CHIME ZINE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE METEOR
PRESENTS

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FOR A FEMINIST FUTURE 22

WELCOME TO 22 FOR '22

Somewhere in the world, a person you don't know is taking a risk. Maybe she's fighting for her fundamental human rights, or her country's future, or their children's dignity, or the freedom to love who they please. But everywhere you look these days, women, girls and non-binary people are deep in it, standing up to overwhelming times with overwhelming, electrifying courage.

So what would happen if we picked our heads up to look around at one another, to see that our issues are all interconnected—and that we can learn from each other's work? That was the question that The Meteor (the new media company of which I'm a co-founder) and Gucci's Chime for Change (which has supported work for gender equality in 89 countries) wanted to take on this spring at 22 For '22: Visions For a Feminist Future.

Over an evening of live performances—and then in a global virtual summit—we heard from activists, artists, and genuine icons, ages 20 to 91. And throughout it all, our host was the glorious TV commentator Symone D. Sanders. So I can't think of a better way to begin than to hand it straight to Symone:

"Welcome, everybody," she began. "My name is Symone D. Sanders and I am a bald, curvy Black woman from North Omaha, Nebraska.

"Now, we are gathered together for a global summit that is all about us. Us as in women, as in girls, as in non-binary people. Us as in feminists, womanists, gender justice leaders—whatever words you would like to use.

"So a couple of things about this program. First of all, we're gonna be real with you: There's a lot at stake these days. So we're not gonna just put on our game faces and offer up a few catchy slogans or fist-bump each other. This isn't about fake rah-rah, folks! This is about real lessons from real people who are already doing the work.

“These conversations were recorded in front of a live audience in April 2022 at Barnard College’s Athena Center for Leadership. And that got me thinking about the word leadership. In the preamble to the Constitution of the United States, it says, “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union.” But who is the “we” that they were talking about? They weren’t talking about me, and they probably weren’t talking about many of you out there. The “we” was rich, old white men who owned property. (You couldn’t just be a white man; you had to own property.) The “we” in the United States Constitution has expanded over time. But a lot of people still think a leader is a five-star general…who is a man. A president…who is a man. A billionaire on a yacht …who is a man.

“But the truth is, we are all capable of leadership. And in this issue we are listening to different kinds of leaders taking meaningful action around the world.

“So, are you ready? Are you ready?”

Thanks, Symone. We are ready—and we need this.

Symone has also provided a short intro to each conversation below.

Enjoy the issue, and to watch the video of the full 22 For ‘22 program, click here.

— Cindi Leive, Co-founder, The Meteor

TELLING OUR OWN STORIES

Symone D. Sanders: *Our first conversation is about telling our stories. Who gets to do it? And what happens when you tell the truth from your own point of view? We have two dynamic women in conversation on this topic. The first is award-winning writer and director Janicza Bravo. We are also proud to have with us a woman who has literally used personal stories to change the world: Tarana Burke. She is the author and founder and chief vision officer of the "me too." Movement. You know #metoo, right? The hashtag. It's been used more than 19 million times on Twitter alone. And last fall, she published her memoir, "Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement."*

Janicza Bravo: I'm really excited to be on stage with you tonight in front of all of you. I feel like I'm a fan. I've been watching you from the sidelines for quite some time. So this is a joy for me. And I know one of the themes of this evening is about owning your own story.

Tarana Burke: I mean, owning my own story is a big part of my life. I think as a survivor, as a Black woman, as a woman, as a mother, just as a person navigating the world—I never felt like I didn't own my story. I was raised in a household where I was actually brought up to know my story, know who I am as a Black person in this world, and what that meant and how it's situated. And to go into spaces carrying that story with me and to not allow people to alter that story.

Bravo: So if you've walked into a room, you've defined your story. And then when you hear it back, if, say, the language isn't not only not to your liking, but if the language is false to you, what is a tool we can use to take it back?

Burke: So the one thing that's been a privilege to me, some people may not see it as a privilege, is I've always worked largely in Black spaces. So I haven't had to fight as much as other people who

have gone into spaces where people want to redefine their story. As I've gotten older and I've ventured out into other places, it's certainly gotten more difficult. Part of it is about what you define as validation and where you look for validation. If your validation is grounded in people who don't see you as valuable, then that part gets tricky for you right? But also, I understand that's a little cavalier because you have to make a living. Like I said, I find that it's a privilege that I have been able to eke out a living for myself in spaces where I've been validated. I do not define my work or my worth by other people's definitions. I do not define my work or my worth by other people's gaze. I told y'all when you found me, I was minding my business. You know what I'm saying? Y'all made my shit go viral. I was minding my business, doing my work. I told y'all when you found me what it was about. The beautiful thing about this work, though, is that it is for everybody, just as it is. When you found me, I said this work started with and is centered around Black women and girls, not to the exclusion of anybody. You don't have to take from us to make it work for you, right? That's our story. And it can remain that story and still benefit every single person here.

Bravo: I have to say that, you know, from the outside, I recall this period where there was a dialogue around the movement being eclipsed. And I loved that you said "By who?"

