



Library podcast

Camille Paglia discusses 'Free Women, Free Men: Sex, Gender, Feminism'

[00:00:05] Welcome to The Seattle Public Library's podcasts of author readings and library events. Library podcasts are brought to you by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our web site at www.spl.org. To learn how you can help the library foundation support The Seattle Public Library go to foundation.spl.org

[00:00:30] Good evening everybody. I'm Stesha Brandon. I'm the Literature and Humanities Program Manager here at Seattle Public Library. Welcome to the Central Library. And to tonight's event with Camille Paglia. Thank you to Elliott Bay Book Company for inviting us to co present this evening we would also like to thank our author series sponsor Gary Kunis and the Seattle Times for their generous supports for library programs. Private gifts to the Seattle Public Library Foundation also help provide programs and services that touch the lives of everybody in our community. So if any of you are at Library Foundation donors thanks so much for that. Now let me turn the podium over to Rick Simonson from Elliott Bay Book Company to introduce the rest of the program.

[00:01:09] Thank you. Thanks Deborah. So tonight we are delighted to have

[00:01:14] Camille Paglia here and I will do a more formal introduction than usual but Camille Paglia is the University Professor of Humanities and media studies at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia where she has taught since 1984. She received her B.A. from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1968 and her master's in philosophy and degrees from Yale University in 1971 and 1974 respectively. Prior books are sexual persona art and decadence from never Tedi to Emily Dickinson which came out in nineteen ninety six. Art in American culture vamps and tramps. New essays which came out nineteen ninety for the birds a study of Alfred Hitchcock published in 1998 by the British Film Institute break blow burn. Camille Paglia reads 43 of the world's best poems and glittering images of a book. She was here last year with five years ago glittering images a journey through art from Egypt to Star Wars she's here this evening with her seventh book Free Women free men sex gender feminism a selection of her most notable articles and lectures on these subjects her third general essay collection will be out a year from this fall from pop Pantheon the publisher that's been publishing and works in Sexual Personae Professor Polly was co founding contributor and columnist for Salon Salon dot com beginning with his debut issue in nineteen ninety five. She's written numerous articles on art literature popular culture feminism religion education and politics for

publications around the world. It's a pleasure to thank you all for being here tonight. And now please join in welcoming back to Seattle.

[00:02:58] Camille Paglia Well hello.

[00:03:11] I don't know which way to use first here is what a pleasure to be back in this beautiful city. The first time I came for a book tour here I think was 1992. And it's just always a thrill to come back to Seattle. So this is my seventh book and I had hoped it was going to be my third essay collection because it's been 1994 since my second one was published. I've written so many things all over the world. I think many important pieces on religion and history and culture and so on. But my publisher felt that my pieces on sex gender and feminism have been so prophetic for the last 25 and 30 years that it was urgent to get them out now. So we went forward with this book and it's absolutely amazing how almost like a tsunami events in the culture swept forward and things I wrote in my introduction to this book last summer when I wrote introduction seemed to speak directly to this moment at my premiere principles as a person and as a thinker are free thought and free speech. I am truly a child of the 1960s in that respect and I am totally opposed to any kind of curtailment of either of those two things. For whatever laudable social causes intimate anyone may think that they have my particular influences came from my experience in the mid 1960s in college when I entered college 1964 and the fall that spring had happened.

[00:04:51] The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley Mario Savio is an enormous culture hero to me. In college my influences were heavily the Beat poets who created the great scandal City Lights bookshop in 1957 the obscenity trial of the arrest of of the manager of City Lights Bookstore 4th for selling obscene poem Allen Ginsberg's Howl Kaddish. These were huge influences on me in college the same thing. Lenny Bruce Lenny Bruce who is the person who transformed the medium of comedy standup comedy from merely gags in the vaudeville style to a very satiric a celibate but meaningful style of analysis of social problems. He's he's Lenny Bruce is the one who made comedy politically and socially relevant. Lenny Bruce was an equal opportunity offender. He went against both liberal and conservative shibboleths. And then the first I really you had an enormous impact on me in adolescence was Oscar Wilde by chance in a second hand bookstore in Syracuse upstate New York. I stumbled on a copy of a book called was a British book called the epigrams of Oscar Wilde and it actually is still available from the Dover editions. They thought presumably that no one in the US would recognize the word epigram so they call it now the wit and humor of Oscar Wilde but it had has all of his many of his wonderful one liners from his plays from his writings from his dinner table and conversation in London organized by topic nature men and women etc.

[00:06:37] etc.. Oh this is the scathing uncompromising quality of Oscar Wilde's thinking huge impact on me. And then in college it was. This was before the Stonewall rebellion before the gay liberation movement. Gay men. Once they were absolutely scathing. Going against every possible social convention they would say things that make you wince about polio victims and so on. Now what happened to that. After Stonewall. Gay men have become increasingly either recreational and hedonistic gay or they have become very P.C. and politicised. So all of a sudden they're part of you know of you know of the Army for the control of speech. But you know I think you know an

underground gay men are still just as bitchy as ever and I'm happy to say. But then in college and graduate school I began to read also the influences on Oscar Wilde himself which would be both labor. And market Assad who was imprisoned for for the way he defied convention etc.. It wasn't that long before I was in college that there was the great trial for obscenity in England. But Lady Chatterley's Lover pink Penguin Books it was was brought up on charges of obscenity and went in when Penguin Books triumphed. It was a great blow for you know against the forces of censorship. So that's what I have stood for.

[00:08:01] And my particular wing of feminism was suppressed for for many years the feminism predates second wave feminism which was created by Betty Friedan with the with her co founding of now.

