology Plus Buddhism book that was designed for me to do Buddhist exercises to really repress my anger. You know, like I said, I understand that we have to transform this energy. But you're right. That's what it was about, how I was supposed to be detached from the world.
Right? So I know that book. I'll tell you the title. Don't bother getting it. You know.

[Ruth Debra]

I'm sorry about that. I forgot.
I grew up in a home where only one person was allowed to express anger, and that was my father.
And that just was it.
That was the rule of the household.
So I had a lot of anger
In a way, it actually has served me well
Because my anger went into safer channels i could
Be angry about injustice.
And I was angry about injustice. And that was a safe place for me to express it.
and so
I did, and I do.
it just it was it really was very helpful to me to find these things that I was so angry. I mean, I remember being 16

That would have been in 1960.
And just being enraged
women did not have the rights to their own bodies.
And, you know, and that
was actually a pretty young realization, but it was overwhelming for me
and it was infuriated me and it has
actually
just empowered every bit of work that I have ever done on reproductive
justice.
So that anger that I was not allowed to express
has really served me well and maybe served others well too.
But I think that
That's been good. And I still, you know, and it's like
When the Donna's decision came down.
it was like all of this
Incredible rage.
that just had kind of been
there, but not
active just in just blew up
Like it was a total explosion
of, oh my God, this can't be happening again.
So, but I think I'm really lucky that I was able to to
turn my rage into more constructive
what has been so important in my life.
As an activist.

[Reeni Goldin
I grew up in a family
Where...
I felt that everybody was much more outgoing than I was.
I didn't feel that. That was true.
Both my parents and my sister were kind of way out there
And I was very shy and quiet
and reserved
And I kind of held on to that for years.
And I feel that I used anger
as my out.
I had to get angry before i
Before I could express myself.

This was in school.
This was in social settings.
It was the only way i could
sort of come out was
feeling this rage and anger inside me until it could get out of my mouth.
Which served me.
Because it let me express myself.
But in some ways it didn't serve me very well because
What I was trying to say came out with such anger that it probably scared
the shit out of people.
So it might not have been all that constructed, but I remember real
clearly
all through elementary school, junior high, high school.
And I always had a differing opinion from everybody because they were
brought up in a communist household and
you know talking about anything to do with the world, my opinion was
always different.
And the only way I could get it out is when I got angry enough.
So that's kind of how I used anger.

[Retts

I feel like I have a lot of anger in me also, and I can relate to some things
everyone was saying to me but

To me, anger

I explain because I'm frustrated.

It's frustration that fuels me, my anger you know

And I grew up as a very frustrated kid. And I'm not sure exactly why. My
family, my mom was angry a lot. But my brother would tease me a lot,
tease me, tease me, call me names. And I was very frustrated. And I
would lash out. I lash out at him or other people.

But I always feel I hate myself for it and you know i

I mean, Alex said an angry woman is a beauty.

You know.

But I never felt that. I always heard the song and heard her say that, but I
never felt that

way. I always felt like um

you know

that I was terrible, a terrible person to be so angry all the time and
express it.

you know and i

And it would be impulsive. I'd say, no, I'm not going to be angry. And then something would happen. I'd be like, fuck you, man.

Oh, can I say that on the Zoom? I mean, I would just you know, F-U-C-K.

And I used to fight with my

And another lover, not Bonnie, but...

She was a therapist. So she would say, you're in a child and this and that, you're not doing this is happening to you and the reason. And I go, oh, yeah, well, this. How about that?

You know, it had the worst. So I had to go to therapy to learn the words to say, you know, I was a frustrated kid, you know, to talk about it. But I do believe it's a lot to do with your childhood and how you're brought in.

you know in the Italian-American community, everybody screams at each other. I mean, we were at dinner, you know, spaghetti's great. Throwing things. My parents, if you wanted to be heard, you had to be louder than everybody else, you know, at the table.

Well, you know, because we'd be screaming. And then it would be over.

And then we'd be like, oh, okay. And I often say that, I say.

If something happens and I get angry, but then it's over. I let it go. I don't carry it on to

an hour later, I don't say, and you know what? No, because sometimes Bonnie will say to me, well, I know you were angry. I go, I was about what? It's so over. I'm so done with it. I don't carry it with me.

