

Divided We Stand

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the United States experienced an unprecedented election process, followed by its bitter and violent aftermath. After the Capitol riot in January 2021, Ian Bremmer (2021), editor-at-large of *Time Magazine*, stated, “there is no advanced industrial democracy in the world more politically divided, or politically dysfunctional, than the United States today” (para. 1). Considering these recent events, I now revisit my work from the past two years, work that generated the play *Divided We Stand* in the spring of 2020. This arts-based research project used qualitative interviews from 30 women in Phoenix, Arizona, and New York, New York, to investigate how women negotiated and maintained their identities and relationships in today’s climate of political polarization. Utilizing the dramatic form of ethnodrama—specifically, verbatim documentary theatre—*Divided We Stand* served as a theatricalized space for conversations that were not happening, a space that placed women’s divergent voices directly in dialogue.

Today, in the opening months of 2021, I question the future of this

project. Do women want to create spaces for this dialogue? Does either side want to understand those with opposing views considering the lies, conspiracy theories, January 6th insurrection, and continued polarized public debate about vaccine freedoms and face mask usage during the COVID-19 pandemic? Personally, how did the past two years working to understand women who voted for Donald Trump prepare me for the news that a close family member, who taught me to be the independent, feminist woman I am today, voted for him in 2020? In light of these questions, I revisit my inspiration and framework for this project to assess its efficacy in our current political and social climate.

This project began with the sincere hope to better understand and navigate my own interpersonal relationships. Like many liberals, I was stunned by the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. What shocked me most was the overwhelming data that 53% of White women voted for Donald J. Trump (CNN, 2016, para. 2). Fifty-three percent of White women voted for him in spite of sexist, discriminatory, and misogynist remarks and acts. Some of these women were my childhood friends from Arizona, and some were my relatives in Michigan. In the days that followed, I had the startling realization that the country, and more importantly for me, its women, were undeniably divided. Speaking to this issue, Jennifer McCoy (2018), Distinguished University Professor of Political Science and founding director of the Global Studies Institute, states that “half of voters of each party say the other party makes them feel afraid, and growing numbers view the policies of the other party as a threat to the nation” (para. 17). This polarizing perception of fear began to influence our behavior and communication with each other.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, many people gathered like-minded people close to them and began to galvanize; they deleted and blocked their former friends and family members in person and on social media. The Pew Research Center states that “39 percent of social media users have taken steps to block another user or minimize the content they see from them because of something related to politics” (Duggan & Smith, 2016, p. 4). In addition to deleting and blocking, some went as far as to condemn or even attack other points of view. From my own experience, I found that I was able to ignore or downplay some of the content I saw on social media, but heading home for the holidays where I encountered these positions face to face

was a different matter. Hanging out with childhood friends over coffee became unbearable as the discussion inevitably turned to their joy over the outcome of the election. Moreover, comments, discussions, and arguments around the holiday dinner table were exhausting, as I couldn't seem to manage when to speak up or remain silent. Both options left me with feelings of anger and hopelessness. The divide was clear and the gulf that separated us seemed to be widening. I wanted to get a clearer picture of both sides in hope of narrowing the divide. Surely, theatre could offer a path, a practice, and some respite from the storm I felt was coming.

From July 1 to October 15, 2019, I interviewed 15 women in Phoenix, and 15 women in New York City. Phoenix and New York City, with their differing political leanings, offered this project the ideal landscape to investigate the divide. Also, I have strong ties to each city and was able to utilize my local resources to gain access to women in each city. My goal was to gather a broad cross-section of the personal experiences of women in each city with respect to the 2016 presidential election. The interview process followed a script that defined the scope of the project, asked for participant consent, and included 14 questions that addressed the project's main research questions: 1. How have the attitudes and experiences of women been affected by the 2016 election? 2. What issues would women be willing to come together for and what might this look like? 3. How can ethnodrama aid in illustrating empathy between divided women today? Participants self-identified as women, were 18 years or older, and wanted to talk about their experience after the 2016 election. Each interview lasted 45-90 minutes and was video recorded.

The verbatim documentary theatre scripting techniques I used are based on the work of award-winning playwright and actor Anna Deavere Smith, and Professor Joe Salvatore, Clinical Professor of Educational Theatre at NYU Steinhardt and director of the Verbatim Performance Lab. I employed Salvatore's (2018) method of "listening for complete stories, unique explanations, surprising declarations, and struggles for meaning because these ways of sharing information [would] appeal to an audience in performance" (p. 274). If a participant's interview yielded at least three of these sections, these were transcribed in the verbatim transcription technique that captures the participant's vocal cadence. This technique transcribes *word for word*, which means all stops, stutters, and disfluencies are included,

and utilizes a *hard line return* any time the participant pauses in speaking, which creates a new line of text. The script came together around the emerging themes of the 2016 election, the 2017 Women's March, opposing issues, the media, maintaining relationships, and the 2020 election.

The script was workshopped through regional partnerships with the Verbatim Performance Lab (VPL) in New York City and The Bridge Initiative: Women+ in Theatre in Phoenix, Arizona. The results were two staged readings followed by 30-minute post-show discussions in January 2020 in each respective city. The staged readings were well received, and the robust post-show discussions highlighted the challenges of our interpersonal divisions and, in most cases, a desire to begin to mend them. Each woman who bravely shared her story wanted to take part in creating a space to listen and be heard. We are still a deeply divided nation, but *Divided We Stand* reveals on both sides a stubborn hopefulness for better times.

Despite recent events, I stand behind the efficacy of ethnodrama as a catalyst for dialogue between divided groups, and it is my hope that this work and the play you are about to read can serve as a springboard for the healing this country needs. Personally, this experience has taught me valuable lessons. For instance, once you hear someone's story, they become more human. Also, I learned that certain relationships are more important than politics and not to ignore the feelings of betrayal and confusion, but to bravely create the spaces needed to listen and hear each other. This is not an easy practice, but in my humble opinion, a necessary one.

DIVIDED WE STAND

A verbatim docudrama by Carmen Meyers

Characters: (in order of appearance) Each character name was chosen by each participant and represents how they want to be identified in the script.

INTERVIEWER
BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68
LYNN 91
MS. T
WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS
MIA MY VOTE DOESN'T COUNT
TRANSGENDER AZ WOMAN
LINDSAY 24
MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT
HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR
40s NY MOM
AZ NAVY GAL

Six actors are needed. Cast doubling/tripling:

INTERVIEWER
MIA MY VOTE DOESN'T COUNT, MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN
NIGERIAN DESCENT &
AZ NAVY GAL

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS &
TRANSGENDER AZ WOMAN
HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR & LYNN 91
MS. T & LINDSAY 24
40s NY MOM & BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

The initial development of the play was supported by the Verbatim Performance Lab with a staged reading on January 14, 2020 at New York University. Subsequently, The Bridge Initiative: Women+ in Theatre furthered the play's development with a staged reading at Arizona State University on January 30, 2020. Both were directed by Carmen Meyers and stage managed by Chantel Martinez.

