

Women's Wars Aren't Men's Wars

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**Elora Chowdhury:**

My name is Elora Chowdhury and on behalf of myself and of the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights, it is my pleasure to welcome you. Today's talk by Dr. Cynthia Enloe is being run as a hybrid event with a live audience here at University of Massachusetts (UMass), as well as participants from around the world joining us on Zoom.

UMass Boston and its surrounding communities are based on the unceded homelands of the Massachusetts, Pawtucket and Nipmuc people. And we want to honor the diverse indigenous peoples enduring relationships with their traditional territories and to acknowledge that the ways land passed from indigenous to non-indigenous control is through a violent history of genocide and forced removal. We'd also like to emphasize that land acknowledgments by themselves are not enough. They are only one small step in supporting indigenous communities and need to be followed by action, building solidarity by combating the ongoing structural and physical violence directed towards indigenous peoples, and by supporting the Land Back movement.

I'd like to begin by thanking Dr. Carol Cohn for this opportunity to introduce Dr. Cynthia Enloe, who is a research professor at Clark University, where she was a founding member of one of the first women's studies PhD programs in North America and where she served as the chair of the political science department. She is the recipient of many prestigious fellowships, guest professorships, as well as honorary doctorates in more institutions and countries than I can count. Her work has been translated to more than 10 languages and has been recognized for her extraordinary contributions to disciplines like Women and Gender, International Relations, and Political Science through prominent lifetime achievement awards. I'm not going to attempt to enumerate her many, many books, I'm sure I would miss some, but I just want to mention that her work is both fields-defining and visionary, as well as prolific. One thing I will say about her books is they require very careful reading between the lines, thought-provoking titles like *'Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives'*, *'The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in the New Age of Empire'*, *'Gender is not Enough: The Need for Feminist Consciousness'*, *'The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging Persistent Patriarchy'*, and many more. Each title conjures an entire feminist archive. She poses a seemingly simple question, which lead to complex theorizing about what happens to our international understandings of politics if we make the experience of women's lives and gender central to our analysis. And her groundbreaking book, a staple, I think in International Relations, a field she helped shape, *'Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Sense of International Politics'* offers vital, insightful and critical departure from conventional top-down treatments of international politics.

Today, I also want to specially emphasize Cynthia's role as a feminist teacher, and mentor, who has instilled lifelong lessons and commitments among generations of feminist researchers and scholars. And I speak from personal experience here, as a cohort from Clark University we all agreed that when you enrolled in a graduate program, you don't usually

think you're going to finish it with more questions than when you started. But that's what happens when you study with Cynthia. I have learned a lot from Cynthia about International Relations, militarism, the intricate workings of patriarchy, gender, justice, feminism, the list goes on. But what I most value in addition to the knowledge I gleaned in classrooms (and that was quite an extraordinary experience) is an ability to inquire and to think in new and different ways. Cynthia may have written *'The Curious Feminist'*, and she is indeed a curious feminist, and she's also taught me to be a curious feminist, and to apply that curiosity daily to my pedagogy, and engagement with the world. And above all, out of the many qualities that make her so remarkable, her extraordinary humility, her strategic clarity, her incalculable daily gestures of generosity, large and small, the seriousness and respect she brings to every encounter, I think it is Cynthia's curiosity that best defines her. And I cannot help but quote one of my cohort members from Clark who once said that Cynthia may be tiny, but she's fiercely energetic, indeed, virtually atomic in her drive, to pose questions that will help us all think bigger and connect the dots. Like so many others, my life has been immeasurably enriched, and my own curiosity enlivened by knowing Cynthia and benefiting from her engagement, her wisdom, and her example. I couldn't be more honored to be welcoming Dr. Enloe here to bring us some of her latest thinking from her most recent book *'12 Feminist Lessons of War'*. Cynthia, thank you so much for coming to speak with us today.

### **Cynthia Enloe:**

We're all in the midst of a conversation, an international conversation about war, conflict. But before the war starts, before the shots are fired, there is the militarization of our heads, the militarization of our daily lives, the militarization of our most intimate relationships. And that's what I wanted to join a conversation with you about this newest effort, the one called *'12 Feminist Lessons of War'* is based on everything I've learned from Elora, from Carol, from people on Zoom, like Nadine, and Sandy, and others, what I've learned about why you have to take women's lives seriously. Seriously, not trivially, not as a human-interest story. Not "by the way", not "if you happen to have some time", not "when things quiet down", but why you have to take women's complex, diverse lives seriously. To make sense of any conflict, you're horrified by, or any conflict, you're in the midst of.

