

Stories from the brainreels podcast transcript

February 2, 2017

[music]

Introduction

CHERYL: Welcome to Stories from the brainreels monthly podcast about brain injury and disability with a focus on art, culture, and disability pride.

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Today I'm talking with Jane Vogel, Founder of Age & Gender Equity in the Arts and steering committee chair for the upcoming symposium called Unconscious Bias: Achieving Gender Equity. We're also talking with Gigi Williams, filmmaker and social justice activist who's also on the symposium steering committee. And me, I'm on the steering committee. I'm interviewing two people today because it was really important to me to have some of the spirit of community building and collaboration that we have in our committee meetings and bring it to the show. I want to say that a lot of effort goes into making sure the meetings are collaborative and not top-down. But with this group, it's not a lot of effort. There's just naturally a sense of camaraderie and sharing and quite a lot of generosity and respect.

I originally met Jane because Gigi had joined the steering committee and then told me how great it was. You remember Gigi from a recent episode where we talked about the film she wrote, executive-produced and co-directed, "Angela's Sacred Heart." So I met with Jane to see if she'd like to be interviewed for the show, and I had joined her committee by end of that first conversation with her. Because we mostly talk today about the philosophies and practices behind the symposium, I'm going to lay out the logistical details here at the beginning before we get to the interview.

The symposium all takes place in Smith Union and Hoffman Hall on the PSU campus. It kicks off Friday evening, March 3rd with keynote presentations, live music, and dancing. We go all day Saturday, March 4th with presentations, engagement sessions, and performances. Saturday at 8:00 and Sunday at 2:00 pm, we're showing Minita Gandhi's solo show "Muthaland" in Lincoln Hall. There will be a talkback after both performances, and you can get the performance tickets either separately or as part of the symposium package.

The diverse lineup of local and national symposium presenters and performers will include Obie Award winner and Pulitzer Prize finalist,

playwright, actress and poet Dael Orlandersmith; film and TV actress and comedian Michaela Watkins; noted classical Indian dance troupe, Anjali School of Dance; and award-winning vocalist, LaRhonda Steele. And there are too many exciting and amazing names to name. So please find all the info, detailed schedule, and contact info at ageinthearts.org/unconscious-bias-symposium-2017.

Getting into the interview, I want to give a brief content notice: We do mention rape, sexual assault, and violence against women and girls. There are no graphic details or descriptions of this beyond a story I tell of a guy being super gross and touching my back too much at work. But I wanted you to know it comes up as one of the many reasons we feel strongly that [more gender equity work is needed](#).

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CHERYL: All right. So I am here with Gigi and Jane.

JANE: I'm Jane Vogel. I am founder of Age & Gender Equity in the Arts, a non-profit social justice organization, and we are created to promote the visibility of women in the performing arts.

GIGI: Hi, I'm Gigi Williams. I'm the writer, executive producer, and co-director of "Angela's Sacred Heart," and I'm also a social justice activist.

CHERYL: Great. I'm so glad that you two wanna talk to me today. It's January 20th, which is a really meaningful day for us to be sitting and talking about women's rights and equity in general, equity across the board. And we're here to talk about the symposium that was your idea, Jane, and we're on the committee for it. One of the hashtags that recently came up was #NowMoreThanEver.

JANE: Yes.

CHERYL: That we wanna use to go along with the symposium. But I think just in general, right? No more than ever.

JANE: Absolutely.

CHERYL: So Gigi, I would love to hear about how you found out about the symposium and why you joined the steering committee.

GIGI: Sure. I found out about the symposium from my friend, Jane here, who's the founding executive director and the board president. We were interviewing on Straight Talk TV with Tony Brown, and she was promoting the symposium there while I was promoting "Angela's Sacred Heart," a film that I had written, produced, and co-directed about my life experience trying to raise awareness about violence against women.

CHERYL: OK! So y'all, but y'all two already knew each other, but you just learned about the symposium when you were on the show together.

GIGI: Yes.

CHERYL: Oh, that's so cool.

GIGI: Yeah.

JANE: Yes, we had a connection through your daughter, Ashley, because Ashley and I are both actors.

GIGI: Right.