Burke: Right. It is very true that Black women's work is constantly undermined. It is very true that I know what people are saying when they say the "me too" movement was co-opted. I understand what they're saying, but it's because they define it by what they see in the media. What has been co-opted is what the media created, and that is not the movement. And so we have to be really careful because people will find a way to blame women for anything, right? They will find a way. They would have loved for this story to be the "Black ladies and the white ladies is getting down and fighting." That's not the story. We have something bigger to do, right?

Now, I'm not taking white women off the hook now. Calm down. Y'all have work to do, clearly. But there's real work to do. This fight about whose movement it is and undermining is not the actual work we have to do. Black women have the second highest rate of sexual violence in this country. Native women. Trans women. Men. People who don't identify as women. There's a whole story to be told about sexual violence. And the spotlight keeps being put on a particular group of women. That's not white women's fault. That's the media's fault, because we've been socialized to respond to the vulnerability of white women. That's a story that we need to unpack. That's not about white women. They didn't show up and say, tell my story. But that's the story that keeps getting told over and over and over again. So collectively, we need to say there's more to this story. Collectively, we need to say if this movement is going to go forward, we have to keep telling a different story.

Bravo: You've said that reading Maya Angelou as a teenager was a huge sort of reframing for you. And I'm curious what it reframed.

Burke: Well, so, you know, I did not understand survival when I was a child. I understood pain. When I read "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," I was a little kid. She was my friend, you know, young Maya Angelou was. Later on, Pecola Breedlove in "The Bluest Eye," these were my friends. These were the people, children, the only other person I knew who had been through what I had been through. And so I recognized Maya Angelou as a person who understood me. Let's talk about you though, I just want to know how you think about storytelling.

Bravo: For those who don't know, I directed this film called "Zola." And when I had ventured into directing, there weren't examples of myself. Yes, there were women directors. Yes, there were Black directors. But I wanted to make comedy. I wanted to make stressful comedy. And the people I would compare myself to or the people I saw myself in were mostly men or they were mostly white. And I thought, well, they're definitely not seeing me, so is there room here? And so when I read Zola on Twitter, I was like, I have to make this movie. I have to protect this woman's narrative. And this is so that women who look like me know that their stories deserve to be told, and that women who look like me can also tell those stories and can protect them. Right? And that's not to say that I think I'm the only person who gets to tell that story. That's not what I mean. But it was important that it be me, because I know that there was a 17-year old Janicza watching that movie who saw it and thought, "oh, there's a shot for me."

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

Symone D. Sanders: So we had a lot of activists and leaders sitting in our audience at Barnard the night of the live talks. And there was one I just had to single out. Friends around the world, please meet climate activist Ayisha Siddiqa.

Ayisha Siddiqa: You know, I promised myself if I had the opportunity to be on a stage like this, I would tell it like it is.

Sanders: Please do. It was a requirement to be here.

Siddiqa: Yeah, a lot of people think getting involved in climate work is about carbon emissions and like reducing plastic straws and saving the turtles. But it's far more complicated. Right now, over 70 percent of the emissions that are being released into our atmosphere come from 100 companies. Of those companies, a majority of them produce oil and gas. I became involved in climate work, not necessarily because I wanted to protect the environment, which I think is an absolutely necessary cause. I became involved because the fossil fuel industries have initiated wars in the country that I come from, and killed, looted, and completely destroyed environments for the reasons of gaining control over vital resources like oil.

Sanders: Talk to me a little bit about COP26. You and the rest of Polluters Out attended. What happened?

Siddiqa: It's a little complicated, and it's supposed to be complicated. They don't want you to know. In 1992, a group was formed called the UNFCCC. This is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Since then, they've held 26 conferences annually. Those conferences, weirdly enough, are being sponsored, not by one fossil fuel industry, but multiple. Millions of dollars are coming in. Millions of lobbyists are coming in. And they're actively changing the legislation and the wording that is coming out of these negotiation spaces. How many in the room know about the Paris Climate Agreement? Yeah? Do you guys know that the words "oil" and "gas" and even "fossil fuel" are not included in the Paris Climate Agreement? So if we can't name the culprits, how are we going to get to a just future?

Sanders: So talk to us about how other young people can get involved in the movement.

Siddiqa: Yeah. When I entered this space in New York, I looked around me and I was one of the only people who looked like me, if not the only person. And I say this because the climate crisis is not passive. The climate crisis is not a result of natural disasters. It's actually man-made. It is a result of capitalism, years of colonialism, years of racial oppression. And so if you want to get involved, the way that we save our planet is when we protect the most vulnerable communities among us. And this includes Black trans women. This includes Indigenous peoples. And this is why it includes children and young folk, because when we protect them, then we can protect everybody else.

Sanders: Thank you. Y'all, give it up for Ayisha.