[00:08:17] In 1966 I was already a feminist because I was directly impacted by first wave feminism in the early 1960s when 1961 when I was 14 years old I suddenly became obsessed with Amelia Earhart after an article about yet another clue was found whatever it was that was in the Syracuse Herald Journal and I embarked on a three year research project in high school into Amelia Earhart. I went to I went to all kinds of places like ransacked the VA the old newspapers and in the bowels of the Syracuse library and so on. And also I was I was obsessed with Katharine Hepburn whom I whom I began to I saw on late night TV what I was getting from Katharine Hepburn. I did not realize four decades was actually a real flame of first wave feminism because her mother was the head of the Connecticut woman's suffrage organization. Herb heard her aunt was also a campaigner for women's suffrage and Hepburn herself camp. He campaigned as a small child with balloons and protest votes for women votes for women etc.. So I was getting that this first impact of 1920s 1930s after women had just won the right to vote in 1920 in the. We want. We wanted to reproduce in my new book the actual page from Newsweek magazine in 1963. The letters to the editor where I had I was given the lead letter to the editor when the Soviets launched Valentino trash Koba into space. It was the first woman to enter space the time when women were banned from the American space program and I wrote a protest letter. I was I was 16 years old. This was before now.

[00:09:58] It was it was ever found and I you know I said that it's OK you know this this this happened she went to space on the very anniversary 30th anniversary whatever it was of Amelia Earhart flying the Atlantic. All right. And I said it's obvious that miss our hearts in a quest for equal opportunity for American women still remains to be won.

[00:10:16] So I was already a feminist way before all this happened to the late 1960s. Then I tried to join the women's movement. It did not succeed because the women's movement had all kinds of preconceptions about the suppression of speech. They were anti rock and roll and anti art you know go down the line at night. I was one of the would later would call pro sex feminist or so in the 1970s for example. You know I love Charlie's Angels. I loved Cosmopolitan magazine. I love ska Boulos covers.

[00:10:51] I mean Well meanwhile the other feminists were like occupying Helen Gurley Brown's offices and like him wanted the whole magazine to be shut down etc.. But I loved the Bond girls the

James Bond girls or Ursula Andress coming out of the water with her white bikini OK. She's the cock of the cock. You know one other knife etc.. So I love the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders.

[00:11:14] So now there's no way I could be taken into the women's movement I was I was drummed right out of it you know right from the start. And so people would say Oh she was made by feminine what was not made OK by Betty Friedan. As I say in the book Betty Friedan did not create Germaine Greer in Australia. And she did not create me in upstate New York. OK. It's about time people realized that the transformations in women that happened very radically in the mid 20th century are not entirely due to the women's movement. I show in the introduction to this book. You know how many things preceded the creation of now. I mean Diana Rigg OK in the Avengers was in a black leather cat suit it before now.

[00:11:58] Ok. You know. Doing all that stuff. OK. You know Betty Friedan didn't create her either. OK. So anyway I don't want to get sidetracked on that although they will turn to that. No wait. Let me. I don't have a certain amount of time here. So let me well let me see. I'm gonna get to work right now. So what happened was Madonna. Madonna. What was so important. I mean the way Madonna is behaving. It's such an embarrassment.

[00:12:24] Because the current Madonna bears no resemblance to the pioneering Madonna of the 1980s and 90s. But she will live forever of what she did. They hurt her. Hurt her. The pro sex feminist movement of the 1990s was made possible by Madonna's trifling with pornography and exposure of the body and so on in her brilliant videos of the 80s and 90s. I don't believe they are truly works of art. Her great period was 1983 and 1992 and I periodically do show some of those videos like Vogue and open your heart and so on. These are these are truly works of art. So at any rate it's all of a sudden this long silenced wing of feminism the pro sex wing burst forth in the 1990s. There was feminists for free expression for example that I was allied with. I appeared in events within the early 1990s and saw what we were fighting against was the horrible scourge of political correctness and suppression of free thought and free speech. During the 1980s in the anti porn movement led by Catherine McKinnon and Andrea Dworkin fanatics. I include in this book what I put. What I think is my classic attack on them. I call them that you're the rebirth of Carrie Nation and those women they'd like. They wrote an ordinance which was indeed adopted by Minneapolis and Indianapolis too to shut down even the sale of men's magazines in those towns like those Playboy and Penthouse and so on. On the grounds that supposedly pornography caused violence against women cause rape caused murder et cetera. These women were deranged and had truly deranged women but they ruled the 1980s and feminism.

[00:14:04] So then thanks to Madonna my pro sex wing of feminism rose up OK. It also was helped along by the lipstick lesbians of San Francisco. It was like a cell of them came her black leather you know lesbians and so on. So then we went national and you know and I thought Oh now we've won. Okay. There's no problem. OK.

[00:14:23] So I kind of retired from the scene in 1994 after being out there with fisticuffs for a number of a number of years and then I went back to what I do. I wrote books on the movies. Alfred

Hitchcock's *The Birds*. I wrote a book on poetry a book on the visual arts. And right now I've been for nine years I've been involved researching Native American culture of the love of the northeast. That's what I'm doing.

[00:14:49] But I have to be now I have to go back on the road. OK. Twenty three years later I have to return all of a sudden we've gone full circle again. And at least this horrible scourge of political correctness is back even worse. OK. We have people rioting and smashing windows at Berkeley. OK. That place you know that the capital of the Free Speech Movement and so on. OK. So here I am again. OK. I'm not happy about it. I'd rather be doing my Native American research. OK. ALL RIGHT. NOW. WHAT ELSE HERE. OK. Oh how many. How much time do I have.

[00:15:23] Ok. How many how many minutes do I have.

[00:15:27] Oh ten moments. Oh good. OK. All right. So now a number of things first of all what I'm calling for might the title of my book. OK. Which is a free women free men.