JANE: And so we knew each other, and then Gigi, you invited me to participate in the talk-back when you were doing a showing for "Angela's Sacred Heart."

GIGI: Exactly. When we had the premiere of "Angela's Sacred Heart," here in Portland at the Hollywood Theatre on Mother's Day weekend. It was a wonderful event, right? And for the special occasion on a Mother's Day weekend, it was even more special because it was a story about women.

CHERYL: And I know a lot of your work around that film is getting women together to support women and uplift women to end violence against women.

GIGI: Absolutely. Absolutely, and I'm very passionate about those type of issues and violence against women and women's right and human rights. I'm gonna be marching tomorrow. The March on Washington will be scheduled for here in Portland the day after. But anything that has to do with raising awareness about women's rights and making women's lives a little bit better, I really want to contribute or participate in that in any way that I can.

CHERYL: Right, right, which is why you are on the steering committee for the symposium, which we're going to talk about in just a second.

Unconscious bias and the need for gender equity

I know that Jane, as you've been designing and programming this symposium, you have met against some pushback of people saying, "Why? We have Meryl Streep," for example. "Why do we need to have a whole symposium dedicated to talking about women's equity or gender equity, age equity?" I am so intrigued, in a negative way, when you get that feedback [chuckles]. So I wanna hear your own words, though, why the symposium on gender equity?

JANE: And more specifically, it's not just about gender equity, but it's about the unconscious bias around gender equity. And for me, unconscious bias is that it lives in each one of us, but it's that part of ourselves that actually influences our behavior.

CHERYL: Did y'all watch the debates? There was a point where Hillary said, "We all have unconscious bias. We all have unconscious bias." And her opponent: "Argh! I don't." And that is exactly what you're getting at. We know about our conscious biases, but we don't know about our unconscious biases because they're unconscious.

JANE: Absolutely.

CHERYL: And this symposium is an opportunity to come and talk about them and raise our own awareness and consciousness around them and in a non-judgmental way. But to recognize that you have them and that you can take steps to try to unlearn them or not respond to them.

JANE: Mmhmm. Conscious bias is what we intend and what we say. And in Portland, Portland tends to be a pretty progressive community, particularly the arts community. And you don't find a lot of people overtly making racist comments, sexist comments, misogynistic--supporting misogyny--or bigotry. However, when we look at actual behavior patterns, are are not post-racial in Portland. We don't have gender equity. Trans women, queer women, women with disabilities are still marginalized, and that is coming from the unconscious piece. And I feel that in order to really make changes, we need to focus on looking at ourselves, looking at that part of ourselves that we really don't have awareness of. It's a very difficult thing to do. And I was excited to do that because I feel that it's an important piece in terms of moving us forward in creating change. What I wasn't expecting was the pushback when it came time to asking for funding because I had such support and enthusiasm from people about yes, this is absolutely a topic that needs to be addressed. When I went out, and I approached women-led organizations, corporations, foundations--and not just women-led, men-led

organizations as well--I was not prepared for the response. And the response was I got several people saying to me, "You know, we really don't have gender inequity in Portland."

CHERYL: [laughs]

JANE: And they could name women actors who they saw on the stage, and they could name-- They said, "And we have Hillary running for President." And so they just were not aware of the data that is pretty prevalent. And so I would share that with them. Yeah, I would say, "Well, you know, 85% of our theater companies, professional theater companies, are led by men, white men in this town. And they're wonderful men. They're very talented, artistic men, but they are men, and they see the world through their male eyes because that's how human nature works." And that's a national statistic. And the other statistic, which Gigi and I share a lot of common passion around, is the statistic of violence against girls and women, that every 90 seconds a woman is raped. That speaks volumes. Rape, sexual assault, violence against girls and women is all about disempowerment. And we have stories about disempowerment in the theater, on the film, in the screens, and that's normalized. And I don't have answers. I would like to raise the questions, and I would like to bring people together--not women, not artists--I want to bring people together from all different walks of life to have this conversation. And together, if we can create a safe environment, maybe we can co-create some news ideas, some new narratives, some new awareness and enthusiasm about how we can move forward. And no more than ever, we need to do that because of regardless of what your political persuasion is, I'm not interested in having political discussion; however, I am interested in safety and dignity and respect for all people. And that is not what I've been hearing in this election. And so no more than ever, we need to rise up and talk about these things and make sure that we keep moving in the right direction.