Siddiqua: Thank you so much. Thank you.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

LIVING WHOLE LIVES

Symone D. Sanders: *Our next conversation is a big one. It's about LGBTQ rights. And honestly, we have a ways to go. We passed marriage equality in the United States in 2015. Sure. But in a number of states, you can still be fired from your job for being a part of the LGBTQ community. And with this kind of "Don't Say Gay" legislation happening in Florida, it is an all-out assault on the LGBTQ community. We should all be standing up and using our voices. Luckily, we have brought two people together who are speaking out. Amandla Stenberg is an American actor and singer. You may have seen them in their acting debut with the film "Colombiana," or their breakthrough playing Rue in the film "The Hunger Games." Joining Amandla in this conversation is Raquel Willis. Raquel Willis is a globally recognized activist, writer, and editor who has been a national organizer for the Transgender Law Center. All right.*

Amandla Stenberg: I'm so happy to be here. And I'm so happy to be here with you, girl, because I have been such a huge fan of your work for so long.

Raquel Willis: That means so much to me because you've been one of the most visible folks in our community. And, wow, you've always held your value so close to the sleeve. And so I appreciate that.

Stenberg: Thank you. I guess I wanted to ask you what misconceptions around trans people that you feel desperately need to be rectified?

Willis: Yeah. I mean, I guess the biggest thing is that folks often think that we are some like satellites just like floating in the distance. They don't consider oftentimes, for instance, as a Black trans woman, I have a family who are always engaged with my life, and I'm engaged with theirs. So I think that's one of the misconceptions. And then I guess the other piece is that yes, we're brilliant, amazing, fabulous folks. But this gender stuff is something that we're all holding. And so, yes, you may think in a lot of ways that being trans or being non-binary is so sparkly and magically different. In some ways it is, because, you know, we know how to work a room. But, everyone is dealing with some gender expectations that they probably fall short of meeting.

Stenberg: Yeah, I mean, I feel like it's a very exhilarating time because we are starting to have language and further conversation around gender. But at the same time, think about all of this anti-LGBT legislation. And so while it is so disheartening, I try to recontextualize it as actually just a death rattle in response to the fact that things are radically changing, and quickly, you know?

Willis: Talking about us living at the end of the world, like it feels like right now with all of the anti-trans legislation, of which there are hundreds of bills moving across the country. If you're gauging it based on legislation or protections, we've always lived at the

end of the world as trans and non-binary folks. And look at what brilliance we continue to create. And I think that and the crux of how we protect and defend trans and non-binary youth is that we don't let the world stifle that fire. We've got to defend that brilliance that just organically exists in all of us without putting each other in these boxes that just don't fit.

Stenberg: I think what I've learned from my queer community is how critical it is to think about oppression in degrees. Centering those who are in the most precarious positions first because the legislation is not going to do it. Can you speak to why it's dangerous for us to be using phrases like "Don't Say Gay" when we're talking about this legislation that affects all members of the LGBT community, but particularly trans people and children?

Willis: Yeah. I mean, you said it all right there. I think a lot of times in our social justice movements, we can get away from nuance because once we get a message out there and gain some traction, you get that bit of validation and you're like, okay, well, this is working, so let's just keep doing that. And then you ignore the fact that you pushed aside groups of people. There's still this ongoing epidemic of violence plaguing mostly Black and Brown trans women. You know, you still have now all of these pieces of protection that were not fought for as fiercely as they should have been. And now we're seeing this on the other side with all the trans youth under attack in these ways. So I think it's about us always continuing to have nuance, and knowing that nuance is hard. When you're talking about womanhood, for instance, and we're talking about the feminist movement. And we're fighting for gender liberation. Honey, you know trans women exist, so don't act like we don't. You know that non-binary and gender fluid folks and gender non-conforming folks exist. So we've got to keep the nuance all the time, especially when it's really hard.

I mean, you're a creator to the core. You are an actor. You're a musician. I'm always interested. What has it been like for you to navigate being so visible as a non-binary person of color for all of these years, and particularly in Hollywood?

Stenberg: Oof, don't get me started on that part. It's definitely strange navigating the media, dealing with pronouns. There have been moments in time in which my immediate community, which is all gays, has just kind of innately used they/them pronouns for me. But I've been afraid or timid to figure out how to use that within a professional environment. Trying to, you know, embody your true self actually can put you in a position of more discomfort, you know. And so navigating that has definitely been really complicated at times.

And what has it been like for you as a transgender organizer to be a part of LGBTQ movements and feminist movements?

Willis: It has been difficult, but I think at the core, finding your community is key, and also just acknowledging that privilege and oppression are not binary experiences. Let's talk about binary, right? Like we're on a sliding scale, honey, depending on what room you're in or who's in the collection of folks that you're in at that moment. You may be more privileged, you may be more oppressed.

Stenberg: So you created a 13-point framework to end the epidemic of violence against trans women.

Willis: You know, the point that I really wanted to make with The Trans Obituaries Project was that there are trans people, particularly of color, who are moving work on all these things. So we need y'all to tap in. We don't need any saviors, we need you to tap into what we've been doing, tap into the conversations that we've been having and support it.

What does liberation look like to you?

Stenberg: Liberation to me means actively working against that structure in order to re-center and afford the people who have not historically been afforded the love they deserve, the love that they deserve.