The New York cast was as follows:

Interviewer	Mackie Saylor
Brunswick to AZ 68	Analisa Gutierrez
Lynn 91	Colleen O'Neill
Ms. T	Nicolette Dixon
White Female 53 School of Hard Knocks	Tammie Swopes
Mia My Vote Doesn't Count	Andrea Ambam
Transgender AZ Woman	Mackie Saylor
Libby Writer Mother in Brooklyn	Tammie Swopes
Lindsay 24	Nicolette Dixon
Female Artist 30's	Sherill-Marie Henriquez
Mimi 48 American Citizen Nigerian Descent	Andrea Ambam
Hazel 72 Retired Newspaper Reporter 1960's Radical Protestor	Colleen O'Neill
40's NY Mom	Analisa Gutierrez
AZ Navy Gal	Sherill-Marie Henriquez
Stage Directions	Nicole Fazia

The Phoenix cast was as follows:

Interviewer	Avery Volk
Brunswick to AZ 68	Lindsey Marlin*
Lynn 91	Pamela Sterling

Ms. T	Alyssa Arns
White Female 53 School of Hard Knocks	Laurelann Porter
Mia My Vote Doesn't Count	Shonda Royall
Transgender AZ Woman	Laurelann Porter
Lindsay 24	Alyssa Arns
Mimi 48 American Citizen Nigerian Descent	A.P. Nuri
Hazel 72 Retired Newspaper Reporter 1960's Radical Protestor	Pamela Sterling
40's NY Mom	Lindsey Marlin*
AZ Navy Gal	A.P. Nuri
Stage Directions	Shonda Royall

Note on the verbatim scripting technique:

Each interview was transcribed *word for word*, which means all stops, stutters, and disfluencies are included and a *hard line return* where any time the participant pauses in speaking, a new line of text is created. If the reader follows the hard line of the transcript, pausing at the end of each line, and not the punctuation, they will get a clearer sense of the participants vocal style and context. Also, when a word is in full capitalization, it is read with intensity or emotion. It's important to note that this technique works best when read aloud.

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[Carmen Meyers](#)

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Pre-show- Clock of the World by Krista Detor is playing and rolling images of the 2016 election are on a screen above the stage. There are four chairs stage left, five chairs stage right, all facing out, and two chairs center stage interview style. Each chair has a character signifier, a costume piece or prop that is meaningful to each character. For example, it could be a hat, visor, scarf, necklace, sweater, glasses, button, jacket, or hair tie. As each actor enters a scene, they put on their character signifier in full view of the audience.

Slide projection: From July to October 2019, I sat down face to face with 30 women in Phoenix, AZ and New York, NY and asked them about their experiences surrounding the 2016 presidential election and beyond to explore how women are negotiating and maintaining their identities and relationships in today's climate of political polarization. These are twelve of their stories, verbatim.

As lights go down, the actors enter during the audio of [CNN's Wolf Blitzer's announcement of Donald Trump's 2016 election win](#) and sit in the chair of their first character.

SCENE ONE: THE INTERVIEW

Lights up on the Interviewer and Brunswick to Arizona 68.

INTERVIEWER

So, we're ready to begin.

I'm just going to ask you a series of open-ended questions and just respond

however you feel most comfortable.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

(overlap the next three lines)

So, uhm-

yeah

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Can- can- can I ask you a question?

INTERVIEWER

Of course you can.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Uhm,

and I guess

I just

are- are you a

person for Trump?

[pause]

Is- is that what this

is- is- is this a women for Trump thing?

INTERVIEWER

No

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Well no okay.

I guess I-

INTERVIEWER

To give you a little backstory.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

After the 2016 election,

I was not

thrilled with the outcome,

but I was more upset about

how

friends were treating each other

on social media and in person

going home for the holidays.

It was dividing families. It was breaking up friendships of 30 years,

and I thought

we're all women,

women I love and respected the day before,

and all of a sudden things just seemed to be

[pause]

I was really disturbed by that.

So, I thought I wanted to do a piece about where women stand today.

How are they managing all of this?

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

And how can we do it better is really what I wanted to get to the heart of.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

Even if we disagree completely

so

yeah

that's what it's for,
and I've talked to women from Arizona and New York
all up and down the spectrum,
all different age groups different races different occupations,
just to try to get a sense of where we are today as women and how we
want to move
forward.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68
Okay.

INTERVIEWER
That's what it's about.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68
Okay
I- I'm-
I'm good with that.
I- I appreciate-
I appreciate
no
because I-
I am very much for
our president.
I was thrilled with the election
uhm
results
uhm
so and- and I found those same things, and
I was
disturbed.

INTERVIEWER
Yeah.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68
In- in a different way maybe then- then you.
You know?
Since you weren't thrilled with the election

[both overlap with laughter]
results.

INTERVIEWER

[both overlap with laughter] I was really- really unhappy.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

So yeah-

so

and- and I tried to-

I tried to talk with some people because well-
we'll-

I'll get into that, yeah.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah

but yes that's where the heart of the piece comes from.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

That's- that's good.

That's good I like that.

INTERVIEWER

I hope so

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Yes- yes.

INTERVIEWER

So, how did you hear about the project and more importantly
why did you decide to do it?

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Uhm Tammy,

uh

sent, I guess through that messenger thing-

INTERVIEWER

Yeah

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

on Facebook-

and said that she had just, I guess she had just interviewed with you
and

we have the

same

uhhhh feelings

about the election and she said

she said, "Would you like to do somethin like that" and I said,
"Well sure."

you know

uh it's-

I'll do that

and- and she said, "Well

just be honest,"

and I said, "Oh I will be." *[both laugh] (Brunswick-take chair UL, sit)*

SCENE TWO: FEELING UNSAFE

INTERVIEWER *(stay seated in chair)*

I never remember thinking about politics growing up
talking about politics.

I remember very little about my schooling about politics.

So, I didn't learn anything-

but I do remember

when I was older

one of the first things I remember about politics

is when Evan Mecham was elected-

I think-

[pause]

governor of Arizona,

and the first thing he did on day one

was he got rid of

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

and

we made national news.

LYNN 91 (X- DL)

I- I- I pray

that he

is re-elected.

INTERVIEWER (*stand*)

Lynn 91. (*take chair UC, sit*)

LYNN 91

Because

if the Democrats get control of Congress

and our Senate

and the White House, the oval office

uhm that they will undo

almost everything.

They've already talked about our taxes will go up

is ANYBODY LISTENING

out there

you know?

MS. T (*X- DR*)

So, I look at you know young women today and it's like

what if Planned Parenthood goes away?

Like

I know so many women who would be

up shit crick

excuse my language.

LYNN 91

Ms. T.

MS. T

But they would be r—you know hard-pressed to find
affordable health care.

When I first moved to New York- I didn't have any healthcare and y—
you know using

-nd it was pre-Obamacare.

Umm-

[*lip smack*] you know and I- I just- having to use like health clinics and
stuff and

which were awful and waiting for hours and hours for a
you know

a pap smear or whatever and I mean it just was-
it was awful so
but it existed
thankfully uhm.

In some cities- I think you have better access to healthcare than other cities.

Seattle was pretty good
and I had a harder time with health care in New York uhm than I did in Seattle.

Uhm

I'm a cancer survivor so
you know I- thankfully I had insurance when I ha- had cancer uhm
but I definitely worry about
that- and what young women are encountering and- and- and
especially women in the arts.

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS (X- DC)

God, I hate to say this to you.

I

[pause]

think

[pause]

Obama ruined our country.

[pause]

MS. T

White Female 53 School of Hard Knocks.

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

And I think he wanted
our country to fail.

Uhm

and

the health insurance

almost buried

my family personally where I had to go back to work.