CHERYL: Yeah. There's the topic of how many women are working in these different fields, and then there's the question of once women are in the door, what is it like for them--for us--when we're in the door? So I recently worked on a production--not a theater production, but an artistic production--and I was partnered up with a man who was very, very nice and very friendly. And also took occasion to rub his hand across my back every time he walked past me. There was plenty of room for him to get past me without having to indicate to me that he was passing me. So it wasn't like a, "Watch out. I'm passing you." He was just rubbing his hand across my back. So there I was. I had my position in the production; I had my name in the

credits. And yet, the environment in which I was working, I wouldn't call it assault or abuse, but it was so hostile. And there were no consequences for him.

So I know that the story that I just told is not unique about being touched. I'm allowed to be on the job, but I'm not safe when I'm there. I know that y'all know stories like that.

JANE: Well, but the other thing that I would mention is that the state of the industry in theater right now is such that for women, there are such few roles and opportunities for them that when a woman speaks out and says, "I don't like it when you touch me like this" or whatever, there is the potential for subtle retribution. At least the woman feels that it increases her chances of not being asked to come back and be cast again. And so women are more silent, and they put up with that kind of thing. And that's unfortunate. One of the things that Age & Gender is going to really push for is for all theater companies to have a written policy for safety in the workplace on and off the stage. And theater companies, I know they're stretched with resources, but this is something that can be implemented without a lot of extra work because since the Profile Theater in Chicago--not our Profile Theater here, but the one in Chicago--when they had revealed that, through an investigation, that there had been 20 years of abuse by the artistic director towards the women who had been working there, several theater companies got together, and they developed a code of conduct. And they are encouraging theater companies across the country to pilot that and give them feedback. So there are documents available that theater companies can use and modify to meet their needs. But we have to begin by having a policy.

Representation on and offstage

CHERYL: We're talking about women working in the arts as an actor or playwright or screenwriter, anything, but then also how the arts reflect culture and other guide culture. And so when we don't have good representations or stories written and performed by the people who--how am I saying this? When you have, for instance, a white man writing the role of a woman of color, that's not gonna be good enough for representation. So it's both on the side of the person working in the arts and the person consuming the arts too.

JANE: And there's discussion and argument about that because the men who are writing and have written, many of them are really, really good writers. But the opportunity for the woman to tell her story is not there, and women

who are playwrights are mentored differently in playwriting school. And you know, there's some research to back that up now. Women are not produced, and so many women end up leaving the profession. And so now, [the Kilroys have gotten together](#) where they are vetting plays written by women so that if a producer wants to put on a play put on by a woman, they can go to that list and look at what the works are.

CHERYL: Yeah. Is there, Gigi do you know, is there a list like that of women-made or women-directed films?

GIGI: There is an organization that regularly puts together a weekly list, but it just gives a list of the numbers; it tallies the numbers. And probably, I think at the end of last year, they had a long list about the numbers of films made over the year by women, directed by women, women's stories. And it's very lacking. I mean, we really do need to get those numbers up. It's very, very small percentage of films, and it's getting smaller and smaller. So that's why I really want to get my film done, and I wanna support films made by women. So I went to see "Hidden Figures" over the Christmas holidays, and that's a film about women, starring three Black women who played a major part in the space program in helping to get that-- What was his name?

JANE: John Glenn.

GIGI: John Glenn, yes. They helped to get John Glenn, the first American astronaut, out into space. They played a tremendous part in this program. They were scientists, they were mathematicians, they were engineers, and they really didn't get treated with respect. A lot of that had to do with the unconscious and the conscious bias. 'Cause we're looking at women, and we're looking at African-American women. And it was very sad, but it made you laugh, and it made me cry. And these are the films that I would like to see. We need to make more films like that about woman, 'cause we learn a lot by people from their stories. And I didn't know about their story until they made this film about it. The film also demonstrated what bias looks like and what their challenge was and what their journey was. So we learn to emotionally connect to the actors on the screen, and also the audience connects with each other emotionally. At the end of the screening, there was a loud applause from the entire audience. So we had been on that journey together, and we had an emotional experience together. I think that the audience, which was primarily white, learned something about what that experience is like if you are a person of color and what their life looks like and what their life feels like. If you're so detached from that environment and not connected to it in any way, how else would you have any way of