Willis: Yeah, that's real hard.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

THE NEW (AND FOREVER) LABOR MOVEMENT

Symone D. Sanders: *Here's something most people don't know about feminism. It's actually about labor. Did you know that International Women's Day started as a strike? Well, our next guest has been at the forefront of the labor movement for more than half a century. Sixty years ago, Dolores Huerta co-founded the United Farm Workers of America with Cesar Chavez. She also led the famous grape boycott and helped pass the first law allowing farm workers to bargain collectively.*

Six decades after Dolores started the farmworkers union, a warehouse worker for Amazon began to organize his co-workers. Amazon fired him and spent millions of dollars trying to stop his efforts. But in April, Chris Smalls helped win a staff-wide vote to establish the first union ever at Amazon. The New York Times called it the biggest union victory in 25 years.

We were honored to be there when these two legendary leaders, separated by 60 years, met on stage for the first time with moderator Paola Mendoza.

Paola Mendoza: Dolores, I want to start with you. You helped launch the modern labor movement. And we're in a moment today, where we're seeing a resurgence of unions and their power, from Amazon to Starbucks to teachers standing in their power. And I want to talk to you just about how it feels 60 years later to be looking at this moment in time and seeing a lot of your work coming to a culmination. How are you feeling about today?

Dolores Huerta: Well, I feel really great to see that workers are finally being recognized, especially people that work with their hands, who often get ignored, our essential workers. And I'm glad to see that Amazon workers and other workers are doing the same thing. And that's what we have to do, because labor unions are the foundation of our democracy.

Mendoza: Absolutely. Labor unions are indeed the foundation of our democracy, and we know that our democracy is in peril today. But, Chris, you are giving us hope and inspiration because you

and your team organized the JFK8 warehouse. For those of you who might not know, that is an Amazon warehouse, which is the number two biggest company in the country. Lots of people told you that your organizing efforts would fail. Amazon invested four million dollars to try and stop you, but they failed. Your tactics worked. So talk to us about your tactics, your creative tactics, and why did they work?

Chris Smalls: Yeah, absolutely. Well, you know, Amazon doesn't know their workers the way we do. You know, we come from our community. We live in these communities. We live there. The grievances, the reality of the warehouse. And when they fired me two years ago, they didn't know who I was. They tried to demonize me. They tried to smear me. And because of that reason, it motivated me to continue fighting to advocate for workers' rights. And when I went back to organize, the one thing that Amazon can't buy is love. And the way we organized is we brought people together. Breaking bread. Music. Having good vibes. Whatever it took to have conversation with them. And Amazon doesn't do that. They had a system that's run by metrics. And once again, when the power of people come together, there's nothing that could defeat that.

Mendoza: I love that. And I've often heard Dolores talk about people power, for sure. Dolores, can you talk to us a little bit about your thoughts with regards to feminism and labor?

Huerta: Well, I think the fact that we have so many workers that are not paid properly, Amazon workers, fast food workers, many, many, many workers, custodial workers, etc. It's kind of a legacy from slavery, literally, you know. And of course, it applies now to workers. Applies to women. It applies to children. So when we talk about feminism being absolutely tied in with labor organizing and organizing per se, we know that it all comes together. Working people are the majority of the people in the United States, and they need representation on the job in their cities, in the state legislatures and in the Congress, because they need people to protect the rights of workers.

Mendoza: Absolutely. What advice can you give to Chris? And we can just listen in on this conversation.

Huerta: Well, I know that oftentimes the workers win an election and you get the recognition, but that the employers are going to go to court. They're going to try to stall. They're going to do everything that they can so that you can't get your collective bargaining agreement. And like with the farm workers' union, had it not been for the support of the American public, in people boycotting grapes and lettuce and Gallo wine, we never would have gotten those contracts. So I'm just really aware because Amazon is such a billionaire, they have so much money that they're going to try to keep you from getting that contract.

Smalls: For the contract. Yeah, we know that Amazon is not going to come to the table with us. So we want to make sure that we have the power of all the unions and political support so that they recognize the union, number one. And if, you know, obviously, if they don't come to the table in a certain time frame, then we will have to do what we have to do and shut it down. I can tell you now, that we have already been contacted by every [Amazon] building in the country. And what we plan on doing is after this, this next victory, we want to have a national call and get every building in the country started so that they can start a chapter. Workers is coming, you know, and this is a revolution, and once again, I want everybody to be a part of this revolution.

Huerta: And there's one other thing that I think we have to point out. If we look at the places where you have strong unions, New York and California, all of the West Coast, what do we have? We have a progressive politics, okay. We have progressive politics. So it's more than just organizing workers to have representation. It's about having political representation. And that's why, when I said earlier that labor unions are the foundation of our democracy, I think that proves it. When you have labor unions, you know, you're going to be able to get people elected that are going to have the values of helping people, and not going against people.

Mendoza: Chris, do you have any questions, any advice that you would want to ask from Dolores?