Many people in the room are pretty sure that one or other of your parents or step-parents, one or other of your grandparents have ever been trying to cope with and live in the midst of a violent conflict, whether it's called a war officially or not. How many of you know for sure? Look around everybody, let's see who in the room! Look, look around, look around everybody. That means you all have a lot of knowledge. And what I suggest, either for Elora's course or for any other course, or just because you want to be smart about how the world works, interview, any member of your family, usually by themselves without somebody else in the room, about how they coped with that. What did they actually do? What kind of resources do they wish they had but didn't have? What kind of resources did they make use of in order to cope with that collective violence? That is learn from our own family members, or our own friends' family members about actually how do women experience war? And how do men experience war? Because I think, for me, one of the hardest things to kind of absorb, that is, actually take on board and make use of in my own efforts to make sense of the world, is that: women's wars are not men's wars.

Let me do that again. Because it's an assertion. It's like a bumper sticker. It's a feminist declaration on your bike or your bumper sticker: "Women's wars are not men's wars". Now, to say that is not to create a hierarchy of suffering. It's not to say that men are less interesting than women. It's that women's lives in all their complexity are as interesting as men's lives.

And that's in this world, not just in this country. That assertion that women's lives are as interesting as men's lives. That's a radical assertion. Why is it radical? It's radical because it goes to the root of the assumptions about who is interesting. In most parts of the world, including certainly in the United States, it is assumed that if you want to understand the world, you have to pay attention to the people with power. Now, that's stupid. Because the people with power only have power, because they've extracted it from everybody else in their community, or in their country. And that includes women. You cannot, I've learned for many, many years, by the way, I'm a recovering non-feminist. Right? Meaning I spent a lot of time in graduate school. And in my first teaching jobs, and I'm embarrassed to say even in my [work]. See, Elora was very kind, she did not talk about the six books that had no feminist curiosity at all. So I spent a lot of time, I was never an anti-feminist, but I just never thought to ask about women's lives. It just never struck me that I should go beyond presidents and prime ministers and cabinet members, and generals and admirals and corporate executives. I thought if I studied all of them, I would be smart about how the world works. Well, I was wrong. In fact, I wasn't just wrong, I was naïve.

Now naïve is a term, it's an adjective that is wielded. Naïve is a very powerful word. Look out if you ever use it. And look out if anyone (and this is what usually happens) tells you you're naïve. Because naïve is a feminized adjective. And it's used by men against other men. And it's used by men, against women. And what naïve means is [*that*] you're unrealistic, you don't know how the world works, you're not tough-minded enough. Terrible phrase. You're not tough minded enough to take on the realities, the hard realities of today's world. That's what happens when somebody wields naïve against you, that's what they're saying about you. And that is a feminized term, meaning it's used specially to challenge, to diminish, to marginalize, to silence somebody who other people look on as feminine. Now, being marginalized as feminine, whether you're a man or a woman, by the way, naïve is used by men against men to feminize, one man trying to feminize another. Why? Because in a patriarchy (otherwise known as almost every country we know and don't necessarily love) if you live in a patriarchy, anything that is feminized even if it's on the front page of the fashion magazine, everything and anything that is feminized can be dismissed as unserious. And that's how you deprive people of genuine civic influence.

So, women's wars are not men's wars. It says if you want to understand any war past or present in today's Myanmar, in Sudan, in Kashmir, in I'm afraid still Congo, as well as in Gaza and Israel, as well as in Ukraine. If you want to understand any war, you cannot just look at people as if they are ungendered. You cannot talk about refugees as if you're being realistic. You have to talk about refugees as men, women as refugees. You can't just even, even if you're horrified, you cannot just talk about children, whether it be in eastern Ukraine, or today in Gaza, you have to ask, you don't know what you're going to find but you have to ask: are the experiences in war, the same for people who are thought of as boys, and people who are thought of as girls? What little we know is that the experiences are not the same. Let me give you an example: Mothers and fathers, not just parents, mothers and fathers trying desperately to protect their vulnerable sons and daughters fleeing from war, oftentimes ending up in desperate refugee camps. Mothers and fathers, not always with equal power under the law, as parents: that's why I've talked about mothers and fathers, not just parents. Mothers and fathers, in many countries think that the safest way to protect their girl children is to marry them off. And that isn't because they are cruel or bad parents. That is because they are parents, mothers and fathers who are trying to think, "Well, what possibility is there to protect our girl children, in the midst of such so much threat, not just of ordinary violence, but sexualized violence?". And United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is one of