Uhm

which is very hard when you have a disabled husband,
and two little children and you have to leave them in a disabled

husband's
hands and I'm not asking for pity.
I don't uhm-
everybody should have to do what you have to for your family period
but
when I am told
I have to have health insurance
and it is controlled
and it costs me 26 thousand dollars a year with a 16 thousand dollar
deductible
yet
they want to give people
who aren't even coming into-who don't even contribute to this country
free health insurance.
I- I started-
that's when I really started gett'in it.

LYNN 91
So uhm
the open borders this is-
WHAAAAT-
what are we gonna do with these people?
I love them.
I think they are
searching for a better life for themselves. America offers that
but
our welfare programs, you know- we're BROKE.
We have a 22 trillion dollar national debt
and in 1993 when the national debt was in the billions and we were
paying 9 billion a year in interest
that was 1993!

MS. T
I worry about student loans.
Not only my own but-
for-
for everybody.
Cause
you're going to NYU.

I mean- *[laughs]*
yeah-
you know!
You're getting an incredible education
and
I know I got an incredible education- you know
fourteen years later I'm still thankful
but
I'm going to be paying for it forever-
forever.
Cause- you know-
it's like- think about the money that I spend each month paying my
student loans
and
I mean
I'm—I'm paying
as much in student loan payments as I pay in rent each month.

LYNN 91

I was so depressed because I have
children
grandchildren
now I have
great grandchildren and great great
I have two great great.
Uhm
I was so depressed and a man I didn't even like put it into perspective
for me,
"Lynn
your descendants
will have to deal
with the world
they are living in".
As we did with Kennedy's assassination
and Bobby's
as well and Martin Luther King
and uh we dealt with it
we had to
what else can you do?

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

I'm not the only person it affected.

It was burying people when the economy hit recession.

People put- were losing houses- why do you think they couldn't afford health insurance?

People-

you know were so sick couldn't take their medicine.

SHAME on you!

People who have

paid their taxes

pay YOUR salary

pay for the- this wonderful country-

you're taking from us to give to people

who

they deserve it, if they'd come over

and they wanna work- like my grandfather had to become an American.

He had to learn it.

He had to work it.

He had the first masonry company in Connecticut

and you're just going to give it and you're going to take it away from us?

No. It affected me

and that's when I

started to dig in my heels

and I was a Democrat!

MS. T

[*Dental click*]

I don't have children

cause that's equal-

in cost and that's kind of how I've justified

uhm,

not.

I never wanted to have kids

but

that's my kind of- part of my rationalizing of it.

It's like

well

kids are equal to my master's degree.
You're saddled with the debt and it's like
I can't afford to have kids.

LYNN 91

I put America-
in my God box
and I also have people who are sick friends who are
sick and dying in my God box.
And turn- I've turned them over
uh to- to God
and- and the country- I've put America
wrote it out.
I have all these little slips of paper and if someone dies
ah they stay
in my God box.
And one day
I got mad at God for some reason
and I took my God box and I dumped it.
And my husband said
I told him and he said uhm, "Oh
that's great!
You've now takin' back
all of the people
and the country that were in there"- and man I couldn't sit down fast
enough and write down America and all of my friends and put
them back in.
Because only God can carry
that and be responsible for that
the weight of the world.

(all start X to chairs, Mia's words stop you, you listen)

MIA MY VOTE DOESN'T COUNT

hold two beats

I think it's a joke nowadays.
Cause a lot of women don't stick together.
We don't.
Everybody teaches us that divide and conquer is better.

Divide and conquer.

LYNN 91

Mia My Vote Doesn't Count.

(all finish X to chairs and sit)

MIA MY VOTE DOESN'T COUNT (X-DC)

An you see what happens when you divide an conquer.

They make you think you have control.

Then what happens-

what happened to Hillary-

they take it back from you.

You're a puppet.

You don't have control if you don't have control of- of autonomy
of your voice

of your- of your

how much money you make-

of when you can get married and have kids-

of how uhm-

what kind of house you want-

of your rights.

It's like common-

we can't even decide this-

what makes you think we can

be together as one

if you can't even see what they're doing?

Because the best way to keep control is to keep us separated

and they start racially first-

then you go by class

and then the final strike is-

let me poison her thoughts

and then you're done.

They have everything when you do that

and a person's like,

"it's not that easy."

It is that easy.

And

that's what we're going through right now

because everybody's like let's just vote for a woman.
I'm not voting for Kamala Harris.
I'll put that on record.
I'm not- I don't care if she's woman or not.
I don't care if she's black.
None of their plans make sense.
I'm flipping a coin just to vote for the 2020 election
and somebody said why
because their plans I-
make no absolute sense.
How can you have ah- free- uhm-
free schooling
when we have one of worst schoolings in this country.
New York is horrible!
They don't even and-
when you hear some stories from the kids about the discrimination and
bullying they go through
and the superintendent's response is,
"we talked to the child."
You did?
Okay.
So, why does a little boy end up dead the next day.
You did nothing but stay in your office and get your paycheck.
Just say that they-
made you say that and shut up
because you don't want to lose your job.
So, that's the biggest thing.
A lot of people are afraid to speak up and that's why a lot of women
don't speak
or try to work together because they're tired.
Some peoples been doing this since
even before the suffrage movement
and you know that was a joke too
because most people don't talk about that.
Susan B Anthony didn't do everything.
Nobody talks about that.
It's a joke.
Women's history month-
there's- there's billions of women whose stories haven't been heard.

They're like, "how you know this?"
I know my history.
I had to learn my history.
When you start seeing stuff like that-
you're like-
how do I have a voice in a society where I feel like
my vote and my voice doesn't matter? (*X back to chair*)

SCENE THREE: MEDIA MACHINE

Slide projection:

The fairness doctrine of the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC), introduced in 1949, was a policy that required the holders of broadcast licenses to both present controversial issues of public importance and to do so in a manner that was, in the FCC's view, honest, equitable, and balanced. The FCC eliminated the policy in 1987 and removed the rule that implemented the policy from the Federal Register in August 2011 (Boliek, Politico, 2011).

This will be a movement piece where the cast creates the media machine of sound and movement in rehearsal.

INTERVIEWER (*X DR*)

From the beginning
I was fascinated by,
"How do we know what we know?"
"Where do we get our information?"
"How do we know
what we believe to be true?"
And
I began asking women,
"how do you know what you know-
where do you get
your information?"
And I was struck by, that-
that many women expressed that
what they believe is
based on fact
and they believe the EXACT opposite

of each other.

So,

is someone wrong?

Machine starts slowly and builds actor by actor. Once machine is established, INTERVIEWER begins to read quotes on note cards and tosses them away when finished. The reading and the machine pick up speed till the last line.

INTERVIEWER

Sexual predator

Just locker room talk

Free healthcare for all

Obamacare is a disaster

Destruction of our planet

Manufactured crisis

Russian Interference

Fake news

Trump ties to Putin

No crime/No collusion

Trump rallies=more hate crimes

We're respected again

Narcissist personality disorder

Common sense

Crooked Hillary

Deplorables

Gang of thugs

Stronger economy

Country run as a business

Republican extremist

Liberal elites

Path to citizenship

Build a wall

Not fit for office

Over 2 million jobs

Children in cages

Who pays?- we're broke

(Machine pieces/actors peel off back to their chairs one by one, until

we are left with only the first actor's sound and movement for 3-4 beats, X back to chair.)