[00:15:36] I'm calling for an end to the sex war in feminism OK. Well women are well launched now. So this kind of this reflex snide put downs of men that are they're everywhere. This this has got to stop right now. I notice you know wherever I go in the world actually that's upper middle class career women are very unhappy. They're very unhappy. Even though they might they achieved a certain status.

[00:16:05] What I'm saying is that if it turned out feminist had to stop blaming men for their own unhappiness the unhappiness is due I believe to huge systemic changes that women fought for for thousands of years. Women had their own world. There was the world of women and there was the world of men and the end if the sexes didn't have that much to do with each other. This is a brand new experiment to have this new system where now women can be economically independent now then they're no longer dependent on a father or husband or brother for their sustenance. But in their working side by side with men in the workplace. Right. This is an experiment. It's never happened before. What I'm saying in the book that we may have to accept a certain amount of tension between the sexes in the workplace and that if the feminist idea that we can just suppress men enough women will be happy. I say no. I say it. And it's on the basis of my own experience as a child an Italian American immigrant community. OK. Is that what women have lost. Is the old Solidarity that they once had when they totally ruled the private sphere a women's life all day long was with other women ones multigenerational. Older women as well as the children. Right. It was a huge tribal experience. And now what women are are feeling is a sense of isolation and loneliness disconnection from from their old function. I'm not saying to go back it's not about saying.

[00:17:41] I'm just saying stop blaming men all right. That's for example these these marches. They just happen. People if the women were exhilarated they were they were almost hysterical. I don't think it had anything to do with feminism or anti Trump or anything like that. I thought it was that women suddenly felt that surge of happiness again for being with other women. You can actually see it in the *The Odyssey* when a discus is is what up naked and alone is lost his ship you know on the shores of

Asia. And he and he wakes to the sound of of girls women's voices laughing and singing and so on it's the princess Nosek Zakia going down to do the laundry on the shore. And actually that is exactly what was going on up until fairly recently where women were all together they did all the chores together they did they did the laundry they did the cooking. I can remember this from my childhood in Endicott New York upstate New York the among the immigrant Italian women. All four of my grandparents plus my mother were born in Italy. So I actually had that experience the experience that went on for thousands of years in the agrarian era where women all together. My mother described as a small child in Italy how all the women would get together to do the laundry and go up the hill to IL sorghum which was a fountain in cut out of the side of the mountain.

[00:19:03] Probably went back thousands of years so the church to the Roman period and so on. She remembered the singing you know did you know the picnicking et cetera et cetera. So there was even though people were were laboring physically in the agrarian era there was a happiness OK a sense of identity there was no quest for identity. Now it's no place for independent thinker. If you are an independent thinker you had no options as a woman is up to become a nun. OK. So I know OK I know it would have been a nun OK 100 years ago. All right. I know.

[00:19:33] And obviously you know communities are intellectually repressive in their own way. Nevertheless we're in a period now of quest for identity. Tremendous pressures on young people to form their own identity separate from those old automatic tribal and community affiliations. So I think there's a tremendous I as a classroom teacher you know of now more than 40 years I can see this. And it's really you know there's a tremendous sense of psychological look dislocation among among young people and they find many ways to try to achieve some sort of identity and part of it right now of course is social media which is causing the total entropy in terms of ability to reason to it to read to write you know the old things and so on. Now

[00:20:24] I'm also calling for an end to this insanity of excluding biology from gender studies. Now how in the world did this happen. How did women's studies and generous that is end up teaching about gender without any reference whatsoever to biology or to hormones. And right now post structuralism dominates gender studies everywhere. No I didn't. I mean I spent six months writing my dissection of fuko. OK what does a twenty seven years ago. And I'll give me an assignment. Hello. Anyone who thinks that if a CO is somehow the master of the universe has clearly not read my exposure of him in junk bonds and corporate raiders. All right. I mean the man was a fraud. I'm sorry. OK. There is compared to Freud OK. I mean Freud is out and fuko is in the post structure lists right. Yes. Pose as leftists. But what were they doing in the past few decades with this with this crazy parasitic growth of this administrator masterclass that has taken over the universities right at a period of obscene a rise in tuition costs and student debt that's crippling families and so on. Where were these leftist the great leftists OK on our college campuses. OK. Where are they resisting the administrators. Were they denouncing student debts. Were they lamenting the plight of adjunct teachers and so on. Now they're all running to conferences talking about fuko with a stupid elitist jargon. You think they thought that's that's leftism. These post structure lists are the worst mercenary careerists in this country.

[00:22:16] Right. The leading post structure lists and new hysteresis are retiring as multimillionaires you mean in a post as leftist. It is a scandal. I don't forget a call for heaven's sakes. I mean absolutely absurd. And so we have to bring biology and authentic study of you know of medicine of anthropology of history you know back into gender studies is one thing I'm definitely calling for now aside from these things there are a number Oh. I'm on the warpath against the bureaucracy of the campuses. When I would add Bennett in college my first job in the 1970s we actually 1976 there was we had an uprising as if as if as faculty against the trustees and the administrators that the president of the college it was like huge publicized Nora Ephron went up there I wrote it up for her for Esquire magazine and so on and in the faculties are totally castrated what are they doing. The faculties have absolutely been marginalized and in this country and they don't utter a peep as this administrative masterclass took over the administrators who are in league with federal mandates of federal authorities in Washington. I mean we're living in an age of Stalinism right now and again the leftists have know they talk talk a big talk. They do nothing where it really matters. OK. We should demand a 50 percent reduction in the number of administrators. Okay. And also you know 75 percent reduction in their salaries which often exceeds that of the faculty members.

[00:23:51] People should realize how many of the ills that I'm decrying about the suppression of speech and free thought on campus are coming from administrators. Who are these you know who are these social welfare do gooders. Oscar Wilde was absolutely scathing about these humanitarians these aggressive philanthropists who dominated the Victorian period.