the best sources of this information, because they do gender disaggregated research, they have found that 90% of all child marriages are not simply children. They are girls. And more than, I don't know the actual figure, but 90 plus percent of all the older spouses, who the mothers and fathers give their vulnerable daughters to as husbands, are older, older, sometimes two decades older, sometimes a decade older than their 13-year-old daughter. So, talk about parents in war, ask about the rights of fathers and the rights of mothers. Talk about children in war. Ask what happens to boys and what happens to girls. Don't just talk about child soldiers. Ask if boys are used in the same way that girls are, if they're forced to join fighting forces. Don't just talk about child marriages. Be curious. Pull back the curtain, the unrendered curtain and ask, does it matter that 90% of all under 18-year-old children—18 years old is the international standard for a child and an adult right under 18)—ask whether it matters that 90% of child marriages are younger girls married to, without usually their consent, an older male?

Think about coping, and this is why you're going to do those great interviews with parents and fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers, uncles and aunts or maybe your older sibling. Even sibling is gendered. If you interview your older brother, it's going to be different than if you interview your older sister. Right? Right. There are people here who know these things. Ask about paid work. Now, anybody doing Gender Studies, Women's Studies, and Gender Studies? Anybody who's doing it knows you have to ask about men's access to paid work, and women's access to paid work.

You know, one of the most famous—I'm back to bumper stickers again—there's the elevator talk and you can't, okay, you can't cheat. If you're practicing your elevator talk, it can't be the elevators to the 20th floor, right? That gives you lots of time to blah, blah, and figure out what the hell you're saying. No, it's got to be the elevator talk to the third floor, okay, when you practice. But bumper stickers are even harder because they have to be true, to capture your point. And one of the most famous second wave around the world, second wave feminist bumper stickers is that “all women work”. You can't say women workers. Well, you can if you haven't really honed up on your feminist consciousness. But don't. All women work. The real question is, and it's a political question: what percentage of all the women who work get paid for their work? In virtually every society that most feminists around the world have studied, men are more likely. Diverse men, diverse by age, diverse by class diverse by ethnicity within the country. In virtually every country that feminists and political economists have studied it is a higher percentage of men who get paid for their work. Maybe not enough. Maybe it's a crummy job. But they get paid for their work than do women in that country, a higher proportion of men in most countries and in most ethnic and racial groups within those countries are more likely to be paid for their work than are women. Now, that's not usually brought into studies of war, is it? Have you seen any data in the last terrible month of horrific conflict in Gaza, and Israel, seen any data on what percentage of Gazan women have paid work versus Gazan men who have paid work (and there's a very high percentage of unemployment amongst young Gazan men)? So, take that into account. Ask the same question in Israel and ask it of Palestinian Israelis, Druze Israelis, Bedouin Israelis and Jewish Israelis, you know, put your intersectional glasses on, don't simplify. Why does that matter for understanding wars and understanding the war in Kashmir or in Congo, or in Ukraine? Why? Because if you do not get paid for your work, even if you're working, dawn to dusk, if you're not getting paid for your work, you're dependent in your household for somebody who is getting paid for their work. It takes money to flee a war. It takes money to keep yourself safe, and your sons and daughters safe. And if you don't have cash, even though you work, dawn to dusk, you are dependent on the person in your household. Who

does have cash? What does that do to a marriage? What does that kind of economic dependency do to relationships between husbands and wives, when the firing starts? Think how little we know about what's going on between members of the same household in Gaza, are the same household in the Bedouin community in Israel, are the same household within the same region of eastern Ukraine that are being bombarded every hour, while we're distracted, every hour, being bombarded by Putin's military's missiles in eastern Ukraine.