Smalls: Yeah, I do, definitely. I've been doing this for about two years now, and I can tell you, the hardest thing to deal with is probably mental health. So you've been doing it for decades. I want to know, how do you deal with that while organizing when you've got so much on your shoulders?

Huerta: Well, I think, number one, sometimes you kind of have to step back a little bit and know that you're in it for the long run. And so you have to celebrate a lot with song and with music and with friends so that it doesn't get so burdensome that it crushes you. And then always, of course, reaching out to people that support you. So knowing that you're in it for the long haul, you're not going to ever quit. That you're going to just keep organizing until you can get all of those people that need organizing to get them to have their union.

Smalls: Absolutely. Yeah.

Huerta: That's really, really important.

Mendoza: Dolores, Chris is definitely the incarnation of “Sí se puede” / “Yes, we can.” For those who don’t know, Dolores coined “Sí se puede.” We’re going to have a very special moment happen right now, and that is going to be that Dolores Huerta is going to lead us in a chant. So I’m going to ask you to stand. Okay. All right.

Huerta: Who’s got the power?

Audience shouts: We got the power.

Huerta: What kind of power?

Audience shouts: People power.

Huerta: So are we gonna use our power to help the Amazon workers, to help all workers, to help fight the fascism, and save our democracy? What do we say, Se puede? Or no se puede?

Audience shouts: Sí se puede.

Huerta: Let’s all do it together with an organized hand clap. Let’s go.

Sí se puede. Sí se puede.

Sí se puede! Sí se puede!

Smalls: And if we don’t get it?

Audience shouts: Shut it down!

Smalls: And if we don’t get it?

Audience: Shut it down!

Smalls: And if we don’t get it? Shut it down. One more time.

If we don’t get it. Shut it down. Power to all people.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

BIGGER PLANS

Our next piece is a conversation between Lachi and Brandon Kazen-Maddox, who performed together at the 22 For ‘22 live event in April (link here). For this issue of CHIME Zine, Lachi and Brandon speak about disability and accessibility—especially as it pertains to live performance.

CHIME: In your own words, could you just introduce yourselves and tell us about the work you do as you want to describe it?

Lachi: Sure. Hi, my name is Lachi, she/her, Black woman, cornrows. I am a recording artist, a songwriter, an actress, a host, a writer, all of the things. Whatever you want, I will do, but it all kind of boils down to my disability inclusion and advocacy, trying to uplift and amplify disability culture, accessibility, and inclusion, especially in the music and performance industries. So that’s pretty much me in a nutshell. I’ll toss it to you, Brandon.

Brandon: Thank you, Lachi. So my name is Brandon Kazen-Maddox. They/them, caramel skin, Black artist with shoulder-length locs and kind of sweet brown eyes—

Lachi: Okay!

Brandon: —and I describe myself as an American Sign Language artist. So I’m a Grandchild Of Deaf Adults, or a GODA. I’m also a

CODA, but I have to say GODA because it's my grandparents who are deaf and it is a part of the deaf community. And I work a lot within the sphere of deafness, disability, disability culture with Lachi in the blind world, and the deaf/blind world in my own interpreting work. I'm also the co-founder of Up Until Now Collective, which is a new non-profit organization established in 2020 that works to create radically inclusive, and challenging, and necessary art with many different artists from all over the world, including Lachi herself.

CHIME: How did this collaboration come about, how was it, what was the meaning and importance behind it?

Lachi: So I wrote [the song] "Bigger Plans" within the headspace of a lot of folks who identify differently and are constantly sort of trampled on, their dreams are trampled on. And they're told, "Hey, take the straight and easy road. Don't do things that are going to be too difficult because you are most likely not going to make it." And so I know that as a person with a disability, and especially as a Black woman, that yes, odds are against us, but it makes us more self-driven and self-determined because we have to believe in ourselves so much more getting that pushback.

And I thought that would be perfect, especially for Chime for Change, because I know that the theme is leaders and women, non-binary folks who are talking about huge things with a lot of pushback from people going, "Ugh." And so I felt that this would be the perfect situation, but I also, having been like a sneak fan girl of Brandon's and watching just the way you move, and perform, and interact, I thought that this high energy, very fun song would be great because we're both very high energy kind of fun people with this hint of seriousness when it comes to our art. And I thought this would just be a perfect fit for the both of us. And so that's why that song was one of the ones that sprung to mind.

Brandon: I think the positivity of that message was really uplifting for me, it was really easy to be hyper energetic with all of it. And it was fun to be impromptu and be like, "Okay, Lachi. Now you walk over here, now you do this." And one thing that I appreciated was that, yes, it was a wooden stage at Columbia University, but then they had a rug, and you could feel with your white cane. And we could hear with our shoes that like, "Okay, here's the stage, here's the edge of the stage, here's the carpet." So from your perspective, Lachi, I wonder how that felt for you having a carpet on stage to know the edges of things.

Lachi: So I have had times where I have fallen and knocked my butt on a stage because I couldn't figure out where the edges were or figure out where the drum kit started. But you know me, I am the queen of playing things off.

Brandon: Yeah, absolutely.