knowing? And that's why a lot of people think, "Oh, there's no bias anymore. There's no racism anymore. It doesn't exist." How do you know? How do they know? So I really applauded the filmmakers for that film. One of the most important examples, I think, that a lot of people were surprised about was the fact that these women were not allowed to use the restroom in the building where they worked. This was in the 1950s. It was a big complex, but the colored restrooms were situated a 1/2 a mile away in another building. So on their breaks, their 15-minute breaks, they had to run to use the restroom and run back to their office to get back on time. They were consistently yelled at because they were late, and "Why do you take so long to use the restroom?" So finally, eventually, they realized that that was gonna be a major problem, especially since there was a restroom right there in the building. So these are the challenges that people have been--Black people--and women have their issues too. But we need to talk about these things. We need to make more stories about these things so that we will have a little bit more empathy, understanding, and compassion about other people and their challenges.

CHERYL: Yeah. And that starts with acknowledging, "You know what? I didn't know that. I had never thought of that before. I'm glad I know that now."

GIGI: It's unconscious! They had no idea.

JANE: Well, and privilege allows people to be unconscious.

CHERYL: Mmhmm.

JANE: That's one of the luxuries that comes with privilege is that you don't have to notice.

GIGI: Until it affects you. Until it affects you in some way. And in this particular case, it affected them because it affected their ability to perform their job. So then they became aware. This is a challenge, and we need to do something about it. Other than that, they had no knowledge, and they really didn't need to care about what was going on.

CHERYL: And isn't it interesting, too, like we don't want to integrate the bathrooms for your comfort and your dignity. But you're taking too long to go to the bathroom, and that's causing a problem for us. It's still, even when we start to take those steps toward equity, we still often center the most privileged self in that, that oh, we can't delay. We need these numbers run so that the space program can work on time. Not so that these African-American women have dignity. Still, every step in the right direction counts, but then keep taking more steps. 'Cause there's always more steps to take.

JANE: Right. So when we change the action, when we change the bathroom policy, that doesn't mean that we suddenly have become post-racial.

CHERYL: [laughs] No!

GIGI: Exactly.

JANE: Or post-sexist or misogynist because we didn't do it out of an empathic reason like you're saying. We did it because it was bogging them down. It was hurting the system.

GIGI: Exactly.

JANE: Yeah.

CHERYL: Which is why it's so important to get the stories out in the media, get more kinds of stories out so people can say, "Oh, I care about that other person's perspective, not just my own!"

GIGI: And that's the whole point, that we get out of our heads and our of our perspective and be able to appreciate other people's points of views and their perspectives.

Puchi de Jesus's story on post-election protests

CHERYL: At this point, we're going to take a short break from the interview, but it's not for a music snippet like we usually do. As I mentioned at the beginning, I had this conversation with Jane and Gigi on January 20th. A couple hours after our interview ended, KBOO did an extended 2-hour evening news instead of the usual one hour of news and one hour of Bread and Roses. That night, the news programmers aired a short piece I made, and I want to play it for you right now in case you missed it that night. Because in so many ways, being in the room to record Puchi for the clip you're about to hear felt so much like being in the room to talk with Jane and Gigi. You'll see. Here it is. The story that Puchi tells is from November 8th and 9th.

As you know, Bread and Roses is the feminist news and public affairs collective at KBOO. We sit down together as a collective to plan out ideas for our shows. A few weeks ago, we were talking about the presidential election, of course, and one of our members, Puchi, had some stories that we were all really moved by. Here's just a little bit of a recording I made with her recently. Oh, and in addition to Puchi's voice, you might also sometimes hear from her cat and his jingling collar. The cat's name is Cootie.

[somber music]

There was a lot of news coverage about the anti-Trump protests.

PUCHI: I had to work that night. So I left the house probably around 11:00.