SCENE FOUR: TRANSGENDER: REAL OR NOT

INTERVIEWER

One of the most difficult
and
joyous aspects of
interview work is
[exhale] the practice of holding space
for someone to speak their truth.
In that moment
it's UNSCRIPTED
it's
visceral and real and
so in the moment.
You can't GET any more in the moment.
Uhm-
the weight of that
is immense. *(sit)*

LINDSAY 24

I feel like we've worked so hard to acknowledge that we're different
and I mean
I am equal to my brother but I'm not the same
and I don't want to be the same.

INTERVIEWER

Lindsay 24.

LINDSAY 24

And when it comes to female sports and
uhm I don't know a wide variety of things
you know now it's
a- a man
wants to identify as a woman
so he gets to run on the female track team
and therefore wins

and
it's like WHAT ARE WE DOING!
How uh-
how are we even- I mean- how is that even
because some person- one adult
feels
a certain way we're going to put
women and children really
at risk for a- a- a wide variety of things-
a lot of public accommodations
uhm bathroom shower locker rooms.
We just have some open-door policy all the sudden for somebody who
says, "oh I feel like I'm a female today.
So, I'm gonna to go into the women's locker room
where"...
I mean if I was a mom and I took my girl to the gym or something-
I mean I change in the locker room
coming from work or whatever
I mean sure- I'm not maybe like the most modest but some of my
sisters ARE-
and- and nobody deserves to feel violated that way.
I think that there's reasonable accommodations that can be made for
individuals that are struggling with gender identity uhm
and their sexuality.
I think that there's a lot of options
uhm
but putting
children and women at risk and
taking ten steps backward in
women's equality is not the way to do it.

TRANSGENDER AZ WOMAN

Many
women
I believe
have no problem understanding
me.

LINDSAY 24

Transgender Arizona Woman.

TRANSGENDER AZ WOMAN

Some of them
probably appreciate the fact that
someone who was born into
white patriarchy and privilege
gave it up
to advocate not only for women
but also for
the women who are the most
vilified and disrespected in American society right now
the transgender women.

Unfortunately
the people on the other side
are receiving these false messages about
what a woman like me
really is
and what our motives are.

And
these peop- these women on the other side
who aren't accepting
and don't understand
largely don't want to ask me
what is it like
to feel the way you do and to be a transgender woman.

Meanwhile they're being told by a lot of
white men who run churches that suppress
any kind of woman what to think
about women in general and specifically about transgender women
but these women aren't willing to stop and say
is there another side to this story?
[They may say], "I'm not willing to talk to that person that transgender
woman
they might hurt me somehow"
or
if I talk to them my church
parishioners may

ostracize me
and assume I am part of
the problem because
I condone the existence of a transgender woman
by simply talking to that person
and asking them
about their feelings and their opinions.
We've got a real breakdown
and
it's
probably not going to be overcome
until something happens
that is
very dramatic
and forces these
women on the other side of the aisle so to speak
to
think differently and start asking questions.
I hope that whatever it is does not involve
any tragedy
but I'm
not very optimistic
that
it won't
involve
anything less than
these women having a child or a grandchild
who is transgender and ends up attempting to take their own life.
I really think that's
probably where it's going
to happen and I hope that
the children
who are subjected to that and are suffering
don't succeed in their effort to
commit suicide
and that there's something left of their lives
to
build upon
along with

their mothers'
or grandmothers'
willingness to rethink their position on whether being transgender
is real or not.

SCENE FIVE: TEARS

As each character speaks, they begin to create a group image of their tribe: liberals: Mimi, Ms. T, Hazel-stage right, conservatives: Brunswick, Hard Knocks-stage left. They can react with celebration or support to each other within their tribe.

INTERVIEWER (*stand in front of chair*)

The 2016 election felt so
[pause]
personal.
It felt like
the country voted against
me
against what I stand for, what I believe in.
It was then
that I
REALLY started to see
that half this country believed
and felt very different from me.
I remember that first day
on the train
the subway
and it was like
like
it was like the city was in mourning, it was in silence.
[pause]
You got on the train and there was no sound.
No one was listening to music.
No one was talking-
there was just
nothing
and
there were people crying on the subway train

just crying
uhm
and this feeling of
a death.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68 (*X DL-leave space for White Female to your left*)

The night the night of the election
the 2016

uh
election
they
uhm it
it was 99%
99%

Hillary was going to win
the polls.

You know,
"Hillary's gunna win Hillary's gunna win"
and then

you know as we watched-
in fact I didn't watch for awhile
cuz I said uhhhhhhh

I don't know if I can see this
you know

and I, and I said, "If she wins let's just go away for a few days". Cuz
I- I need to
you know just
grapple with that.

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS (*X left of Brunswick*)

We were living in Florida
Hellsville.

Sorry
uhm
and
it was Clinton
who I think is-

deserves to be in jail
she should be in prison straight down that line.
I just- she is a HORRIBLE person.
I went to bed- she was winning
and I had to go to work the next morning
and I was like alright
here we go
more bullshit down the line.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68
Our- our neighbors came over
and they said,
[whispers] "Have you, have you seen, do you have the T.V. on?"
And I said, "No I turned it off for awhile."
"Turn it on turn it on!"
And then
I forget what the states were but
MSNBC
CNN all these people-
you could tell
if you turned on one of those channels
they were like
ughhhhh
this can't be happening you know.
The-
just- I mean
they looked like they were just-
just about in tears.
You know and we're sittin' there goin' "yeah
YEAH!"
Laughter

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS
I got up at like 11:30
and I said okay I'll go turn the TV on
let me see
and yay
I was very happy.
Actually danced around the house and woke the kids up and my

husband. *[laughs]*
And I know many women that didn't get out of bed for days.
And I asked one
I said
okay
we're on opposite ends but why?
"Well because I wanted a woman in."
Okay
but
why?
What- why did you want Hillary Clinton in so bad?
What about all of this...
"Just didn't matter to me. I just wanted a woman in."
Ok. So-
you- you haven't researched. You haven't looked. You haven't-
"Nope. I just wanted a woman in."
Ok.

(Brunswick and White Female X back to chairs)

[Pause]

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

[in chair] I could cry right now.

[pause holding back tears]

It's like (X DR, leave space for Hazel to your right)
what happened?

[pause]

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

Mimi 48 American Citizen Nigerian Descent.

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

Like you know, you think about the people who just sat
back and didn't vote.

You know, you just completely discounted yourself
and look where we are today.

[takes a breath, pause]

MS. T (*X L of Mimi*)

I was walking from
my house to my coffee shop that morning-
which is just around the corner- before I went to get on the train.
And
um-
I—I decided I couldn't go in to get coffee cause I knew if I went in for
coffee I would cry
and my girlfriend who works at the coffee shop saw me and she came
and ran out and she threw her arms around me and we sobbed
on the street.

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR

(*X stand R of Mimi*)

I'm not a crier.
I simply don't cry. It just doesn't happen to be my emotional response
to anything okay.
So, when I tell you
that the day after and by the way I didn't stay up
on the night of the election.

MS. T

Hazel 72 Retired Newspaper Reporter 1960s Radical Protestor.

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR

Who had to stay up? You know what the result was going to be, right?