Lachi: I will never fall inelegantly, but it was helpful. But I got to say, the interaction with the two of us actually helped a lot. One thing that I preach a lot, I hate using the word preach, but one thing that I speak a lot about is the independence of interdependence. Because we were there together, it allowed me to be more independent, because I got to use your knowledge of where you were and knowing the feel of your body, and just naturally knowing where you were. I knew where I could and couldn't go. It was a really collaborative effort and a lot of fun, honestly. So one thing I don't know if a lot of people know is that for blind folks or wheelchair users, the cane and the wheelchair is part of the body.

Brandon: That's right.

Lachi: So just as much as you're not going to just randomly touch someone, you don't touch their cane, you don't touch their wheelchair unless they ask you to or want you to. So it was a lot of fun to open up myself to you and hand you the cane as part of the art of the dance, so that really just allowed us to be even more connected, especially for folks in the mobility device community.

CHIME: You often say that you sing in sign language. Can you explain a little what that means?

Brandon: Think of a choreographer who is responsible for dance and a production. I'm an ASL choreographer. So as a dancer it's my job to take the choreography that I'm doing, which is a mixture of gestures and actual shapes of the dance, and the ASL, the sign language that actually has five grammatical parameters, that has linguistics that I have to follow, and blend those things together in order to not just translate from English into sign language, but also to show the dynamics of the music and to show the character of the voice, if there is a voice. So Lachi's singing, is she being harsh with her tone? Is she being sweet? Is she being demanding? And all of that comes from my facial expressions and how I move my body. But I think the largest distinction between interpreting something like the presidential address to taking something like a song that Lachi has written, and is singing and playing on the piano, and expressing artistically, is being aware of the kinesphere, of your body's kinesphere, and using all of it. And not staying so localized as to just relay the message, but to show the dynamics and stretch the music, and show the rhythm of the music as well in one's body. I think those are all things that I really focus on when I'm signing a song.

CHIME: Lachi, you gave an interview and said "Always remember that the gift we've been given as folks with disabilities is that we know how to solve a maze with no solution. We are always about the option C that no one else considers. So what's your option C?" Could you speak to that a little?

Lachi: As people with disabilities, we get ‘no’ all the time, and quite frankly, it’s not just the word or verbiage, no, from people saying it to our face, it’s just the way society’s built. Society is not built for folks with disabilities in mind. I mean, frankly, society’s not actually built for Black people in mind, for queer people in mind, for Black women in mind. So society has its own paths. And listen, society is very colonial and we can talk about that, but at the end of the day, in order to survive and succeed in this society as someone who’s living in it, and it wasn’t built for them, you start to hone this muscle of problem solving. You start thinking outside of the box, thinking creatively. You see the staircase and you can see that you can get to the top, but the question is just a matter of how, not a matter of not getting there, right? And so that’s really what I mean by folks with disabilities, really hone that craft of being able to solve unsolvable mazes, being able to figure out that option C where most folks who are so used to just black and white and going, “Well, I don’t see another way,” and walking off.

And this has really applied to my life personally, in so many different ways, figuring out how to run a studio as a blind person, but also how to make people feel comfortable watching me work and also how to really do anything, honestly, because everything’s so inaccessible. And Brandon, you made such a good point. I kind of want to go back to this point of when we create things with everyone in mind, it’s not just access for people with disabilities, it’s really just general access. And so what I’m trying to say is that when we universally think with everyone’s needs in mind, this includes people with disabilities, everyone benefits.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

THE GREEN WAVE AND GLOBAL REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Symone D. Sanders: *This was a conversation you know we needed to have. In the United States, this is serious right now. But I'm about to tell you something that should make you hopeful, because it made me hopeful. While access to safe abortion is threatened in the US, the Green Wave movement has helped deliver groundbreaking victories in Latin America. For this next conversation, we're proud to highlight a leader of the Green Wave movement, Paula Avila-Guillen. Paula has led efforts to end the total abortion ban in El Salvador, and successfully legalized abortion in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico. I need y'all to focus on this because it can be done.*

And speaking with Paula is actress, author, and reproductive rights activist Busy Philipps. In 2019, Busy opened up about her own abortion on her talk show "Busy Tonight," and she sparked a national conversation using the hashtag #YouKnowMe. A month later, Busy testified before a House Judiciary Subcommittee on threats to reproductive rights in America.

Editor's note: *This conversation took place at the end of April 2022, a few days before the Dobbs v. Jackson draft Supreme Court opinion was leaked.*

Busy Philipps: There are 13 US states currently that have trigger ban laws, which means if Roe v. Wade is overturned, abortion in the first and second trimesters would be immediately banned in those states. Abortion will be gone for the people who need to access that vital health care and for people who deserve bodily autonomy, including in my home state Arizona, where I had an abortion at age 15. Let's be real, baby Busy Philipps still gets the abortion. Because my parents would pay for it. They would take me where I needed to go. I'm white and I'm born privileged. What this decision in June is going to do to the most vulnerable in our country is unconscionable. We can learn from other countries. I know that many people in this country thought, "Oh, it's never going to get overturned". And here we are. And so now, Paula, let's just talk about what the state of abortion in Latin America was five years ago.