CHERYL: But something that didn't get as much coverage was a smaller group of people on the second night of protests who got together for a very different purpose. This is that story.

PUCHI: So the first night, it was OK. It was the second night that was a little wild.

[Portlanders protesting and yelling, banging, police yelling]

The MAXes were not running because they were blocked. So I couldn't take the MAX to work, so I had to walk all the way. And there was smoke everywhere. I could hear the cartridges being shot.

[flash bangs, yelling]

And the rubber bullets and everything, and just big booms everywhere. And I'm just trying to get to work, and there's people running in my direction. So they're trying to get away from the direction that I'm headed towards! So I get to work, and I still see people running around. There's trucks with riot police driving by.

[police vehicles rush past]

I hear that windows are being broken in businesses and stores. I was...I was just worried about what would happen if it was me by myself with like the cleaning lady for the store. So for me, it was a little nerve-wracking because normally everything is so quiet, and you don't hear anything. If anything, you just hear the garbage trucks and maybe the MAX ding.

So around 1:30-ish, the truck arrives at my store. My job is to receive the truck with all the new merchandise every night. He calls me to see if I'm working that night because as he's driving into the city, he says that he can barely see the city. He says that there's like a fog. I tell him, "I don't think that's fog." So he comes over. He doesn't have a problem making it into the city. There's still riot police riding around, and there's people running around as we're taking the stuff down from the truck. This group of people starts to line themselves up across the street right there next to the dock! [crowds yelling] And there's just this group of people just trying to stand their ground there on the corner yelling, "White power" out there. And my heart just sank. I'm stuck in this store. It's just me, the cleaning lady, my truck driver--who happens to be a Black Puerto Rican man--and then there's the security guard for the building, who's also a Black man. Every single

cleaning person that works for the building is either a minority or some immigrant. There's people in there that barely speak English, you know. What do I do in a situation like this? There's people yelling, "White power" outside.

And all the sudden, the riot police show up, and they're right there in front of the store! And they're telling them, "You need to get off the street, or we will use force." And the people are just there, trying to stand their ground. It was maybe 40 people.

It was almost two in the morning around the time they were gone, finally, all of them.

[somber music]

That morning, as soon as the store manager came in, I was like, "Listen! I need somebody from security here tonight." 'Cause they don't leave security with us overnight. They just leave us with the alarm set up. But I was just like, no! I am not gonna be alone here tonight. There's another protest. I explained everything that happened. So he was totally OK with that. They had someone in the next night.

Yeah, I just wasn't expecting it to be...a riot, I guess. I was following protests in other cities, and I was just like, "What happened in Portland?!" Not that there's anything wrong with riots. I don't know if it has to do with the politics of people in Portland in specific. I don't know if it has anything to do with the amount of white people in Oregon and how people tend to radicalize a little more because of that. I don't know. I don't know what the conditions are that caused specifically Portland to turn into a riot.

Since the protests calmed down, I feel all right. I did talk to my store manager again. I was like, "Listen. The 20th, the Inauguration. I have to work that night. I don't know what's gonna happen when he actually gets sworn into office." So I asked them to put security in the store again just in case.

[music]

Intersectional approach to gender equity in the arts

CHERYL: Let's hear now from Jane and how her life path took her to the arts, away, and right back into the arts to fight for gender equity.

JANE: So I wanted to be an actor; an actress is what we called it back then. I wanted to be an actress from the time I was about an elementary school