Hillary was getting elected. I didn't discuss it. I didn't pay
attention. I didn't. I didn't have the T.V. on nothing.

So, the next day
when I found out
uhm I was alone in the house. I certainly wasn't doing this for
effect or anything like that.
I sobbed. And the reason I sobbed- I didn't think Trump was going to
be as bad as he is.
I really didn't.
It was the first time in
my

life and this includes the Vietnam War and
the first time in my life that I was deeply ashamed to be American.
That we had voted this man
into office and I lived in a country that voted this man into office.

MS. T

Part of it was this you know moment of, "get it all out" because you're
gonna have to go and face a room of students.

Um and we've been talking about this for weeks.

And

I had one student who was very much a Trump supporter
and the rest of them were not
and it was a very difficult Fall, kind of finding the teacher balance of
um
empowering kids to have a voice and to speak up and speak out and
I'm very much a speak truth to power person.

Um

and so how do I give the you know
seat at the table to everybody?

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

Uhm *[laughs]*

I had a party
thinking that
Hillary was going to win.

And uhm-

my brother describes it as the Saturday- Saturday Night Live skit.

[laughs]

Yeah. He said that my neighbor and him were sitting there
and us girls we're talking and all the guys we're talking and slowly but
surely it's like
we're like

all excited and they're like, "Oh, this is not good. This is not good."

And

it just became-
all of a sudden realization and
one by one
and everybody was just like

[pause]

Wow.

This is really not happening-
complete- it was like a nightmare
and everybody leaving- people in tears and it was just
horrible.

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR

And I don't want to hear about how he didn't win the popular election.
Yeah.

Granted he didn't.

Take a look at how many millions of votes he got.

Yeah I'm not -
for the purposes of why I was crying-
it didn't matter.

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

I think because we're New Yorkers too.

We actually knew
who this guy
is

and was about to be the President of the United States! *[laughs]*

[laughing through words] It's like-

it's like

what?

This is a joke

but it was a nightmare.

Yeah-

yeah

I'm still crying.

MS. T

So

I got myself to school

and

I decided I would do a- a restorative circle like a content circle.

And um

I had everybody- I gave everybody an index card and they all sat you
know- there were thirty-two of them- it was my AP English

class.

They all sat in a circle- this group of eleventh graders
and you could see it on their faces
and then the young man who of course was thrilled with the outcome
of the election comes in with his red hat on
and is like, "Make America great again!"

And-

and-

I'm like,

"Okay- I'm gonna give you the platform and you get to go first and talk
about how
thrilled you are

but then

everybody else gets a seat at the table and they get to talk about
how they're feeling.

It's really important for everybody to be able to voice how they're
feeling in this moment because

um

I know how I'm feeling and- and if it was me, I would want somebody to
ask me how I was feeling."

So-

so that's what we did

and I proceeded to listen to thirty-two-

you know seventeen-year-olds talk about

how

heartbroken they were

and how disappointed and shocked and surprised and

hurt

and

um confused and

unsafe.

'Specially my students of color

suddenly feeling unsafe

um and

being worried about riding the subway.

And it was like-

I—I wasn't prepared for what- what came.

Um there's nothing that could have prepared me for that conversation
that day.

um

[pause]

But it was probably the best thing I could have done
um because their catharsis was my catharsis.

(All but Brunswick X back to chairs, sit)

SCENE SIX: WOMEN'S MARCH

40s NY MOM *(X DC-w/chair)*

I went to the Women's March in DC- the first one
and I was-
it was so wonderful- it was wonderful right?

INTERVIEWER: 40s New York Mom.

40s NY MOM

And it was peaceful and it was loving and it was warm and it was like
exciting and I like ran into friends there and it was like
everybody felt so good and so powerful even though it's such a
negative thing
for such a negative reason.

And so we had actually-
we

a friend and I had actually bought plane tickets the day we heard about
it- we bought plane tickets
and I'm so glad we did.

Because you couldn't get there right?

So we flew from the LaGuardia first thing in the morning-
at the crack.

Got there.

Had this wonderful experience- we had- we had gotten a hotel- we
spent the night- we got up
the next day- first thing in the morning.

So we were in

the airport

on the way

back

and there was this

family- these women- it was
so
two women.
It was a woman and her son and then this other woman- had been to
the inauguration
like and they were chatting with each other
and they were from
Texas or like very- they were- and they
had
drawls
and they were just like, "Oh my gosh it was so wonderful, didn't we
have a great time."
And to the son
she says to her son, "Oh my gosh wasn't that the most wonderful- don't
you feel so lucky that you were there at the inauguration. Oh
my gosh what
a magic moment" and whatever da da da.
And then the other one said
uhm, "and did you see this dis- this mess yesterday- that march- what
a disaster- what a
bunch of fools" and like
just completely going on and like and saying- the way she said it- she
made it sound like it was- it was just like chaos and what a nightmare
and chaos.
And I was and I turned to her and I said,
"it was wonderful
you should have joined it."
And they just looked at me
like I was crazy.
And my friend
she was like,
"let's go."
you know.
And she was like, "don't get started with these people."
You know, I said it was wonderful and you should of joined in
and that was, you know like it, but they're- they had this impression
that it was
chaos
and horrible

and violent and you could tell the way that they were speaking about it.
It was like- it was a fantastic day!
The only people there who were chaotic or violent were the protesters.
Yeah. You know.
The people who were there
with their burning baby signs whatever.
Uhm so yeah- it was- it was really lovely and that gave me so much
hope.

(Wh. Female, Lindsay, Navy Gal X in when they speak and form semi-circle standing behind 40s Mom)

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS (X UL 40s Mom)

I don't- I don't believe in the Women's March.
Because I-
Nobody- everybody I ask,
"Why is there a women's march?"
Not one person can give me
an exact why there is.
Why is there a Martin Luther march?
Okay, it's to honor
the blacks. What he believed in-
that eh and he just didn't believe in blacks he believed in-
he tried to make it
united.
Why is there a women's march?

LINDSAY 24 (X UR of 40s Mom)

I remember feeling like-
I was so
disturbed
by
the signs that women held
and
the rhetoric that was used and it was so
discouraging
and uhm
depressing that woman feel like we have to
shout from the rooftops and

be so overly
not just dramatic but
uhm
I mean perverse isn't the right word but
I don't know what I'm searching for I guess like the uhm-
bluntness.
I don't know.

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

Why is it okay that you're having a five-year old wear a vagina on their head.

You know what?

You lose the respect at that point.

That woman

lost the respect

not just from men

but from other women.

I-

I-

I totally lost respect for that.

I don't understand that.

Wouldn't- what-

what did you gain by having your five-year-old somewhere wear a vagina on their head?

He doesn't know what it is.

He will *[laughs]*

but he doesn't.

One way or another he will.

AZ NAVY GAL (*X Up of 40s Mom*)

I think about that

because you know I- I have friends that will go down to the women's rallies -

put on the pink

you know

pussy hat.

LINDSAY 24

Arizona Navy Gal.

AZ NAVY GAL

And I- I just that- that

I look at that and I go

eh

why? You know?

We're trying to like differentiate ourselves as wo- women. So, why do you need to wear your genitalia on your head?

You know that's-

that's always what I think when I see it.

And it- and again I'm not going to NOT be friends with these women because

I think they're great people.

We just disagree about

that

and I know not to talk about it

not to bring it up.