And maybe that's a good thing to express as long as you don't hurt anybody

You know, I have been known to throw things.

But not like, you know.

And he has a very good arm.

So...

you know like but it's like anyway but like it's like I would take a pillow. I mean, I remember throwing a whole

I had clothes I had just folded and

And this was and she this other

person, it was not her phone. She'd say something to me and I took all the clothes and I didn't hurt her and I threw them at her.

like folded clothes folded clothes

But, you know, she told me I had to go into therapy after that.

Good advice. So...

Anyway, so that's my experience but
the frustrated, mostly frustrated about something i get
I'm angry or, you know, I'm angry at men. I'm angry, you know, in the old
days
And now I'm angry at Trump. Now I'm angry at the country.
Fucking country, I'm angry at
Israel, I'm angry at, you know, whatever's going on, you know, and it
doesn't stop, right?
That's it.

[Sally Goldin]

It's sort of interesting that it's a good discussion about anger and it's a
good topic.

What I have realized about anger in
my current time of life is that I tend to be
When something makes me angry, I say it right out.

And sometimes that's
really uncomfortable.

nerving to people because people are not used to people
responding angrily.

Especially a woman. So like, even if I'm hanging out with ML and she
does something that i

that like I don't like or

mildly pisses me off and I'll say something like.

That was shitty that you did that. I don't like that you did that or
something. And she's like.

Oh my God, she's angry at me. And it scares her.

Because you're not supposed to be, because in many families and in her
family, if somebody was angry, then you might be in danger.

Right. But I don't

think of it that way. I just think of it if I'm upset, I got to say it.

sort of right then

Because that's how I'm feeling.

And then we either talk about it or we

Somebody says, oh, I'm sorry, I didn't, or this is what I meant. And then it's
sort of like you said, then it's over, then it's done

But it has to get put out.

you know and

I think most people are not used to that.

Because it's not acceptable, especially for women.
You're not supposed to be angry.
You're supposed to smile.
You know, you're supposed to be nice.
And I'm not nice all the time.
You know, and you know
And the anger that i feel at
things like the country and the politics and the
at Israel and those kinds of situations
Those feel ongoing and that anger
I think translates somewhat into
I don't know if I would call it not like clinical depression but
there's a there's a
And it's not exactly a hopelessness, but there's a, oh my God, I'm scared.
I don't know what's going to happen.
can't stand that this is going on.
But it doesn't always come out as always
anger in the in the
classical way where you raise your voice and yell.
So there are different ways to, but it is, but I am angry about it
like when
I'm on Facebook and when people post something about
something that's going on political
I will frequently use that emoji that shows an angry face because I'm
angry.
that whatever it is they're posting about is happening.
as opposed to
I like what you're saying because I agree with you.
I'll say I'm angry. I mean, I wish this that it's more like
When I wear my buttons, I have a button
that says, um.
keep immigrants deport Trump.
And...
you know people will say, oh, that's a great button
I also have one that says, if you're not outraged, you're not paying
attention. And when people comment on it, I say.
I wish I didn't need to wear it.
Because I wish I didn't need to wear it.
Because I'm sort of angry that I have to wear it, you know?

But I do, or at least in my mind, I do.
that's a way that I have to communicate what I'm thinking so
That's all.

[Rena Grasso]

I just want to say in response to that, Sally, that yesterday had a really
difficult day. And I think this relates to what you're saying.
Because I was reading all this horrible stuff that's going on
In Gaza and
thinking about what's going on in the world and i'm thinking
And we've protested and around the world
And I had this awful sense
that our anger didn't matter.
that the constructive outpouring of our anger didn't matter.
And where I went was to despair.

[Sally Goldin]

despair, that is a good word for how frequently how we feel.

[Rena Grasso]

And, you know, despair is an awful thing to feel
It's powerlessness and resignation
and darkness and
that was another interesting
dynamic.