Here's a little you know, asterisk. I love asterisks because it's like a comedian aside. It's the thing they really meant. So, here's the little asterisk: Vladimir Putin, the authoritarian leader of the current Russian government, Vladimir Putin is smiling this week. Why? Because most of us have stopped paying attention to Ukraine. We're on to the new shiny thing. The new shiny thing being the new violent thing. Every time we get distracted, and think, "oh, Ukraine, it's a stalemate", I mean, "it's not very interesting, I watched, you know, football, I want there to be yards gained and if there are no yards gained, I'm not very interested in that conflict". Vladimir Putin is smiling because we have stopped paying attention to Ukraine, because we watch Ukraine like a game. And if there's not some great forward movement, if there's not some dramatic change in the front, then we're kind of bored. Yes, the artillery is still falling on Ukrainians, energy, and water supply. Yes, it's getting very cold in Ukraine right now, mid-November. Yes, Ukrainian civilians are being killed: men and women and boys and girls in Ukraine by Ukrainian aggressive weaponry. But, you know, we've got another war to watch, now. But feminists don't have narrow attention spans. We at least try to think about Sudan, and Congo, and Kashmir, and Myanmar, and Ukraine and Gaza and Israel altogether. Because each one, when we're attentive, teaches us about the gender dynamics of the other. Not to say that Sudan is exactly the same as Ukraine, not to say that Ukraine is the same as Gaza. We don't do that kind of cartoon version. But we know that if we watch Sudan really carefully, where there is a vibrant women's movement, the Sudanese women's movement. If we watch Sudan, we will learn something about what we should be watching in Ukraine. If we pay attention to Ukrainian feminists, we will learn something about what we should be curious about in Gaza. Paid work is gendered, the gendering of paid work is political. The gendering of the politics of paid work means that women's wars are not men's wars. Here's a final, not final but final for all of us just to chew on for now, idea maybe a bumper sticker, almost, and that is the "feminists continue to be activist in the middle of wars".

I went to University of California at Berkeley in the 1960s. And that was when University of California, Berkeley, was really hot, was very political. Except you know what? I realized it wasn't really political enough. Because I was taught about how to study politics and how to study international affairs. And nobody, nobody in hip radical activist, Berkeley of the 1960s, (so don't be nostalgic for the 1960s really, a lot of bad stuff happened in the 1960s). Nobody in my graduate education, nobody said that, if you want to understand wars, how they start, how they're perpetuated, how and if they end, and what the ending is like. Nobody said, pay attention to women's organizing in the midst of war. But women do organize in the midst of war, and many women who organized in the midst of war, even if it's called humanitarian aid, are often driven by feminist ideas of equity, feminist ideas of justice, even if it's called humanitarian work, and this is true in every [war]. There's a Gazan feminist movement, what's happening to her? What's happening to the Gazan feminists? What are they saying? What are they feeling? What can't they say? There is an Israeli intersectional feminist movement, where are they now? What do they think they can't say? What kinds of work were they doing before October 7<sup>th</sup>, that has now been shut down? Here's a group to watch. An intersectional, Palestinian Jewish Israeli feminist group. It's called "Gun-Free Kitchen

Tables”, “Gun-Free Kitchen Tables” started by a handful of Israeli Jewish and Palestinian women who were worried that security guards, overwhelmingly male private security company guards, were being allowed to bring their weapons home. And that was increasing the use of guns in domestic violence. So they started very small: “Gun-Free Kitchen Tables”. They started very small, they just wanted to push the government, the Netanyahu, right-wing government to force the company executives of these private security firms to obey the law. And the law is the companies are responsible for making sure none of their armed employees, male security guards, take home their guns. The government didn't want to do it. And now, the Netanyahu, very conservative, very patriarchal government, in fact, is opening the floodgates to private individuals gaining guns they can keep in their private homes. So that “Gun-Free Kitchen Tables” opened up a small avenue to try and take on that form of the militarization of Israeli civilians' lives, particularly to increase the security of Israeli Palestinian and Israeli Jewish women in the form of at least, if they were living with an intimidating partner, the partner didn't have a gun at home. “Gun-Free Kitchen Tables” is still trying to work in the midst of this latest escalation of violence.