child. Our family had come over as refugees from Indonesia by way of The Netherlands, and so I spent a lot of time writing plays and starring in them. And then when I got to high school, that was when my father, who was a very lovely, protective man, pulled me aside and told me that he would forbid me to go into acting. Because, he said, in America they do bad things to women who become actresses. And he had done his research and heard the stories about Judy Garland back then, and that wasn't what he wanted for me. So I became a trauma psychologist, and it wasn't until I was in my mid- to late-40s when he passed away that I realized that that dream was still alive. So I decided to pursue that dream. I have no regrets about that. I'm passionate about the arts. What surprised me was how women were treated, still, in the arts. I don't know. I guess I hadn't seen it up close like that. And so I realized that I wanted to do something to see if I could make that different, and not me alone, but to bring people together to talk about it and to take some action steps and see what we could do. So that's when I came up with the idea of Age & Gender Equity in the Arts and the initial idea, which we are doing, and that is to raise money and to invite professional theater companies in Portland to take a look at their numbers, to take a look at who they're programming for with playwrights, who's doing the directing, who's doing the lead roles--and eventually, we're also going to be including designers into that--and to see if they can make it more balanced. Because people who identify as women represent 51% of the population, and we're anywhere from 17% to 30%, depending on what category we're looking at. We still have a long ways to go. So that is one aspect of it. Then the other idea I came up with is to have this symposium to just raise awareness about what does it really mean to create equity, to create gender equity. And another issue that I would like us to have a lot of conversation about is how we are addressing equity, that right now, I'm seeing a school of thought that says that we need to do it in a compartmentalized, linear way, that we need to look at race, or we need to look at disabilities, and some other time, we're going to look at gender. I completely disagree with that. I feel that when we look at race, if we take the women and color and don't bring them to the table, we are not going to make the progress that needs to be made. So I say we can't wait until we have successfully addressed the racial equity piece. No. We need to have the women be part of that solution. So it needs to be in an intersectional way, and that's why I say the table is round, everybody needs to come to the table, and we need to not talk about, "OK, we're only going to talk about gender, folks, and we're not going to address race in this." Absolutely not. We're going to talk about humanity, and humanity is about gender; gender is not binary. We're going to talk about

race, we're going to talk about ableism, disabilities, we're going to talk about LGBTQ and what that means. We're going to talk about all of it.

CHERYL: Yeah. Now, I wanna point out this is different from "All Lives Matters."

JANE: My understanding of what "All Lives Matter" means is that we don't look at what the Black experience is, and we only look at what all lives-- No. What I'm saying is we look at Black Lives Matter, but it's not without the gender piece. It's looking at it in an--what I call an--integrated way. If we truly lived our lives as if all lives matter, then I'm all for all lives mattering. But the reality is that our institutions do not operate as if all lives matter. Our institutions operate as if Black lives don't matter. And that is why we need to call attention to that.

GIGI: I agree, Jane, 100%. You're right. If all lives matter, then we wouldn't need a Black Lives Matter. We wouldn't need that program because everybody would matter, you know?

CHERYL: Right.

JANE: I think I might've said this metaphor before. I think about it as having more than one child and saying, "You know, I'm going to feed and raise one child first, and then I'm going to come back and do the other one." It's not how it works!

A symposium without "experts"

CHERYL: Another interesting thing that's happening in this moment is we have people coming into extraordinarily high offices--including the highest office in the country--people who don't actually have training or education or job experience in the jobs that they're moving into, which I find completely terrifying and mind-blowing. But I'm thinking about it because one of the key parts of the symposium is that it is not based in "experts" sort of dumping expert information into the heads of non-experts in that binary. But I wanna be clear that that's different from having unqualified people step into positions that they know nothing about. I just wanted to clarify, 'cause when we've talked about non-experts before, I wasn't thinking about how the presidency and the Cabinet is being filled with really, really non-experts. Jane, I'd love to hear you talk about your perspective on why this symposium the presenters are not just experts talking at the audience.

JANE: I have opted to choreograph the symposium this way because I believe that when it comes to equity issues, I feel that we are in the baby

stages of really learning about that and knowing about it. And I just happen to come from a school of thought in the way I live my life that when I enter into a relationship with someone, whether that person 2 years old or 90 years old, I come away learning something from that person. And I find that if I'm in the position of being the parent or the expert or the teacher, first of all, I generally am doing all the talking and not the listening. And then I don't learn. I would really like this symposium to be very much about whoever walks in the door has expertise that they are going to share. I don't want to create the illusion--or the delusion--that people who are coming in the door are going to be met with these experts who have the truth, and we're going to teach you about equity. I just don't believe that we're there, and not "we" the symposium people; I believe that we on this planet are not there.

CHERYL: I like that.

GIGI: I like that too, Jane.

CHERYL: [laughs]

GIGI: So we're learning together.

JANE: Yes.

GIGI: Yeah.