[Tina Minkowitz]

So, okay.
two things.
I've been realizing how much
I feel a lot of frozen anger.
And some of that is actually very related to what Rena and Sally were just
saying about the state of the world.
I don't feel like I can do anything about it. And where I live, I don't feel
safe expressing myself politically
And bumper stickers and flags on the house in buttons.
And that makes me feel grief, you know, and also the political situation in
our country is so stuck
and unmovable in any direction that's really

going to make a positive
pathway.

And so I turn it off.

You know.

I don't feel there's anything I can do and i just
turn it off. And Gaza i mean

If I allowed myself to let that enter into me, I would be just nuts and
not able to do anything

And I don't feel I can do anything about Gaza. So I have to turn that off.

And that causes me grief and anger

And I realized the anger is really sitting there frozen

And it relates actually to what Rini said
that I really identify with a lot and even

In a way, how you use the term reserve

That was a word that was said about me when I was a kid. My mother
took me to a psychiatrist and he told us nothing wrong with Tina. She's
just reserved. And I love that because that was like.

partly safety also. See, there's nothing wrong with me
psychiatrist said, so I'm just reserved

but

There was also a truth to that and like some of it is personality, like what
you said

And I also really

Like, I would kind of...

I didn't react that quickly to things. It's like often it takes me a while.

Sometimes it can take me like just a few beats, but sometimes

And I'm sort of experiencing now

I understand I'm able more to kind of

identify and process a little bit more quickly in the moment

but or more quick but

It used to be that I would just like struggle with it. Like, can I say
something

or even what to say. What is it that has to be said?

And it would be

Anger, when it would come out, it would be in the form of
of rage and like everything all at once

I think I also felt that I had to somehow have a whole developed thing
that I had to say to argue as to why I'm angry and why I have a right to be
angry.

I don't know, somehow that has changed.
I've just gotten more able to identify what's going on and to accept what i
feel and also what I see somebody else is doing. So to trust myself about
all that
And I also remembered
that my mother kind of...
she somehow put a
she didn't like when I would get angry at men.
Also as a teenager, because I was starting to come into feminism
And that's
So I think that was also a little bit shutting down some of my anger and
my ability to access that anger
Through feminism.
But anyway, I guess...
You know, that just sort of all gets in like my
everybody's self-analysis but
Yeah, the main thing I wanted to say was about that frozen anger sense
that
There is some real power there and also grief because it's very hard to
figure out
what to do with it.

[Naj McFadden]

Well, this conversation has just reminded me of something that
happened to me when I was probably 19 or 20.
I did not know that this, but the woman I was having a disagreement with
had grown up in a physically abusive home.
And I raised my voice
I've never hit anybody
Other than siblings when I was a small child.
But I raised my voice in our argument and she immediately like cowered
and said
Don't hit me, don't hit me. And that just really set me off. It was like, I
mean, there wasn't any thought in my mind that
I was going to hit her.
But I don't even remember what the issue was.
But it made me realize that
A lot of women, if they grew up in abusive homes, are very fearful of
anger because it brings back up

the powerlessness and the fearlessness
you know that they felt as young children

[Rena Grasso]

Well, you know, I'm struck by
by hearing an affirmation of hearing
What I feel.

Which is that, yes.

I continue to deal with anger and
I have enough esteem and in tina
I don't know if this applies to you, but I feel
that the more I have through my life.

developed

an innocence of esteem

the more I am able

to deal more

constructively and to accept

My anger, to me, there is a relationship between esteem
and anger.

But to get back to the major point, I wanted to say is.

I feel that for the rest of my life.

I'm going to be dealing

With yes, much of my

Anger does come from my childhood.

And I'm constantly

uncovering

and recovering memories

And even memories that I have that I've had before will suddenly peg up.

And I'll appreciate them on a whole different level.

I don't think it's ever going to go. I don't think it's ever going to go away.

and so

I feel that we're probably all going to be dealing with those childhood
roots.

And their ramifications.

The second thing I want to say that relates to this whole issue is I often
find myself thinking

Why aren't women

more angry.

I mean, we are all here.

And by virtue of our being here, I think it
you know, it means that we are all more able
to deal with anger than many women are.
But given what's going on in the world.
thinking about Roe v. Wade, for example.
Why aren't more women
really angry.
about what's happening.
the destruction of the earth.
Roe v. Wade.
everything that's happening.