In Ukraine, look at the group called “[Women's Perspectives](#)”. Both of these groups, because they know that they're working in a globalized world, publish their findings and their demands and their organizing strategies on the web in English. That's the good news, that's the bad news right? That any local group feels now they have to publish internationally on the web in English, even if it's their third or fourth language. “Women's Perspectives”, it's based in Lviv in western Ukraine, but it is organizing against domestic violence throughout Ukraine in the midst of war. Now watch how militarism works. Domestic Violence? Who's got time for domestic violence? Putin's missiles are landing in civilian neighborhoods, who's got time for domestic violence? In English, “There's a war on” watch that phrase, “There's a war on”. It is used to say keep quiet. Don't be trivial. Later. My fourth bumper sticker is “later”, always in quotes “later”, is a patriarchal time zone. Meaning, anybody who says “Domestic violence? We'll deal with that later.” “Women's fair access to paid work? There's a war on, later.” And women who've been active in war zones in Nicaragua, in Algeria, have repeatedly found that later never comes because when later is “later”? In fact, the patriarchal roots of marginalizing women's security, marginalizing women's reproductive rights, marginalizing women's fair paid work. Those roots of patriarchy, of marginalization, have gone even deeper than they were when you first raised it and were told “There's a war on, later”. That makes women's perspectives in Ukraine, that makes those activists even more remarkable, because they're saying, in the midst of this, really do or die, defense against the Putin government's aggression, even in the midst of that, we will not be silent about other forms of violence against women. And in fact, what they have to find out is how to argue that actually, in the midst of war, is when you have to take women's rights to safe households, seriously, or you'll never be able to win a defensive war. Now imagine trying to make that argument. Another Ukrainian feminist scholar that I've just had the good fortune to talk to said, she's been trying. She's a scholar, she's a professor in Ukraine. She's been trying to raise the question of Ukrainian male soldiers, sexual harassment and abuse of Ukrainian female soldiers in the middle of war. Just think how popular that is. The United States is war mongering around the world, but he's not at war and you can't raise that question in the United States with any effective reaction. So, imagine what it's like to raise that... You all do know, right, that there is a movement to try and get the US military high command to take seriously male soldiers' sexual assault on female soldiers? It's now a whole category of health benefits in the US veteran's administration. It's called... honestly when something becomes bureaucratized you know, it is so widespread, right? It's called military sexual trauma. And bureaucratically, it's been reduced to “MST”. That means it is so widespread in the US military for male soldiers

in uniform, to sexually assault female soldiers in uniform, that it's got a bureaucratic acronym.

Imagine you're in Ukraine. Or imagine you're in Gaza. Or imagine you're in Israel or imagine you are in Sudan. Or imagine you are in Kashmir, and you try to raise that question. You won't just be told "later", you'll be told "you're a traitor". How dare you reveal the patriarchal realities of our heroes? How dare you? It is hard to be a feminist activist in the middle of a war, but it is exactly the time when you have to have feminist activists. In the middle of war, because war privileges not all masculinities, absolutely not, but very narrow definitions of masculinity. And it silences most women unless they toe the patriotic line. Be curious. Don't be satisfied. Talk back when somebody says you're naïve and tell them why you're not. You're just a feminist who wants to know how the world works? Thanks.

**EC:**

Thank you, Dr. Enloe. For that incredibly expansive and timely, urgent talk. We do have about a good amount of time, 25 minutes for question and answer.

**Q1:**

So, a lot of the talk about gender is very binary, so my kind of question is how does transgender and non-binary identities fit into kind of the worldview and perspective that you're talking about?