CHERYL: And also saying we don't-- You know, when you hear the word "expert," typically you're talking about somebody with a degree or multiple degrees, which requires money and the access of all sorts, a lot of class and other kinds of privilege to get to "expert" status. Which devalues all the lived experience and the life wisdom that anybody might have.

JANE: Well, and being in my early 60s, which I'm very pleased to be in my early 60s, I have lived long enough where I have been in a period of time in history where we believed certain things to be true. And now 20, 30 years later, we look back on that, and we say, Whoa. That wasn't true at all." For me, it has humbled me. So when I hear experts today speaking, I think, you know, 30 years from now, that may not be the way we think at all. And therefore, I like to always be curious and open. I also think that when we become experts, I think that we have a tendency to stop being curious, and we stop questioning and learning. And that is not a good thing. This whole issue about treating people with dignity, treating people who are vulnerable and who don't have access to resources, finding ways that they can empower themselves, that we can change the way we're living so that it's not adversely affecting them, that is such a complex and difficult situation.

Because when we have privilege, we don't like to give that up, particularly around power and money. We don't like to let go of that. So even though I wear rose-colored glasses, and I'm very optimistic, I also don't see equity as a final destination; I see it as a dynamic process that we must spend our lives working at, being curious about, and being open to the idea that inside of us lives this shadow where we are indulging in privilege, and it is adversely affecting another person. One thing I was going to mention is that we have over 40 performers and presenters and that almost 60% of them are people of color, which I think is very important considering what the dire statistic is in theater and in Portland in general in terms of people of color.

Sponsorships and donations to the symposium

CHERYL: The symposium is happening in a month, and it takes quite a bit of resources to put a symposium on. Let's talk about ways that people who are listening to this episode can lend support or sponsor or give to one of your scholarships.

JANE: Yes, it does cost money to put on this symposium. And the reason that we are moving forward with it is because a lot of people, including the two of you, are being incredibly generous in terms of volunteering, lending support. We have gotten in-kind donations. Portland State University has stepped forward, and they are co-sponsor. They are donating the venue and providing us with a lot. That said, I would like to be able to number one, pay people who are helping work the symposium. Many of these people are people who don't have a lot of resources themselves, and they deserve to be paid. So I would like to have funds to be able to do that. The other thing is that I feel it flies in the face of equity to say to people, "You cannot attend this symposium unless you have the \$150 registration fee." We have \$150 fee; it gives people a lot in terms of the entire symposium; however, that is often way beyond what many people can pay. So we have set aside a scholarship fund. I would like to say yes to every person who wants to attend. Some ways that people can help: You can go online, ageinthearts.org or go to our Facebook page, and there is a link where you can donate. You can say, "I would like to donate and make sure that one or two people are able to attend." If you would like to make a big donation, right now we are still looking for a show sponsor. We have this incredible one-woman show, "Muthaland," written and performed by Minita Gandhi. A true story about a young woman who goes back to her homeland of India with her family. She is sexually assaulted. And she wrote this amazing play. It's going to have its world premiere in Chicago this summer, and she will be performing it at the symposium. If somebody would like to be a show

sponsor, have their name or their organization associated with that, that would be absolutely wonderful. You can contact me, Jane@ageinthearts.org, and I would be happy to talk with you and give you more information. So a small donation, a large donation, anything in between is great. That is what we need right now.

Safety and Deaf and disability access

CHERYL: We've talked about dignity and safety in the workplace, in the arts, and in stories. It's also a big priority around the symposium for it to be a dignified and safe and comfortable space, and accessible. Do you wanna talk a little bit about those pieces?

JANE: Yes, we do want to make it accessible and safe for everyone. I also feel that this is an area that I am still learning about, and I will forever learn about it. So one of the things that we have done is that we have put it on our registration page that if anyone has any kind of special needs to please let us know, and we will certainly do what we can to really have this symposium be welcoming and accessible to that person. So that's very important to me and to us.

CHERYL: Yeah, and we are talking your standard kind of reasonable accommodations. People do have to make their reasonable accommodations requests by February 24th so that we can find out how we can best meet those accommodations needs.

JANE: Correct.

CHERYL: People can contact info@ageinthearts.org with accommodations requests, and then we'll see how we can meet them.