[Retts & Bonnie NY]
Typically.
That's a very good point, Rena.
I started, I think that too.

[sandy covahey]
I think a lot of women are very angry. I just think that
they don't know where to take the anger.
in a way.
There was so much going on in the 60s.
the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement.
the whole hippie thing. I mean, there was just this
huge cultural change going on all over the place.
And...
women came from all these different movements because they just got
fed up with men. I know I did. That's how I
you know, in the anti-war movement, that's where I came from i mean
they just started driving and you know
The other thing I was thinking about recently in relationship to
something else
Practically every town had an underground newspaper of some sort.
And Liberation News Service fed all of these underground newspapers
all over the place with the news mostly about Vietnam and a few other
things.
you know there was this whole network already established
And then women took over rat.
magazine, one of the big ones, one of the newspapers

Women took over Motive magazine, which was a Methodist thing.
And some of those women became radical feminists and helped start that.

And...

For me, for me i met

to women who were feminists and it was at the really beginnings, radical feminists, not called that then, but political feminists

And a Vietnam War anti-war teach-in.

And women started to come together around the whole abortion issue, around a whole lot of other things.

And it was a particular point in history.

Now, where are when we're supposed to go?

You know, there's not the same kind of thing going on that was going on then

And for lesbians, there's no place that

that women can really, you know, lesbians, I mean, everything is male oriented now to such a degree that you can't even get together as a group without having a huge local battle

But I really think, I mean, I have friends who are completely not involved in any kind of feminist politics or anything.

I mean, they're linked to that as me.

you know and they come from lots of different walks of life, lots of races and classes and whatever.

everybody's mad, but you know it's it's

how do you get them all together and how do they know where there's no place to go? And the Women's March was just

you know, I went to the Women's March in dc

There were so many women there. I mean, it wasn't a march it was a massive chaotic mess.

There were at least three different marches going on. It was so poorly organized.

But there was an enormous amount of rage and anger there. And there were women from all over the place.

And then it was, you know.

the whole group and what they were trying to do, they didn't know what they were doing and it didn't work very well and it wasn't localized.

And I think the other thing about the women's movement, it was very localized.

But they had a national base.

So I think women are angry now and everyone I know is pretty angry. But it's very hard to figure out what to do with it and where to take it. And I can't figure out a way for women to get together particularly across all the boundaries that exist now.

I wish I could, but I really don't see how.

And everybody has sort of gone into their own particular group, whatever that is.

And I know women who are in their particular groups

But they're not feminists.

So, but I think women are angry. That's the point I wanted to make.

[Naj McFadden]

Thank you.

Well, I think Tina said it that that

anger at anger at

systemic things that

What do we do with that? I mean, there's nothing

I don't know what to do about any of that.

and that

that that either leads to depression

or you have to just kind of

put, you know, put it out of your mind or accept it.

And I don't mean accept that it's a good thing or whatever, but I guess

accept

that I as an individual cannot do anything about it.

Anyway, I just wanted to

reiterate what Tina had said. Thank you.

[Reeni Goldin]

I really feel like I

I know the rage and frustration

And the worst thing that can happen

like Rena was feeling yesterday and she fucking blamed it on me

is despair.

So it seems to me you do whatever you can.

whatever you can. I printed up a whole bunch of stickers

that's two by two, little stickers.

It says no US dollar tax dollars

for Israel's genocide. Sally's holding it because I mailed her 100 of them

I mailed Rena a bunch. I send them everywhere. You want some, I'll send them. You wear your t-shirt.

You wear buttons.

Tina, you're, what, an hour and a half from me?

come down every saturday we stand in front of the library, women in black

mostly overwhelmingly straight women

It's hard for me to go to their social events but

We stand there together and there's like 40 of us

And it just gives you something to do to feel like you're not doing nothing.

and you're not in despair because you're doing something

[Rena Grasso]

Well, you know, I mean, the philosopher in myself, you know, takes this Because I think about this a lot.

You know, so what does it take to build their there are people do answer systemic oppression.