**CE:**

Thank you very much. Well, here's what happens in war. And here's what happens in militarized societies, even if they claim to be at peace. And that is all definitions of acceptable gender identity and gender behavior, get shrunk. That's what militarization does. It shrinks down what is patriotic. In fact, what it does is it takes a needle, the needle of society. And you know, the eye of the needle? I almost didn't pass my Home Economics class at Manhasset High School. So, I remember very well the eye of the needle because I wasn't very good. Anyway, they think of the eye of the needle. And the eye of the needle is what is acceptable in your society. And, you know, what happens when a society becomes militarized, especially if actually violent war breaks out, is that eye shrinks and shrinks and shrinks. What it means to be a respectable woman shrinks, what it means to be manly shrinks, what it means to fit in shrinks, and all the priority is put on: are you loyal? Are you a patriot? Are you a danger to society? And so, I think it's very, very tough to be outside the conventional gender boxes in war. That's true of non-binary people in Gaza, non-binary people in Ukraine, non-binary people in Kashmir. Oftentimes, they try to flee. Or oftentimes what you do is you try to fit in, it feels very, very dangerous not to fit in when society has mobilized around patriotism and so, sometimes what you do is you voluntarily enlist in the military. Or you flee, or you try to be just the good mother. It's a very dangerous time for anybody in any society who doesn't fit the most conventional, narrow boxes. It's a great question. Thank you.

**Q2:**

First of all, thank you for the really insightful talk. What you implied in your presentation is something like this, which I gather, if we remedy the unpaid work, and equalize the pay between women and men, so gender inequality will be obliterated. Is that oka, for one? And secondly, like your talk is very modernist in its streak, like, one-size-fits-all. Like if we pay women in Pakistan, where I come from across the globe, so then this gender equality will be enshrined suppose something like this. But didn't you ignore the power from your talk,

irrespective of what gender one comes from? If they are a professor, men, we will respect them for their knowledge, no matter which gender they come from. If you are journalist, and you were a woman or a man, we will respect the order, because that's the power imbalance. What about that? Thank you.

**CE:**

I think that trying to equalize, women's economic and men's economic conditions is one straw in a deep woven—I've got mixed analogies—one thread in a deeply woven social fabric. It does not guarantee full justice or full equality, right? And your point about introducing class status... So, for instance, I have a good friend who's a UMass Boston PhD and she is a Pakistani feminist political economist at LUMS, famous Management School in Lahore, right? And she is a feminist professor. And she tries to understand the lives of women in Pakistan working as low paid, exploited domestic workers. And her whole research says both are being paid, she's being paid and domestic workers (women working as domestic workers), including in university professors' homes, are being paid. But they are unequal in status. And in actual pay. So, your point, I think, is a really valuable one. That is any strength of patriarchal fabric needs to be, any thread, needs to be teased out and looked at. But then look at what role it plays in the whole fabric. Right? And I think you're right, I think that's very important. It doesn't mean that if you have gender equality in pay, you won't have war, by the way.

**Q3:**

So, my thought is just how the fragility of the patriarchy really stems from, I feel, the roles which we allow ourselves to play, and I'm interested in how in your new book, you talked about how a lot of times, women in war are depicted as shy, tearful, broken down, almost like dolls, like very fragile. I feel like this victimization is kind of deception, and it's a way to keep that patriarchy in place, you know, that story kind of. I was just wondering what you thought and how, like, if we keep ourselves in those boxes, and if we, through agency, upliftment and activism, how we can work through those battlefields of women's wars? Because I feel like a woman's war isn't, you know, it's not like I don't, I see it differently. And I feel like the battlefields are all over the place. And they're like, on our bodies, they're in our mind. It's just everywhere. It's what we see. It's what we eat.

**CE:**

Thank you. You know, it's about journalists, and editors, and us. We all gravitate to the big photograph of women crying. As if that's the main thing women do in war: they cry. And women being pictured as crying makes us think that's what women do in war, and then we don't ask any further questions. What does she do after she's had her good cry? What did she do before she started crying? What does she think when she's crying over her son's body? Or her husband's body? What does she think? And, as feminist, you're absolutely right, we want to know, what did she do before, what does she think during and what's she going to do afterwards? And it's one of the reasons I had a book on the Iraq War called "*Nimo's War, Emma's War*", and the difficulty of finding a cover image that didn't show Iraqi women crying. You don't have to read the book. You don't have to buy the book, definitely. But go online and just look up "*Nimo's War, Emma's War*" about four Iraqi women and four US women in the Iraq war, but look at the cover. And the cover is by an Iranian Canadian feminist photographer. And look at those women, they are debating each other, that's what they're doing. They're sitting on their apartment house stairway. And there they are deep into a big conversation. And it took about six of us to find that photograph and that photographer, because otherwise, most photographers, and that means their editors... Whenever you see a



photograph in print, always ask why the editor chose it. It wasn't the only photograph that journalists took, or that camera person took, but that was the photograph I wanted to show. I want to show Iraqi women debating with each other about this horrific war. So yes, you're absolutely right, don't be seduced as a viewer into the conventional notion that women are best imaged as crying. Thanks.