Paula Avila-Guillen: So five years ago, it was like what we are about to see in the United States and was what you were just describing—is that abortion was a privilege. Those who live in urban areas and have money will always find a doctor who's willing to do the procedure, will always find medicine, and abortion will always be available regardless of the status of the law. Legally, there

were five countries that had total abortion bans and there were only two countries, Cuba and Uruguay, who had the recognition of autonomy as a right. The rest of the countries [had] what we call the “exception system,” in which you needed to justify the reason why you needed to have an abortion. In some cases, it was because your life is in danger or your health is in danger, or because you were a victim of rape. But it needed justification; it was never because you choose. And that is so crucial because at the end of the day, what ends up happening is that doctors, insurance, politicians, everybody who is always trying to get in our bodies and in our business, will find multiple barriers to deny the services, even in the cases of life, health, and rape.

Philipps: And then what happened with this Green Wave?

Avila-Guillen: What happened was that we got tired of dying, because literally we were dying. And who was dying? The most vulnerable, the most poor, the youngest, the ones who live in the rural areas. And we say enough. And then something happened in Argentina when we celebrated International Day of Violence Against Women on November 25th, which is usually only about violence. The reproductive rights movement was always separate from the women’s violence movement and violence movements. They were like two different things. And then the movements decide to collide. And they take this symbol, the symbol of the pañuelo [scarf/handkerchief], and they make it green because it’s health. And they decide to have one of the largest marches that we have seen in history. There were millions of people and women on the street, and that’s just a spark of movement that didn’t stop. That’s what we call it, the Green Wave. And they took over Argentina, and then to Mexico. And then it arrived to my home country of Colombia very recently.

Philipps: If abortion can be decriminalized and then legalized in the three largest, most Catholic countries in Latin America, what are we doing wrong here?

Avila-Guillen: One of the things that really frustrates me, is when I see what is about to happen in the United States, and I don’t see people protesting every single day. They want to control us. They want to control our bodies and our choices. Because if they control our autonomy, they decide for us. And if they decide for us, then we will not rise up. And they are so afraid of us rising up. They are so afraid of minorities and other people rising up because if we rise up, then we overtake this system of oppression that has been existing for years, this patriarchy. So they need to control our destinies. And it’s not only about abortion, but it is about who we are, how we decide to live, it is about our identities.

Philipps: Okay, so how do we start the Green Wave here? What are we doing?

Avila-Guillen: Yes! So look, if there is something that I think that we need to do, it is to start really showing up.

Philipps: We can do that!

Avila-Guillen: We have to do it. And I have these, and I just want to throw them to the audience because I do believe that symbols matter (begins throwing green bandanas, the symbol of the Green Wave, into the audience).

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

UKRAINE:

A PLEA

FOR PEACE

Symone D. Sanders: The war in Ukraine continues to create massive refugee populations. As of April 2022, when this conversation took place, an estimated 5 million people had been forced to flee from Ukraine, and they joined a vast population of displaced people from around the world, over 84 million in total from countries including Syria and South Sudan. To help us understand the human impact of this war and how the world is responding, I spoke to Olena Chianova. She's an attorney and mother of two who left Ukraine and arrived in New York in April. Olena, tell me where you're from and what did you used to do in Ukraine?

Olena Chianova: I am from Ukraine, Odessa region. City of Izmail. It is in the south of Ukraine which is currently not under occupation. During the first days of the war, we did not have any food in the supermarkets, no medicine. My child is disabled and I could not buy the medication in the city and the whole of Ukraine because there were no shipments from Odessa or Kiev. My oldest son, he was going to a regular school, he was going to art school. Before the war everything was peaceful and quiet, and when the war began, peace vanished. People are having nervous breakdowns. My acquaintance from Kharviv, her neighbor committed suicide because of the blaring sirens and rockets exploding.

Sanders: Olena, I'm so sorry to hear about your friend and neighbor. I want to ask you, when was the moment that you knew you had to take your sons and leave?

Chianova: I knew when I heard the sirens and when I could not buy the medication or sanitary supplies for the child. I could not provide safety for my children, that's when I made the call to leave, because with a disabled child it would be difficult to leave the occupied territory. With my disabled child in my arms, we crossed six countries, two continents. We were in transit for a month with a child in a wheelchair.

Sanders: Your sister is here in New York. She's in Brooklyn?

Chianova: Yes, my sister is in Brooklyn. She helped me get out of Ukraine because not everyone right now has the ability to do that. People do not have savings, even for a plane ticket.

Sanders: Olena, those people. Those are your friends, your neighbors. Have you spoken to any of them since you have been here, and if so what are you hearing from them?

Chianova: Yes, we are constantly in touch. I left my mother, my father, and my brother. People cannot escape the occupied territories. There is no water, no food. Non-stop war. They're hiding in bomb shelters. Everyone is suffering

Sanders: You have a room here full of feminist leaders, people who care about what is happening. What message do you have for them?