They build movements, right? I mean, there are movements that arise

In order to deal with systemic oppression. I'm saying that to you, Naj.

You know, we know this from history

But what do we do to do them? I don't know. So does this mean, I think philosophically.

So I guess it really means that

Well, what do you do? It's like the hundredth monkey.

Do you try to be the monkey that does something in the hopes that there's going to be a hundred, that you might be the hundredth monkey who will then spark the revolution?

I guess, you know, but it does bring up to me the whole philosophical issue about

Well, are we really powerless unless there is a political climate?

Such as the political climate that existed in the 60s and 70s.

You know, I'm just throwing these out. I don't expect an answer.

But these are the kind of things that come into mind and you know

When I was out, I was out recently

collecting signatures

Out on the street collecting signatures because

my city of Worcester is going to try to get a ceasefire resolution

in our city council
And people said to me things like.
you know this is not going to do any good.
You know, first of all, our city council isn't going to do anything. And
second of all, even if worcester
passes a ceasefire resolution
Nothing's going to happen.
And, you know.
And I find myself saying, you know what i know
I agree with you.
I really don't think because I see all around the world nothing's
happening. But I'll tell you why I do it.
I do it because I want to let people know
that people like me exist.
and care about them.
And I do it.
Because I...
on my deathbed want to say
I did what I could.
And then really did make me go into despair.
Because I hadn't read
about Gaza for two weeks.
the facebook the
entry for women in blacks next vigil
And therefore, I had to go read everything
And I felt the horrible despair
of my powerlessness.
I just throw all of this out just
for facets because there's this, there's that
I feel the powerlessness too.
And maybe I'm just making up things for myself.
To say, I don't want to be on my deathbed and say.
I don't know.
I have no bromides and I make no judgments of anybody. Believe me, I
don't anymore.
Isn't powerlessness the basic root of women's anger?
I think so.
I think so. I think it's a huge issue.
a lifelong feeling of powerlessness.

[Ruth Debra]

All of this. And it's twins, helplessness and hopelessness.

[Rena Grasso]

Yes. And a lot of us here, by virtue of being lesbians, we don't feel that way. But I mean, I saw it in my counseling groups. I certainly did see that many women have grown up with that feeling of utter powerlessness. And they haven't been like us personality life story, whatever.

[Ruth Debra] 16:28:39

Well, not to be trite

I would quote Michelle Obama and say, do something.

Do something, do anything. Just do something.

[Rena Grasso]

True.

[Reeni Goldin]

Has everybody here heard my story about poking the potato? I won't say it again if you did.

Here's a story from

the Second World War, this Jewish kid a

boy, like 16, was rounded up and sent to a concentration camp

And his job, his only job was to unload trucks

coming in with all the food for the SS troops to feed them. And that's all he did.

you know, probably 14 hours a day.

He managed to get a little piece of chain link fence.

He was unloading all these

bushels of potatoes.

And he poked every potato that he could.

In the hopes that they would rot.

before they got to feed the SS troops.

if all you can do is poke the potatoes

Then poke the frigging potatoes.

That's my story.

[Rena Grasso]

Well, our next month's topic could be similarly enraging, and it is women and mother nature

And certainly at this time.

We may well have another occasion.

to express our rage.

Thank you for everybody for sharing. I know that lots of us shared our personal

Stories.

Thank you, everybody.

[Retts & Bonnie NY]

Thank you.

[sandy covahey]

Thank you.

[mariKo 1945]

Thank you.

[Lorraine Stoltzfus]

Thanks for organizing this this was

Yeah. Thanks.

[Retts & Bonnie NY] 16:31:05

Thank you.

[Rena Grasso] 16:31:05

Thank you, Lorraine. Thank you.

[sandy covahey]

Rena, if they're going to do Rage next time, my doctor will not be happy with me.

[sandy covahey]

Maybe I should stay home.

[Rena Grasso]

Oh, no, no, no. It's very bad for the blood pressure. On the other hand, swallowing anger causes ulcers.

[Retts & Bonnie NY]

No, I took my medication.

[Naj McFadden]

And more than that.

[sandy covahey]

Bye, everyone. It's been really good.