**Q4:**

Kind of jumping off on her question: But I had a different opinion. I feel that a lot of the times women in war aren't victimized enough. And like I completely understand the points that you and she made. But there are many women in my family who were comfort women in the Japanese Imperialism time. And it wasn't until like, you know, many years later that they even talk about it. You know, and because of this, not wanting to victimize yourself, and nobody really caring, you know, I understand you, you don't want to be perceived as weak in comparison to men. But at the same time, it's like, if you don't victimize at all, no one's going to take the time out of their day to ask, you know?

**CE:**

You are so smart. This is really good. No, it's really good. It's only certain women who are portrayed as victimized by war. And they are the women who are never interviewed, their images are just shown. The women who were turned into forced prostitutes, by the Japanese Imperial military, during well, it looks as though the first Imperial Militaries' comfort women brothel was in Shanghai in 1933. So, it's a long time. It's not just our notion of World War Two [*being from*] 1933 to 1945 [*Correction: World War Two began in 1939*]. And you're right. That one of the ways that gender works in our imagining of World War Two is to silence those women. And it wasn't only the Japanese that silence them. Right. Sometimes it was their own families who were felt they'd be stigmatized. Yeah.

**Q5:**

I agree with also the, like, [it was] embarrassing that you were even a comfort woman, even though it was even not your own choice, as if being one is made to devalue and not just people in your family, or like Korean peoples, if you bring this issue out loud, then you're devaluing all the women who were like this. So even saying it, even victimizing yourself is in turn, devalue yourself, and at the same time.

**CE:**

You're right, that's how patriarchy works. It's as if a woman who has been exploited sexually loses her honor. No woman ever loses her honor because she's been sexually abused. The man who does the abusing and his superior, who organized the system, they've lost their honor. But the way a patriarchal society works is it blames the victim. And most of us can't afford, you know, most of us, including your older women relatives, most of us cannot afford to be stigmatized. We need to be thought of by employers, and by public officials, and our own family, we need to be thought of as honorable women, we have little enough. We can't afford to give that up. And so, the women who began to speak out in the 1990s, almost 50 years, well 50 years after the creation of the comfort women system. And almost 50 years after the end of World War Two, 50 years it took these women, they were so brave, right, they were so brave. First it was a model of feminist alliances, alliances over generations. It was young Korean women who built up trust with women who they had begun to hear, had been forced into prostitution during World War Two. And those women in their 70s and the women in their 20s build up enough trust that they were willing to speak out. And now you can go to Tokyo and there's a feminist museum that was built in cooperation with all the women who

experienced that abuse. Only with their agreement, and it is called the Women's Activism Museum. And it's hidden away because it's very dangerous because Japanese nationalists don't want to hear it. It's up on the second floor. On the first floor is a bridal attire company. And you go in there's no sign, it is very dangerous in the 2020s to still tell the story that these now these women from Korea, China, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, want to tell. So you're right, breaking that silence adds to our understanding. But the breaking of that silence takes courage. And it takes courage because all of us, you know, we don't get off free here, all of us slid into stigmatization. And that built the blanket of silence. Thank you. That's really, really important.

**Q6:**

I did not actually raise my hand but thank you so much for the opportunity. You know, maybe I could read, you know, the end of chapter seven of your book as a response, because it speaks to the question that you asked. Sohaila Abdulali, the Indian US feminist writer, activist and rape survivor offers a feminist caution: "It's quite a balancing act. You don't want to have a secret you can share. But you equally don't want this one thing that happened to you to be the biggest thing on everyone's mind when they think of you. I hope being a rape survivor isn't the most interesting thing about me or anyone else."

**CE:**

Thank you for reading Sohaila's words.

**Q7:**

Thank you very much for your wonderful presentation. My question basically is about an issue that is, I don't know whether it's contemporary, but it's gradually creeping into kind of a war against women. And that is some people now turning themselves into women and venturing into sports and competing with women. And evidence has shown that such people when they get into the women's sports, they easily win and take the kind of prize that is supposed to be for women. What is feminism responding to this new development?