LINDSAY 24

I don't think Donald Trump's a good person. I don't.

Uhm. I think that his administration is doing a lot of wonderful things

and I think that him being in office has

provided a lot of really great benefits for our economy and country

but as a person the guy sucks. *[laughs]*

And uhm

I heard before- all he needs to do to win 2020 is just

close his mouth and point at the Democrats because it's just been ridiculous.

But-

yeah. I just remember seeing that women's march and people were just so angry

and so consumed by their hatred for uhm

you know our then now President.

And

it just blew me away that

women were willing to throw away

I guess

just any sor- any sort of dignity

to- to scream their own message.

And to me that's just not an effective way of communicating what you

want
and I think that
uhm it looks childish
and it looks immature
and it made me
sad that- that something that's supposed to be celebrating womanhood
was just
hating somebody else so much.
I mean
I actually attended the pro-life march that same week
and so
it was really surreal.
I mean it was really-
it's just sad and it really does- it just makes me sad to
have gotten so far that
not only are we not invited but just completely not welcome and shut
out.
And uhm-
there's no
opportunity even for a dialogue.
It's like ye- once somebody's made up their mind
it just feels like
there's no chance for a conversation anymore.

ALL reset and change character as needed singing Family Feud song.

SCENE SEVEN: FAMILY FEUD

The cast: Interviewer, Mimi 48 American Citizen Nigerian Descent, Brunswick to AZ 68, Ms. T, White Female 53 School of Hard Knocks, and Hazel Retired Newspaper Reporter 1960s Radical Protestor will make all Family Feud sounds, including singing the opening/closing music, the music as contestants cross to the buzzer, the buzzer sound, and the screen tile flips. Mimi 48 American Citizen Nigerian Descent and Brunswick to AZ 68 cross center and stand in front of the Interviewer with one arm behind their back and one hand ready to hit the invisible buzzer.

INTERVIEWER: *(reads from an index card, with one hand held out palm up as buzzer)*

We interviewed 30 women in Phoenix, AZ and New York, NY on what issues they thought women on both sides of the aisle could come together on. The top three answers are on the board. Name an issue women can come together on.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

(slaps buzzer) Abortion.

ALL

[make buzzer sound] Naaaah!

INTERVIEWER

(to Mimi 48 American Citizen Nigerian Descent) You have an opportunity to steal. What's an issue women can come together on?

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

Healthcare.

Liberals cheer.

INTERVIEWER

The survey says...

ALL

[make buzzer sound] Naaaah!

INTERVIEWER

Answer number three.

ALL

[make tile flip sound] DING! Patriarchy.

INTERVIEWER

Number two.

ALL

[make tile flip sound] DING! Domestic Violence.

INTERVIEWER

The number one answer to what issue can women come together on

is?

ALL

[make tile flip sound] DING! Equal Pay!

All sing the Family Feud song till next scene is set up-change characters as needed.

SCENE EIGHT: COMING TOGETHER—WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

Each actor will stand directly in front of the person speaking before them creating a single line.

INTERVIEWER (*stand in front of your chair*)

In Arizona

I found this

wonderful mix of women that were willing to share
their stories

shout from the mountain tops you know.

In New York

[pause]

I struggled.

I- I didn't want the New York story to be just liberal

but in the three months that I-

I emailed

infiltrated Facebook pages and was not so politely told to remove
myself

badgered

contacted every conservative organization in the city
multiple times

not one conservative woman agreed to speak with me.

[pause]

Everyone I talked to said,

"Oh

I think I know one person who's a Republican."

Sometimes they would contact them and I would email and share that I
had strict guidelines and they
they could remain anonymous
and then there'd be

radio silence.

[pause]

I did hear from one woman who said,

"I just can't.

I'm looking for a job."

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

After my client's husband died she had a luncheon

for everybody at

the-

the- the-

the Farm.

And so she text me and said or emailed me whatever and said you

know I wanna get all these strong women who helped me blah

blah blah

you know through this

and I was like

okay. And

so

I

didn't have an opinion one way or another- didn't really know why I was

goin'- I didn't know anybody I mean

I didn't- I knew her very little.

And that's it-

I went there and I was sittin' around the table and I was like well this is

pretty cool. I mean everybody's talking and everybody has stories and

it wasn't just about John or Connie it was

about life stories, kids, how's your kids.

You know-

who's getting a divorce- who's this- who's that.

I was like, this is really cool.

Like

you know just

a bunch of women

being respectful

having fun.

I don't even know if we were drinking wine, water couldn't even tell ya

cause

I just don't remember but

do I think it could happen now?

40s NY MOM

I think it's just a lack of empathy maybe.

Like an- not an understanding of

how other people live

and a refusal to

kind of

peek into other people's worlds somehow.

Like I was saying my- my bubble.

My very like- I've been here forever- I've not- I have an idea how other people and I certainly judge how they live you know but I've never lived in their shoes.

And- and I- I think-

I'd like to think I'm empathetic but I-

then the reality is like-

I don't know how these people live- like and I don't necessarily want to know.

I'm just like nope.

You're wrong and I'm right.

LINDSAY 24

To be fair

they're emotional issues. I mean a lot of political issues are highly emotional for people and it's because their story

and it's because you know

they had their own personal experiences and

I- I don't think those should ever be discounted.

Uhm but I do think that-

that has to step aside when it comes to

creating policy and creating things that are effective for society and culture.

Uhm

and that's what's tough

is

we're human.

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

I guess you just have to listen.

You know-

and listen

and say your side and

they always say put yourself in the conversation.

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR

You're going to think I'm trying to be snot nose clever. I'm not. I'm dead
serious

about what I'm gonna say.

I think women have to get together on-

believe it or not the easiest quickest way for me to say this is to give an
analogy.

Alright-

I remember-

decades and decades and decades ago watching television and

seeing something on television

that

changed my attitude towards racism and sexism and antisemitism
and EVERYTHING.

It was a panel discussion. I don't remember who the moderator was-
but

it was three black people

being interviewed.

And they were the equivalent- I can't tell you who they were. I don't
remember but it would have been the equivalent of Anita Hill
you know-

black lawyers.

We're talking about

in the sixties. I mean we're talking about-

and Ralph Bunch.

I don't know if you know that name but he was our ambassador- United
States Ambassador to the UN
was black.

And

the moderator of this panel

who's white

said, "I don't see how you can say"
being deliberately provocative you know.
"I don't see how you can say
that we're still racist in this country, I mean look at Ralph Bunch we
have a black man
who was representing us in the UN."
And the answer was-
I've never forgotten this,
"You really don't understand.
You have always given us the right to have Ralph Bunch.
You've always given us the right to have Jackie Robinson
or jazz musicians.
We want the right to have muggers.
When you get mugged by a white white person
you don't automatically say white people are muggers.
We want the right to have a black person
be a mugger and not have all the rest of us targeted, tarred with his
crime."
And I remember it completely opened
my eyes
and just changed the way I feel about everything.
When you say, what can women do?
What is the one issue that we have to do?
There are women out there who sleep their way to the top.
There are women out there who when they become bosses are mean
to other women.
There are women out there who are cunts.
We need the right to have bad acting women.
And that's the only way I know how to describe that is by describing
seeing that on TV.
I don't...you know something if you go out and you do something really
cunty
I don't want to get blamed for it.
I didn't do it-
right to have muggers.
So, I think that's one of the main issues we have to fight for-
don't lump us all together.