[00:24:12] At any rate in terms of other things in the book there is reprint of what I consider an important piece of mind in time magazine where I called for the end of this outrageous in age twenty one law in the United States where young people cannot buy a beer OK. This is a bit didn't you. You. Nowhere in the world except in very repressive regimes right. You know like the United Arab Emirates and so on. These are anything like that. Well what exactly what a Mothers Against Drunk Driving. OK. What they wandered into an area here that has been extremely destructive when that rule was passed nineteen eighty four.

[00:24:53] What did young people do at unable now to drink. They began taking the club drugs of course ecstasy and ketamine all this crap that they take into their bodies. Right. And what's happened to the ability of young people to go to a bar learn how to drink in a sensible way in an adult context be able to sit with with it look with the opposite sex learn how to talk how to flirt discuss ideas. OK. It's absolutely a cruel law.

[00:25:21] No one has raised me. You can buy marijuana in Colorado. Right. And young people can't get out get a glass of beer OK. When they arrive in college you realize how outrageous that is. Now why aren't you more outraged. OK. And

[00:25:34] That has to end. All right. What else here. OK.

[00:25:40] Let's see. OK. We've hit quite a few things this is really good.

[00:25:44] Let's.

[00:25:47] Oh yeah. So just just to return to what I was saying about the about the you know the solidarity of women in the agrarian period.

[00:25:55] I think that probably part of my ability to to analyze things come comes from my exposure to almost like kind of a capsule condensed version of of of human history I experience the agrarian era through my contact with those those most powerful country women who had immigrated. And there's a whole piece in my book about about Southern women about the power of the rural paradigm and the strength of Southern women and so on. But we were a whole town of us really from Italy concentrated in this area of the Triple Cities in upstate New York because of the shoe factories and the Johnson shoe factories. So I then had a direct experience of the industrial era which followed the agrarian era that my grandfather everyone in the town went to the factories which dominated and Endicott with the smokestacks in that period before environmental laws the soot would be heavy you know on the window sills you could smell the tanning pools and so on. So I the expense expensive industrial era and then my father fresh out of the paratroopers in World War 2 was able to go to college on the GI Bill. I was born while he was in college. My parents married at 20 and had me at 21 now. So he was like mopping the cafeteria floor. The only member of his large family to go to college. Then he became a high school teacher and then a professor at La Moyne College in Syracuse. So he saw that we moved into the new service sector economy. So I in my own life I've experienced all these transitions in human history. So I think I think it's given me a kind of insight into change now what I'm saying in the book is that those women the country women were more powerful than any feminist.

[00:27:49] They were physically powerful literally in that period before automatic washers and dryers everyone did laundry by hand. And I can remember my grandmother washing on the back porch with a washboard. There were powerful like this. I

[00:28:02] And these women had big voices and big attitudes.

[00:28:07] I mean I think once when my father was teaching high school in the small farming town of Oxford New York we lived for a year in the upper floor of a farmhouse and there was like a hilarious moment with my father was out with his brother they were standing outside smoking a cigarette and suddenly the farm woman yelled at them get a calf had escaped from the barn.

[00:28:33] And she said stop her.

[00:28:35] Ok. To my my father and my uncle and the calf thundered by my my father and my uncle just step backwards as it went by and the farm woman would chase the calf and came back carrying the calf. And as she's passed she said men. OK. Those were the women for thousands of years the country women had physical power and mental power and they were the equals of men.

[00:29:03] In fact it's no coincidence that that the first states and territories give women the right to vote were the word in the West. That he was the pioneer areas where it was obvious that women were the equals of men. Whereas right to the very end the the educated states the states where the great universities were like Pennsylvania New York state Massachusetts and so on refused to grant women the right to vote not until the constitutional amendment was passed in 1919 20. It's because the differential between and between between the upper middle class men album middle class woman OK in the late 19th century or early 20th century was very profound. OK. The lady a lady seemed to be a different entities and to be far more emotional tended to faint tended to be rather delicate etc.. So the idea of granting such women however admirable the right to vote was not as easy as it was for the. For the territories.

[00:30:00] Ok maybe. All right. Why don't we just move to the question period then. Because I I I love the question period and I'm sure you would do Hi. Hi.

[00:30:10] Thank you. I didn't know this talk was happening until just recently so I'm really happy I stayed. Thank you for coming. Oftentimes in discussions I'm having with people who I've gone to school with and friends of mine oftentimes over Facebook where things quickly get lost and you know no nuance exists there and everything. Oftentimes it feels like the really the best thing that I as a gendered male can do is to die. And I realize that now hearing you talk and everything that this is kind of the result of the pendulum being swung very far to one end and I was wondering if you thought that we were. Are we now at the point where a pendulum is about to swing back into a more kind of moderate. Let's all actually do something together and treat each other as equals all genders all races kind of thing.

[00:31:00] Well I'm I'm calling for men to take control again of their own lives. I think I've said in a recent interview that if there is a women's center at Yale University which there is for the undergraduates then there should be a men's center. There should be absolute equality and the men should be totally free to do whatever they want in their men's center right.

[00:31:23] They can show Dirty movies or whatever whatever they want. OK. I just constantly beating down of men. This demand that men redefine themselves until they suit. You know what feminists want them to be. It's an outrage. And I'm saying throughout throughout this book and the pieces I've written over the years that the civilization with all of its protections and conveniences is essentially the invention of men. Now I explain that in my first book Sexual Personae. By saying that woman's power is so enormous that men had to band together to go often and to create these objective structures and I still think that my analysis of it is absolutely right.