Chianova: I would like to ask them to stop the war in Ukraine. To stop death. If we all respected each other, and treated each other with love, we would never have war. We all need to remember that we live in a civilized world and to find a solution to this situation. War is death, suffering, it is grief for all of us. Especially for my nation today.

Sanders: Olena, I want to thank you for sharing your story, for your courage, for your leadership and reminding us all that people are at the heart of what is happening around the world.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

JOURNALISM RESISTANCE AND FLEEING AFGHANISTAN

Symone D. Sanders: *For the next conversation, we are going to take you across the world and back for another vision of a feminist future. Until last summer, Fatema Hosseini was reporting on many of the same political and social issues we are dealing with in the United States of America. Except she was 6,730 miles away as a journalist based in Kabul, Afghanistan. And when Kabul fell to the Taliban, she was at real risk. We'll hear about her escape in her conversation with Paola Ramos, who has herself witnessed the implications of dictatorial regimes worldwide in her role as host and correspondent for Vice News and contributor to Telemundo and MSNBC.*

Paola Ramos: It's amazing to be here, and I think this is obviously a conversation between two journalists and it's a conversation about human rights. But I think more than anything, it's a conversation about the pain and the trauma that comes with exposing truths. You chose journalism, which in many ways was and is a death sentence in Afghanistan. What made you choose that path?

Fatema Hosseini: In 2018, when I graduated from Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, my major was politics, philosophy, economics. I always wanted to be a researcher focusing on women's issues because women keep having these serious problems in Afghanistan. These issues have been going on for ages and they have never been solved. I am the daughter of a refugee family, so my parents fled the country during the 1990s, the first time the Taliban took over the country. Growing up in that society, under the Taliban, I have always had questions about women's rights. And when I came back to Afghanistan, I was searching for jobs. When I got offered the job, I could not say it to my mom. She was super worried about me because my father was already part of the army. And my mom seeing her husband's life in danger and seeing her daughter accepting a risky job was not acceptable for her. So I could not tell her. I hid it until a month before the fall of Kabul.

Ramos: And then came a moment where you couldn't hide that any longer. Where being a journalist essentially put a target on your back and on your family's back. Take me back to August 19th 2021, the day that you fled.

Hosseini: My mom always used to say that the Taliban are so scary. But at the same time, she was the person who told me that the Taliban are just human beings, as we all are. So you should not be afraid of human beings. You can fight with all you have. Right? And that, that takes so much bravery. The team that stood with me, stayed with me, and saved my life, had that bravery. At the first checkpoint, the Taliban swore in public that if they would see me again, they would literally kill me. At the second checkpoint, one of the Taliban commanders wanted to lash me, but when I entered the space, the whip directly hit the shoulder of one of the women behind me. Her flesh was torn and I could see the blood. I got sexually harassed. I stood up and shouted. I knew that the Taliban were there, and they were literally screaming that if you don't sit, I'm going to shoot at you, right. But I couldn't, I couldn't take the hand between my legs. And it was stuck there, and that man's wife was literally seeing her husband's hands in between my legs, but she couldn't do anything because it's dangerous. And women are like voiceless. Most of women are as voiceless as that woman that day. So I stood up and I literally shouted, "take me out of that crowd, throw me out of that crowd." And the commander came and he fired next to my ears. And I could see the bullets are falling off to that lady—I don't know whether she was dead or not. I felt like I lost all my weight, and I felt so light like a ball that the Taliban commander took me and threw me out of that crowd, and I got faint. And it was at that moment that a Ukrainian army force saved my life. He called me saying: "Just stay there. I bribed one of the Taliban commanders to take you in at the airport." When I went to Ukraine, I talked to Ukrainian commanders and they agreed on evacuating my parents on the next plane. And they were. They went to Ukraine.

Ramos: Do you see any glimmers of hope in Afghanistan right now? Are you thinking about the notion of change in a different way?

Hosseini: I'm sad to see the war happening in Ukraine. I'm sad to see that after that war, Afghanistan's been forgotten by the world. So right now, the media doesn't focus on Afghanistan and the things that are going on in Afghanistan. And I'm sad to see that the Taliban are taking the opportunity of that chance to increase the number of expulsions, to increase the number of violence, and killing more and more people, robbing more and more people. And it's the resistance coming from the people. Last year, in the same month, an explosion happened, actually two, three explosions happened at a girls' school, and there were more than a hundred young female students who were killed and wounded. This year three explosions happened at the same place, the high school but for male students, and more than two hundred students were killed and wounded. Who talks about that? These schools are open, these students want to get an education. They never want the Taliban to be the winner. Right now I'm outside the country and the question comes to me, 'What if I were to be in the country? What would happen to me?' The province I was born in, where my parents were also raised, is called Bayman, and it is in the central part of Afghanistan. Recently there was an event launched by the Taliban and they wanted to encourage people to support the Taliban but women were so angry they went on the stage and tore the banners. But I do see hope. This time the change is not coming from men. It's coming from women, which is inspiring.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full conversation, visit 22for22.live.

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