SCENE NINE: RESTORATIVE CIRCLE

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

Steps out of line, speaks to the cast and directly to audience.

Look where we are today.
You know, why can't we just like have
like
get everybody in like a High School
you know Auditorium
who could- different backgrounds and all that and let's just sit and talk
and see what we come up with right?
Put women together and let's listen to each other-
[laughing] lock those doors!
Just know that we're not going to agree with each other on everything
that's just not human nature
but if you can have some kind of common understanding of where
somebody else comes from
then maybe we can move forward together.

The women on stage respond differently to MIMI depending on their character with "Ok", "Maybe", "I don't know", "Lord." Some choose to go back to their seat's others choose to rally the women together. The INTERVIEWER sets her chair and sits up center encouraging others to do the same. The actors set five chairs in a closer semi-circle on either side of the interviewer and place the character signifier on the chair.

(Each actor puts on the signifier and sits in the chair of the character that speaks first in this scene, and switches chairs and signifiers to their other character as the scene progresses in full view of the audience)

Once everyone is seated, there is a palpable silence as they are all sizing each other up and wondering what this face to face encounter will bring.

INTERVIEWER

O.K. The doors are hypothetically locked. Who would like to begin?

[pause]

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

Breaks the silence.

I talk to people.

I mean-

I didn't- I didn't stop talking to
people who voted for Obama.

You know- I mean- I have friends that voted for Obama.

I didn't say

knock their hat off their head- or tell'em how stupid they were or
anything like that.

We had a difference of opinion.

Sometimes I would say, "Well what's he done for ya?"

And then-

you know- they- they come back with something,

"Oh- oh- oh he killed-he killed Bin Laden." I said, "Oh did he?"

He went out all by himself and had his gun and killed Bin Laden?

[laughs]

But we would banter-

Yeah- yeah-

but it was friendly.

LYNN 91

Our best friends are liberals.

And uh-

and if I get

uh you know-all you have to do-

is

mention one word.

As a lady in the pool- I'd forgotten her name

and she tells me

it's Marla.

And I said, "Oh I usually associate names."

And I said, "That was President Trump's

uh second wife."

"Oh don't' uh-

you know-

put me in the- don't even mention my name-

with Trump or..."

Well

I'm not goin' to talk about it anymore am I?

I know how she
feels.

She's angry.

So, if I get a sense
of
you know
where they stand.

MS. T

Thankfully I'm able to talk about it at home

um

you know teachers I think- walk a really fine line of what
they

how-how political they can be in their classrooms.

Uhm

some teachers are very much like,

"our kids never know my, my politics." Um

you know, it-

next year I've—I'll be you know faced with this election again and
you know

I have to make that choice

you know do I

tell the kids that I'm a card carrying Democrat

or do I choose to kind of sit on it and hold it?

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR

I have no problem

discussing

political areas in which you and I may disagree.

They're just a few areas I can't
discuss.

Nope.

I told my friend Pam and she didn't agree

but I said to her, "this is- this is not-

this is not negotiable."

And every now and so often she slips
and I stop. I say, "No, crossing the line."
Because she's also a very smart person the way she gets.
[laughs] She gets- she sends me emails.
It's very funny.
She'll send me the email
and depending on my mood
I will- and she knows- I crack up- I will either send back
read comment- acknowledged comma- ignored
or I will send back to her
I never received this.
[laughs] Because we are good friends and we really do- I'm going to
use the word love- we really do love each other very much.

LINDSAY 24

You know it's kinda funny. I have a lot of
girlfriends that are
very liberal
and I would say also very
not educated on the same issues that, but I mean, it's my job.
[laughs]
And uh
I feel like I- I struggle with
sharing because
uhm- you know- I go back to
if you've really done your homework
and you feel how you feel
I respect it.
And I think that that's really great.
I'd love to have a conversation with you
uhm it doesn't need to be an argument.

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

I always have to remember
who I am and stand up for
me.
Like with my friend who uhm
she moved to North Carolina and you know that's where she's from-
the family

and had always wanted me to come and see her. And-
and I was always like
I had to tell her like
I feel that you completely discounted
me as a person for
you know, just because of who you were voting for and you lived in
New York
and you knew who he was.
“But-
but he's better than Hillary!” I'm like, “Okay whatever.”
I won't even go there
but as an immigrant-
as- as a black woman- as a woman- I mean there were so many things
that you voted against
me.

40s NY MOM

The worst that's happened to me is I got stuck next to a guy on a plane
wearing a MAGA hat.

[laughs]

And then

it was so awful because

I got upgraded

and I was so excited and I got to board the plane first and I was like- it-
the comfort plus or whatever-

board the plane and make sure that I don't have to check my bag

and I got on to sit and I'm like, “Ohhhhh.”

Next to a guy with a MAGA hat.

So, then I'm one of the first people on the plane

next to a guy in a MAGA hat in a two-seat thing

and every single person who comes on I'm sure is thinking that I'm with
him and I'm like,

“OH GOD!”

INTERVIEWER

When I found out my father in-law voted for Trump

I-

I

couldn't comprehend it.

I LOVE this man.

He and my mother in-law were coming to the city for a week.

I didn't know what to say

or do.

So, I decided

to just hit it head on and next to their blow-up bed in our living room

I put up

a Greatest Mother In-Law in the World picture

next to her side of the bed

and next to his

a framed picture of Donald Trump.

40s NY MOM

I was ...after the election I was posting all the time

all this political stuff and I was like why am I posting?

Shouting into the abyss

or just like

you know-

talking to a mirror

or something.

I'm not-

I'm not saying anything

that the people I'm talking to don't already know.

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

My friends and I

on aspects we've chosen- we just- we just don't talk

about politics.

We just-

we'll see posts here and there

uhm we just-

our friendships are more important.

Yeah.

I see their stuff and I'm like whatever

and I'm sure they see mine and they're like

whatever but

we just don't-

it's- it's a- it's a belief.

It's no different than-

one of my closest friend is Jewish. I was raised Catholic.
I'm not anymore but-
I'm gonna dislike her because she's Jewish?

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

But I've had arguments with-
arguments-
discussions on Facebook.

Yeah

but I- I was never-

I was never
angry.

I guess because I won I felt like I had won
you know- I'm sorry- this time I won.

You know I-

I suffered through
eight years of Obama,

HAZEL 72

I do not discuss politics on social media end of discussion.

[pause]

AZ NAVY GAL

I think we've reached a time where politics has become really ugly and
I actually lost a friend of ten years
and so I don't know what else we can do.

I mean the vitriol has gotten so
out of control and-

we-

the greatest thing about this country
and life in general is we can all have different opinions right?

[pause]

I mean at the end of the day
my-

I mean for the most part-
my opinion doesn't define me.

It doesn't change who I am as a person. Doesn't change
how I've supported my friends in the past

you know, I mean, you can have disagreements with people
but to just
cut somebody out of your life.

LYNN 91

I've made up my mind. I will not lose
a good friend over politics,
I'll-
I won't back-
you know down or change but
uhm but I can be tolerant.

AZ NAVY GAL

I specifically made a point to NOT talk politics with this one particular
friend
because I knew
where she stood here
and then for it to kind of just blow up all at once
and for me to lose a good friend
you know it's-
it was tough.

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68

I- I- I would never
have
lost a friend
because they voted for Obama.