[00:32:03] But it's men who are doing all of the you know the hardest and dirtiest work in society. I told in a recent interview of you know that doesn't mean a whole list of things. When there's an ice storm in the Northeast it's the men who go out at 2 a.m. to collect off with the fall the live wires. So I rarely see women going out at that. I never see women manning the greats vats of tar in the heat of the summer that people are mixing to put on the roof. I never see the women win as I did last year saw an enormous sewage break in a neighboring town with where men has met suits were up to their

knees in wastewater not a single woman wants to volunteer for that kind of work. People are still depending on men and keeping working class men invisible. I've launched an attack for example on Sheryl Sandberg as incredibly smugly entitled talking about leaning in while at the same time concealing from sight all of those servants that she has and the nannies that she has and who are who you know working class people who are supporting her particular very public lifestyle. I think in general you know men are a race that the countries of men are race and also the contributions of working class people are erased too. And this has to stop. It has to stop. We need a much more enlightened feminism I think than most most men are in favor of of women rising in society and being in charge in society. We're no longer in that and the living old days.

[00:33:48] So I want men to to recover a sense of who they are as men again and not feel they have to obey any any list checklist being issued by Gloria Steinem and co. in in Manhattan Hello.

[00:34:05] So a lot of what you're saying is very very offensive and bothersome to me as a cis gendered man living in the year 2017 in this city.

[00:34:19] And to your point about the ice storms in the northeast now women are out there fighting them. Well why would you think about like these institutions that you know don't like road crews and they're like micro aggressions and the sexism on these crews of the working class men. I'm a landscaper and I can tell you that there is a huge degree of. OK. My question is about do you believe that sexism is relevant because you said that women have to stop blaming men for their unhappiness. And nowhere in there was a discussion of sexism in the workplace that women are like treated as less smart as less capable.

[00:35:03] And it seems to me that your words are sort of reinforcing this notion especially in terms of the workplace.

[00:35:11] Well I am an equity feminist that is I believe in the removal of all advances to women's to all obstacles to women's advancing society in the professional and political realm. So absolutely I am very focused on the instance of workplace sexism. What I'm saying in my writing is that we are not simply working individuals. Right. There is a there is a public side of our life and there is a private side of our life and sexual postponing a 700 page book. I talked about the psychological dream life of mankind. There are all kinds of primitive impulses in us that are very atavistic. Do we want to understand ourselves as human beings or what. But we cannot simply define human beings in terms of of of what we are in the workplace or in the political realm. I believe that was actually the biggest legacy of the 1960s 1960s were about turning away from materialistic careerism and embarking on a kind of cosmic quest for meaning in the universe. Well I think that my work offers a kind of dual perspective. I'm talking about women's advance in society and what this helps that. And I'm also talking about our need as human beings to to expand our imaginations. I have even though I'm an atheist I have a very spiritual mystic view of the universe and that is my particular vibration with Native American culture. That's in fact what I'm doing for the last nine years is trying to trying to map the actual metaphysical religious perspective of the ancient Native Americans. I believe I'm that my views of things as represented in sexual persona are very much involved with that.

[00:37:13] Camille thanks for coming. I haven't read in your books but I've seen your videos so. Oh I'm. I'm a fan. Anyway. I camera which video. It was. But you were talking about college education and you're fed up with the whole cafeteria. So I think you called it invent your own major you think you should go back to a survey sort of. And I graduate from college a couple several months ago so I've never taken a sort of a course in my life. So I was hoping you could talk about what you think the benefit to that type of education.

[00:37:47] Yes I think that's a bit the absolute disaster what's happened in the last 30 years. I speaking as a of course as a career college teacher which is this this degeneration into the cafeteria menu where our young people arrive in college and say you could teach take this or this or this or this or this or this and then you have all these kind of narrow courses being offered by professors who are basically teaching what they're interested in. I think that is not education at all. That that the best kind of education gives the broad view. You know the abandonment of the great art history survey course has been a cultural disaster in this country where it used to be you had two semesters you would begin with with cave art the stone age and move all the way down by the end of the second semester to abstract expressionism and modernism. This gives you a sense of the narrative of history but of course within postmodernism infrastructural ism there and all narratives are false. OK. Everything OK the. OK. There is a narrative in history there is. You know I've talked about how you know the pillar forms the created by IMHO tap at the at the pyramid complex at soccer rock in Egypt that can be seen 5000 years later.

[00:39:00] OK. In our Corinthian columns and banks all over the United States and Europe and so on. People who deal with artifacts of archaeology and history you can recognize the legacy and the continuity and cultural traditions. So yes I think that colleges need to be very stripped down they need. They need to make it to be making decisions about how to about what they're going to teach. Now I have been saying for 25 years that for me the the best multiculturalism would be to teach comparative religion the great the world religions. As it is a way to introduce students to the world not just to the Western tradition to the entire world. And if my plan had been followed we wouldn't have a lot of the problems today in incomprehension about about Islam. People would already know about the sacred texts. Ok. It would be able to discuss. OK. This group is following these particular verses of the Koran.

[00:40:00] This this group is doing that and it wouldn't be this cast as you have right now in this period of secular humanism is an absolute failure. Absolute failure. Young people they are starved for meaning. That's why they're clinging to politics. But you cannot cling to politics politics and the social realm. This is minor. It's a minor part of human existence. There's something much bigger much much bigger the universe. There are there are there are whole Wells of deep meaning out there be on the political round. I'm not saying it not to not to demand social reform. I'm not saying yes to cease to be progressive and to look for the you know the most of the most just human society possible. But I am saying that there is a kind of mania abroad right now. You know a total obsession with politics that is this is not this is a betrayal of the legacy of the 60s a betrayal of the tremendous vision the cosmic vision of the 1960s. And I've written about this. I believe that the reason for that is that the you know

the apostles of that particular spiritual quest of the 60s are lost to us because they took so much LSD they never came back. That's the problem. They never wrote the books which you know which I should have in the companion books to my own work.