**CE:**

Thank you. That's, that's a very good question. It was raised here, also, when we're asking about non-binary people, most feminists who are trying to be inclusive of trans people mean, most feminists want inclusive societies, right? So that's where they start. Right? They also want fairness. Right? And you would think that inclusiveness and fairness are almost the same, but not in real life, you have to work on both. And so, from what I understand, and maybe this is true in the athletic department here in UMass Boston, but it's true in many, many sports around the country. Now, people are trying to figure out exactly what is fair when a male to female trans person wants to take part in women's sports. And what is so healthy about this debate, is that people are trying to really work on fairness, not on stereotypes, right? Not on kind of rigid notions of will they be excluded? Oh, of course, that's not fair. But actually, to work on it. And to work on it in terms of, well, when did the person join the sport in their own transition? And what is the sport like, and what kinds of, of sport skills are privileged? So, what I would suggest is true, it's going to be true in the Olympics. So, watch it. Watch the people not who are wielding stereotypes. Watch the people who you trust. Just to really work on the nitty gritty of fairness because fairness is always ready, right, always gritty, always in the detail. Watch them. And my sense is that in soccer and in many sports, there is real effort now to work beyond stereotypes into fairness, and still be inclusive. Right? Right.

**Q8:**

Do you have any advice for young folks looking to enter the world of Global Affairs? And how they can continue to amplify feminist perspectives and approaches to international communication and conflict resolution?

**CE:**

That's a wonderful question. Thank you, online. I think [*my advice*] is: Be curious, always ask the gender question about masculinities, about femininities, about women, about men, about people who don't want to be categorized as either. Always ask and find out what you are going to discover. And then make what you find, make that your pathway into activism. But start by being curious, start by being attentive, don't just read the headlines, don't just read TikTok, don't just read, now X, but really don't just read what it pops up in a single screen on your phone. It won't be complicated enough. And if it's not complicated enough, it won't be realistic enough. If it's not realistic, the information you're trying to gain, then you won't be an effective activist in the world. It takes time to be a feminist.

**Q9:**

So basically, in your reading, when reading it, you kind of talk about how it's important to not look at just like one certain group of women, but like every different religion and like, country and everything. And it reminded me, because also, we see a lot of misunderstandings about different women from different parts of the world. Do you agree? Because this might be a little stretch, it reminded me of like the US feminist movement in like the US. Would you agree that basically, because of the misunderstanding of other women around the world, we see like less progress, just like how it was in the US feminist movement of basically like, the feminist movement, like lost their potential to reach where we could be, because of the division that we have, between the misunderstanding of what it is to be like a white woman and the misunderstanding to be like what it is to be a woman of color?

**CE:**

Good for you. Yes, I mean, you know, it's taken a lot of Latina women, a lot of African American women, a lot of Native American women, a lot of women from many backgrounds to try and get white women up to speed. And those white women who have been most receptive, who have really listened, are the ones who are most effective. Right? So, for instance, Gloria Steinem, who's probably one of the most well-known white women feminists in the US, she always, she always says, it was African American feminists who taught me to be a feminist. And the first time she did any activism, she went on the road, invited by an African American feminist, to speak to small community groups. And she said, that was my education. Right? So, I think for all of us, no matter how broad we think our curiosity is, is probably not curious enough. Right? And you have to be ready, without being embarrassed without being defensive, you have to be ready to learn somebody else's realities that you haven't thought much about. And then you have to be ready to change your mind about what you think our priorities are, or what you think our strategies are, right. So, you've given us a good warning. Right? It is a good warning. This is true in every society. I mean, Sri Lankan feminists have had to work very hard to overcome the divisions between Sinhalese and Tamil divisions within Sri Lankan society. So, there it's not white feminists who are predominant, it's Sinhalese feminists who are predominant. And they've had to build these alliances that are new to them and that are hard to sustain because there's not a lot of trust. But it's a model I think that American Feminists can still learn from. It's hard to build alliances. It's hard to build lasting alliances. Short term? Yeah, maybe. Just for the strike? Maybe. Just to vote

down that piece of awful legislation? Maybe. But to build a strong alliance? That's harder. But you know, feminists have stamina. That's the good news. Thank you very much.