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

I don't understand the friendships that were ruined over it.
And it's-
so my older sister and her family
they're all Republicans. My middle sister
I don't really know. I don't think she really knows. So I really can't say
uhm-
she voted for Obama. She wanted a change
and then somebody- things were taken away and she almost lost
everything and
our comment was to her,

"So how'd that work out for you?"

I mean

you...she doesn't

know anything about politics- she doesn't get involved
well then don't vote.

I hate to say that

because it's the American thing to do.

It's not an illegal thing to do-

it's an American thing to do

but

if you don't know

your two parties

or even your party that

you're supposed to be involved in

jus don't vote!

*WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS, AZ NAVY GAL,
LYNN 91, and LINDSAY 24 begin to disengage through this next
monologue: take out a phone, a book, headphones etc.*

40s NY MOM (let this monologue build into a verbal attack)

To me the worst part was-

that-

what-

a majority of white women voted for him- for Trump.

I couldn't-

like I couldn't believe that as a woman anybody

any woman could go and cast a vote for that person

and you- but that's when you realize that ok

there's some people that just believe this is normal behavior

this is-

this is acceptable somehow.

That was the hardest part for me was like-

after just being like- this is not acceptable behavior- to have to tell my

kids, "oh by the way

that guy-

that was not acceptable behavior- is now our president!"

[pause]

40s NY MOM

[You know] the Times

just did this whole thing where they got 500 people together who represented all walks of every voter.

They had like one-

one person who represents every voter in America and they got them all together and

sort of asked them questions and put them in little focus groups and worked them up and-

I mean what a beautiful thing but basically they all came out of it saying,

[pause]

"Yeah, no.

I'm pretty much where I am".

There were small changes but most people though they moved a little bit on certain subjects

the majority of them came out of it- the same way they went in.

(all take a breath together, stand and push chairs back, get into next character if needed)

SCENE TEN: 2020

TRANSGENDER AZ WOMAN (X center)

There has become a tendency to

vilify

compromise

or vilify those who seek compromise.

And that

is

causing problems

and I- I stand strong for certain things but I also realized that I have to educate people on some things that

are unfamiliar to them- a-

and so-

it may be an oversimplification

right now

but
it
is certainly
a valid description
to say that
one of the major
sources of the conflict
is between
religion
and freedom of expression.
Because I came from an Evangelical background I feel qualified
to discuss this.
I was taught
as an Evangelical that you don't compromise
because if you compromise
then you are
negating
the
devotion
that you're supposed to have
toward your faith.
And I believe that in this
significant battle right now that
contributes to the division of our nation
whereby religion and freedom of expression
are at odds
many in the evangelical camp
refuse to compromise.

[pause]

It's certainly hard on those of us who have to suffer
the
negative results
and consequences
of
their unwillingness to compromise. (X back to chair)

AZ NAVY GAL (X center-talk to Transgender AZ Woman)

I don't wanna say that we should go back to
the early seventies

that's not what I'm saying at all.

Transgender AZ Woman X back to chair

But I just- it always-
makes me kinda tilt my head and I go, "I don't understand what
right don't you have
that a-
that a man does?"
Yeah, I get it you don't want male politicians to be making choices for
you- I mean nobody wants anybody to make a choice for you.
Why would you want- why would you want anybody else deciding what
you can and can't do.
I get-
why you know-
the feelings that you have. I- I can appreciate that.
I can I can you know- certainly understand that
uhm but yeah it just always goes back to- I don't understand what-
what rights we don't- we don't have.
I- I don't feel-
what's the word I'm looking for?
I don't feel- uhhhh-
I don't feel kept down-
Oppressed- oppressed. Thank you that's the word.
I don't- I don't feel that. (*X back to chair*)

WHITE FEMALE 53 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS (X Center talk to
AZ Navy Gal)

What-
what have we lost
since Trump has been in?

AZ Navy Gal X back to chair

So, I-
I think that throughout the years
you know women were in high-powered positions.
You know uhm-
I didn't go to college.

I didn't have to go to college-
again school of hard knocks.
I don't know what New York City is like- I mean- you read about it- but I
don't know so
I- I've gained more power in the last three years
because I have more of a voice
and I think men
have no choice but to give us
a chance
because we have a voice. *(X back to chair)*

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR

(X center- talk to White Woman 53 School of Hard Knocks)

I think we have to accept as Americans
that this polarization has always existed.

White Female 52 School of Hard Knocks X back to chair

This is why I cried-
you know going full circle to the first
comment I made.
Uhm
I don't believe Trump created one racist.
I don't believe he created one anti-Semite.
I believe he made it okay for them to express their feelings.
I think we have to accept that this exists.
I think we have to accept that we're not going to change it.
I think we have to be alert to its existence. *(X back to chair)*

*Throughout this last monologue, each woman grabs her characters'
rally signs with a short catchphrase from the play.*

INTERVIEWER *(X DC)*

I wanted to bring this- these two groups of women together
in a dialogue that's not happening today to see- if we could
understand each other better-
communicate better going forward
because I feel like we- we aren't communicating at all

or if we are it's- it's not healthy.
So, it was an altruistic idea of going- you know like- I'm- I don't know
what I was hoping for I'm
not sure I found any answers
[pause]
and that saddens me
but
I'm still glad I took the journey
and I've always found that when you ask a question you rarely find
concrete answers-
you usually find more questions.
It's so frustrating.
I like answers.
[laughs] "Okay
thank you questions."
But I ask more questions cause it keeps me teachable- it keeps me-
and the more I- whether I agree with them or not-
these women are living real lives. WE ARE ALL living real lives with
real life
and uh I don't think life is kind.
I mean it is- it can be very loving and warm
and fantastic but I think
life can be
challenging.
So hearing people's stories behind what they think-
sometimes
[pause]
I don't change- it doesn't change
how I see the world- but it does
change how I see them.

*All actors cross down stage and form a line on either side of the
INTERVIEWER and raise their rally signs. Hold 10 seconds.*

BRUNSWICK TO AZ 68
"Just be honest"

LYNN 91
"I put America in my God box"

MS. T

"Kids=Master's Degree"

WHITE FEMALE 52 SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

"I have more of a voice"

MIA MY VOICE DOESN'T COUNT

"Susan B. Anthony didn't do everything"

TRANSGENDER AZ WOMAN

"Is there another side to this story?"

LINDSAY 24

"We're human"

MIMI 48 AMERICAN CITIZEN NIGERIAN DESCENT

"Put yourself in the conversation"

HAZEL 72 RETIRED NEWSPAPER REPORTER 1960s RADICAL
PROTESTOR 40'S

"Right to muggers"

40s NY MOM

"Never lived in their shoes"

AZ NAVY GAL

"My opinion doesn't define me"

[Black out]

END OF PLAY

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Meyers, C. (2021). *Divided we stand*. *ArtsPraxis*, 8 (1), 1-63.

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Carmen Meyers, EdD, is an artist and educator committed to developing applied theatre practice as a basis for community empowerment. She has been at Bronx Community College, CUNY since 2010, and has over eighteen years of teaching experience at the college level. Her research specialization is in verbatim documentary theatre and ethnodrama addressing women's issues with a specific focus on political representation, aging, and domestic violence. Professor Meyers holds a Master of Fine Arts from Indiana University and a Doctor of Education in Educational Theatre from New York University.