[00:41:23] Thank you for your question. Thank you. OK.

[00:41:26] I thank you for coming. I read a sexual persona during a time when I was recovering from a. Incident with sexism and so workplace sexism definitely is something that affects a lot of women. What can male allies do to help alleviate the common situation of workplace sexism in a way that doesn't overly blame them.

[00:41:50] Well I'm saying that you know a real man is honorable a real man respects women and that's it. Any man who abuses women or treats them in a denigrating fashion is showing weakness a weakness that in fact comes from some inner sense that he has of woman's overwhelming power to prove that I had to write a seven page book. OK. All right. So I'm calling for a mutual recognition mutual respect between the sexes. But I'm also calling for middle class girls to stop asking for special protections again. I want equality of treatment in the workplace. But I think there's too much decrying OK of of a men's behavior when in fact what too many white upper middle class girls are bringing now to the workplace is a certain manner of speaking that is removed from the actual harshness of the world that actually working class women whether that whether they come from the farmland or they come from the street they understand the risks and dangers of the world. So it was the most controversial writing that I've done is about the need for women to to be Amazon and Amazon warriors for themselves. That is something I My philosophy is street smart feminism or Amazon ism that's why I posed with weapons and so many of my pictures. It's up to women themselves to understand the dangers of the world not expect the world to be an extension of their protected comfortable middle class living room. And that's I think what's kind of what's happened. I see I see women who whose voices aren't strong enough. Women have to learn OK not to be embarrassed to be loud OK. And to confront when it happens I mean what what I see too many cases of women who are dismayed by something which they feel is demeaning and who just who who just accept it.

[00:44:00] And that is not. No no. The first time it happens you speak out you speak out you stop it you're in their face like immediately you see. And that's what I believe I represent. Which is that every moment of every day you have a responsibility to protect your own dignity. And it doesn't matter if you're embarrassed or you create an embarrassing situation you protect yourself. Now when I went when my generation arrived in college 1964 the parietal rules were in full know in full power. So that at Harper College the University of New York at Binghamton where I went to college the girls had to sign in at 11:00 at night into the dorms and the guys could run free all night long. OK. And so it's my generation of women who said all right we want this same trip and as men we want the equality and freedom that men enjoy. And the colleges said no. The world is dangerous. We must protect you we must protect you against rape. And we said give us the freedom to risk rape freedom. Freedom is the value not protection. OK. So I dismays me to see young women today wanting the parents figures back wanting the oversight wanting to run to committees when something goes wrong on a date. I opposed that. I think it's infantilizing. And and women have got to stop doing that. They have to

govern their own relationships with men or with anyone else. And that is the only way women will ever become totally free and totally equal.

[00:45:53] You just mentioned you compared the agrarian period with the physical effort of that era that created strength in women and men and then going into the modern era where people became more fragile. Do you think that modern society with technology is sustainable because constantly we are removing all of our stresses and all of our efforts from the environment.

[00:46:20] Yes I am concerned. Yes I saw technology today. It's become our art form. There's no doubt that you know that the constant modulations and evolution of art are handheld devices and so on. It's the equivalent of of art forms and another another society. But I am very concerned about our excessive dependency on this new virtual reality. Now I love the Web. You know I was in the you know from the founding issue of Salon magazine. I've been part of it etc. But I'm very concerned because I see a pattern from ancient history which is that when you have empires which become extremely affluent and extremely complicated with you with a you get very complex bureaucratic structures and everything gets so interwoven that it's very easy for the whole thing to collapse.

[00:47:17] And at the same time you get you get a an affluent educated class that's extremely tolerant. That's that that has you know that that is rather hedonistic that has no scruples about heterosexuality homosexuality and so on anything goes. It's out there in the ancient Roman period they're vacationing on Capri Pompei. And so.

[00:47:43] So I'm concerned that we're heading toward a civilization that is so complex and so dependent on other people in particular electric power all it will take is one gigantic asteroid burst. That takes down the power grid and all of a sudden mankind is going to be scrabbling back to the primitive and barbaric realm again. So I do feel some concern about the fragility of our culture and our removal from nature removal. And with secular humanism has also gone this cosmic vision. I was talking about the lack the lack of this larger perspective. Well yes I mean I don't you know I think there's there's reason you know I feel the shot I feel Shadow's coming yes you see no exit from this cycle well my theory of history is is cyclic. I believe everything. Everything. I guess what I say kind of organic pattern in history as an artistic styles things begin. And you know great ideas high energy.

[00:48:53] It grows to a certain point and then you start to get the decadence. Now I love decadence. All right. Oscar Wilde was after all my you know my very first influence. Well I feel like I'm a decadence. You know in the fall of Imperial Rome.

[00:49:08] It's why I'm very interested in androgyny. That's been my my my subject you know since I was in college the subject of my dissertation. I consider myself transgender. And I think people are starting to understand that my book sexual persona is I was a transgender book.

[00:49:27] That it was a transgender protest against the power of nature. Finally I think people are starting to wake up to that.

[00:49:38] It's very nice to see another southern tier native and Binghamton great. I'm sorry I didn't I said it's very nice to see another southern tier native.

[00:49:49] Oh oh yes. I've been here ten grand. Oh OK. Oh great.

[00:49:54] We have a common upbringing and our fathers knew each other. And you're very big on extended family clan and tribe.

[00:50:03] What sort of paradigm would you see for making this relevant in the 21st century well I'm not sure that we can ever recover that tribal connectedness any longer. But I do see it still surviving for a working class families much more than four upper middle class families. I noticed this for example when going to the New Jersey Shore just to walk on the beach and so on. I see in those working class resorts like the wildwood. So how how often you have multi generations of families vacationing together. It makes me quite nostalgic. That is something that's completely gone from the upper middle class the more affluent you are the less likely it is that you're going to go vacation with your parents where people run off to expensive resorts in the Caribbean and so on.

[00:51:03] They're not taking the grandparents with them much but working class families in Fairmont Park in Philadelphia. You know every week you can see immigrant families still. African-American families they'll they'll come for a day in the park with the food toys football et cetera.

[00:51:23] It will take us some park benches the barbecue pits and so I spent the whole day there multiple generations of a family all together for the day at the park.

[00:51:33] And every time I see that it takes me all the way back to Endicott into what you know what I remember that's lost now which is that there's everyone knowing each other the people who came from the same town in Italy and the people would grow up next to each other and people didn't move. Today we're in a very transient culture where people can get a job. You go a hundred hundreds of miles thousands of miles far from the extended family. So what you have today. It's a great it's great difficulty for four women trying to manage a household in Iran and also a job at the same time the simultaneous is the collapse of the old extended family into the nuclear family.

[00:52:21] Now what I'm saying in my work is that I think the nuclear family is toxic.

[00:52:25] This is something new and this is what conservatives know Margaret with conservatives who constantly talk about the need for a two parent family and so on. I'm going. If you look throughout most of human history there has never been a two parent family. It has been a multigenerational family has raised the children not just two. So I believe that what we have today in America so often is like these houses lined up next to each other with it with a two parent family the children that these actually kind of toxic cubicles for neurosis. I don't necessarily think that has ever been you know a healthy prescription for for children to be raised. And another thing is that. At. First the women have benefited enormously from the invention of all these labor saving appliances like the automatic washer and dryer and so on. It saves women so much time. Compared to all the laborious doing of

the laundry and rinsing out squeezing the water out and so on they had these. But now today the laundry which used to be a communal activity with other women has turned into an isolated lonely thing for women. You're trapped in a house to do laundry et cetera and also the more the higher up you rise and affluence the less likely it is that you know the neighbors you don't know the neighbors.

[00:53:46] All right. And even if you know the neighbors you would never dream of saying to them oh something's come up. Can you just watch you know my my two or three children. They would just rent you would you would never do that in a million years. OK in an affluent neighborhood whereas in a working class neighborhood people know each other then they they trust each other. And also people in working class neighborhoods particularly in cities like South Philadelphia are oriented toward the streets. They're watching this. They're sitting on the stoop they're sitting on the porch. OK. So there's this this sense of of a neighborhood it's a river. It's like a real community of the old days. But again I think that as people move up the economic scale in terms of affluence and power in the workplace they're actually getting more and more neurotic. OK all right. Because of the of the psychological dislocations that have not been I think you know fully confronted. So I don't know exactly how to recover these things but I do think that it's useful for it for poor women to realize OK how much they've lost in terms of their solidarity with other women thank you for being here.

[00:54:51] I hope you forgive me but I'm I'm pretty obsessed with politics.

[00:54:55] I know I am too. I follow it constantly. Yes.

[00:54:59] I would love to hear your thoughts on on the forces that allowed the rise of Mr. Trump especially in the media.

[00:55:05] Well I mean I'm a Democrat. You know I supported Bernie Sanders I voted no initially but for the second time for Jill Stein of the Green Party and so on. I view the victory of Trump as a response to the failures of the Democratic Party to confront real problems their longstanding problems in the United States that the Democrats had no solutions to. All right so that I felt this coming and for a very long time I thought it was a terrible mistake to allow the DNC to push Hillary Clinton through as the nominee. I'm sorry. It's just my opinion and I don't think it I quite frankly I wish that there had been younger candidates in both parties. I think it's about time for my generation the Baby Boomers to get off the stage for heaven's sakes. You know what I wanted. I wanted nominees for both parties to be younger people in their 40s or early 50s. And I don't know how it happened that we ended up with so many older nominees but I think that I hope that's going to be a great blast of energy into the political system soon. But I but it's important for my party for the Democrats to do seems to me a very clear eyed analysis of the reasons for the loss because there were real issues about job creation and other things reduction of the federal bureaucracy. OK. Wasn't it was an issue the Democrats were helpless with. I think that bureaucracy is to me you know an octopus a parasite whether it whether it's in Washington or it's on the college campuses. Bureaucrats are automatons. They are absolutely soulless. And the minute you allow you know any entity to be run by bureaucrats. OK we're in trouble right now. So the Democrats just want to add on and on and on. OK. This is not the way. I don't call that progressive. OK. Progressive is to deconstruct the bureaucracy.

[00:57:06] So again Democrats have just have to have to come up with better solutions to problems and they'll start winning again I would just like to ask you to talk some about the differences between men and women that you think are really important whether they're hard wired or have developed over thousands of years in feeling in thinking in sex drive in the workplace whatever you want to say about that.

[00:57:32] Well I I analyze this at length in sexual persona.

[00:57:35] Yes I speak about biological factors in the way the mind works.

[00:57:42] For example I mean it's it's slightly satirical in chapter 1 of sexual persona but I you know I think I'm right which is that boys have to learn because of their genital anatomy how to aim right if they don't learn how to aim.

[00:58:02] Okay. When they tried to urinate. OK.

[00:58:05] They will soil themselves and the wall and everything else OK.

[00:58:09] They must learn to aim.

[00:58:12] Ok. And eventually that carries over into the sex act. And so I'm I too I talk about that focus and proposal of ness and directness. OK. And how you know Freud talks about. How primitive man preen himself on his ability to put out a fire with a stream of urine. And I. I say I say well was a strange thing to be proud of. But beyond the scope of any woman

[00:58:38] Who would scorch her hands in the process of trying to put out a fire with a stream of urine. So.

[00:58:44] So I do believe that there are sexual differences I think I think that you know that that as civilizations evolve as they become more complicated that gender eventually has the performance quality that that it becomes an artifact like other artifacts like works of art. I mean that's why I have a 700 page book on the subject my from my first book. But that ultimately there are very fundamental sexual differences that come from the fact that most men have eight to ten times the amount of testosterone in their bodies than than women do.

[00:59:20] And that's I mean I for my entire life I've noticed the way men men talk and think is different. I mean heterosexual men talk and think different than the way women think. I remember my father saying he could do that when he would listen to women. The women talking. My mother my aunt and you know all of it. He said he could never follow the conversation he that he never. They would know no names are being used and it's in sentences weren't being ended. But yet everyone knew exactly what they were talking about.

[00:59:50] And I've noticed that myself people say Oh did he. Did he see that he or he saw that. Oh ok he saw that she saw all. OK. All right. So

[01:00:00] And that's why I love the real housewives. I adore the real housewives. Gloria Steinem hates it. OK you say but the real housewives. Absolutely. OK. Records and documents the way women are in a group. OK now maybe not dissenting women maybe not lesbian women. OK. I'm just saying about heterosexual women. OK. All right. In a group I love to be around heterosexual women talking in a group OK. And so do a lot of gay men. That's why they're stylists and so on and so forth. This is a weird energy OK that the women have with each other. And it goes all the way back to that. Done the hunter gatherer era. OK. Where are the women.

[01:00:34] We're all talking with each other around the hot while the men went off in the hunting party and had to be quiet and silent while they stopped the prey you see the talkative men didn't last long.

[01:00:48] Right. But. At the same time. I do feel that you know that transgender people and that you know many gay men. Occupy kind of middle ground between the sexes. And a lot and tremendous amount of the history of the arts. OK. It was created in that middle ground. OK. That the that the transgender shamans had a vision of the universe had an intuitive quality but I know it biologically speaking every single cell of the human body the DNA has a DNA code in it which tells you what the actual gender of that body is. So that I think that there's a lot of talk these days about the ability to change sex but you cannot change sex in point of fact you can make modifications of the body you can take hormones that further change the appearance of the body but ultimately a certain point every every single cell in the human body will continue to show that it is either male or female except for a very tiny number of truly intersex people. And I don't know what you know exactly belong to. I do. I never for a day in my life have I felt female never for a minute in my life I felt female. But I don't feel like a man either. So I'm willing to acknowledge you know that I have a gender dysphoria. OK. And out of that gender dysphoria I made a lot of books. OK. My books are my sex change. I've said the sexual persona is the biggest sex change in history. OK.

[01:02:27] And in fact the truest thing ever said about sexual persona was by this gay intellectual guy in Massachusetts who ran the gay and lesbian review into back in the 90s he said the voice of sexual persona is the voice of Myra Breckinridge. Now Myra Breckinridge was the transsexual star of a Garvey doll book that was made into a movie that should've been a great movie with Raquel Welch she was a terrible movie. But that is really true. My voice is the voice of a transsexual. This is absolutely true. But nevertheless I believe that's why I've called my book Free Women free men that it's time to Valentine's Day.

[01:03:06] The sexes. Transgender people in the middle. OK actually gain identity from the existence of the mass of men in the mass of women so I applaud you as a man.

[01:03:19] Ok.

[01:03:22] Thank you so much for being bold and going into the non P.C. realm. Ann Powers people like me I sort of grew up Baptist Taliban if you will. And I made the jump to libertarianism. And I would just like to ask you my from my perspective libertarianism is about empowerment. It is the party the women should be migrating to in my opinion. In your opinion how do we draw more women to the libertarian philosophy and explain to them that it is the party of the Parliament whereas the Democrat Progressive The idea is sort of to replace men with the government whereas the Libertarian philosophy is to empower women and while also empowering men so yes why would we do.

[01:04:12] Yes I do call myself a libertarian as well even though I'm not really part of the Libertarian Party at all. But yes I think this is really true. Watch what you said exactly right. We cannot have a situation where women now substitute the government for for the male figures upon which we used to depend for economic sustenance. I think we need many more actually parties in the United States. The problem is we have these like giant big tent parties too which suck up all the oxygen and all the money and and become a kind of porridge. There's no no no clear. But you know countries that have multiple parties 12 or 13 parties often are very fractured. You have to. They have to form coalitions in order to govern. So I can see the difficulty of multiple parties in a in a country of our size. But there's absolutely no doubt that we need to manage drastic reform of the present party structure and I think it will only come from the challenge. And so I'm trying I'm trying to develop the Green Party to even though I don't necessarily agree with everything the Green Party stands for. Yes. So are you would you say that you are in terms of your economic policy as well as a libertarian do you think you you tend more to toward the conservative or capitalist or what.

[01:05:31] Do I find myself to be fiscally conservative. I think that free enterprise has brought more people out of poverty than any government program and I've traveled overseas quite a bit and I've seen that. I think that we're facing a situation where we don't have free enterprise. We have burdensome regulation and taxation that sort of suppressing small businesses and individuals to the advantage of too big to fail corporations we bail out the banks we kick out the home you know the homeowners so. So I would say yes I'm fiscally conservative.

[01:06:04] Yes I feel that what we need in socially in the inner city. In high school is the teaching of entrepreneurship to to disadvantaged youth to show them the way the system can work and. Everything about the that's kind of the kind of thing that comfortable middle class upper middle class young people get from their parents who don't know about banking and stock and investment and so on. I mean I definitely believe in a much more jobs oriented educational system. But at the high school and the college level I think we are of the same mind.

[01:06:39] Ok. Thank you so much. Keep doing what you're doing. Be the change. Thank you. Right. OK. All right.

[01:06:44] Very good. I got no more questions. OK. All right well all right well thank you very much for coming

[01:07:01] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.