JANE: Yes.

CHERYL: Yeah, there's gonna be one film screened, and it will have captions. So we know we've got that piece definitely already on the books and covered.

JANE: Yes.

CHERYL: Safety and comfort? You were talking about Dori, right, maybe being part of the symposium?

GIGI: Yes, I tried to put Dori in contact with Jane so that they could discuss that issue.

JANE: Dori and I are going to have coffee together on the 4th.

GIGI: Yeah!

JANE: And there are a couple of other people who have said that they would be back-up people as well. And so yes, we want to offer emotional support for anyone that needs it as well. You know, we're going to be talking about information that is delicate and controversial and triggering, potentially. And we are going to laugh, and we are going to celebrate, and we may cry, and we may get angry. All of those emotions, we need to create space for that.

GIGI: It's so wonderful you have that background in psychology and trauma, so you understand the effects that that has in these type of events. And I think it's wonderful because this is the direction I would like to see that we move in, in other venues as well. And I'm prejudiced, I guess, but I just feel like when women are in charge of things, we look at the finer details too and try to make sure that everyone's needs are addressed as best as possible, try to make people as comfortable as possible. Isn't that correct, Jane? Yeah.

JANE: Yeah, I think as a society, we have a tendency to value cognition, thinking, and we tend to devalue emotions.

And we also say that physical strength and brain power, we often associate with masculinity, and we associate emotions with the feminine. And the truth is that the masculine and the feminine lives in every single person, but it is when the feminine is more obvious in a person, whether it's a cis male or a cis female, when the feminine comes out, it tends to be devalued. That has to change.

GIGI: That has to change.

JANE: And that's not going to change as long as the stories that are on television on the film and on the stage are celebrating violence and aggression as opposed to emotions and relationships and the things that we attribute more to the feminine.

GIGI: It's out of balance.

JANE: it's out of balance, exactly. Yes.

GIGI: What we're trying to do in my work and in your work is to try to put a focus on that and try to bring more things back into balance.

JANE: And everyone benefits from that. Those who identify as male benefit from that as well.

CHERYL: If they are worried that they shouldn't come to the symposium because it's not for them, that's not true. It's for everybody. It's not a gender-specific symposium. When you devalue people around you, you are losing touch with your own humanity.

GIGI: Exactly.

CHERYL: It doesn't, people think in the short-term it benefits me to step my boot on your neck so I get to be on top, and you get to be on the bottom. But you're not expressing your full humanity. So if you can't care about the person down there on the ground, think about yourself. You're not moving forward 'cause you're standing there with a boot on their neck. So ideally, there would be nobody lying on the ground with a boot on the neck, and if someone was lying down, we would all care about that person. You still do gain from learning about and practicing gender equity and racial equity and all these things we're talking about. So you can come to the symposium even if you're feeling selfish!

ALL: [chuckle]

JANE: Everyone is welcome, and everyone is actually strongly encouraged. We really want to include people who are in positions of making decisions for others because this is so vitally important that their consciousness is raised because the decisions that they make influences so many other people.

CHERYL: Yeah, yeah.

Wrap up and symposium details

So just to wrap up, let people know again where they can find the information online.

JANE: The symposium is March 3rd-4th, and we also have a show on the 5th. The registration form is on our website: ageinthearts.org. The registration deadline is February 24th. So please go there right now.

CHERYL: Yes!

JANE: Right now and register.

CHERYL: And it all takes place on the PSU campus, which is a physically accessible campus. The goals of the symposium are to raise awareness, to stimulate transformation, and to facilitate action #NoMoreThanEver!

JANE: Yes.

CHERYL: And it really, I can really tell that those things are going to happen at this. So I wanna thank both of you so much for coming to talk to me today.

JANE: Thank you.

GIGI: Thank you.

CHERYL: At this point, I asked Jane and Gigi if there was anything else they wanted to say, anything I hadn't asked them about. And here's what Gigi offered. I usually end all my interviews with the old "thank you for coming today" thing, but what Gigi is about to say is so powerful that I had to play it after our thank yous and formal wrap up so that it's the last thing you hear.

GIGI: In reference to art, the arts in general, I think it's very important. Art to me is the truest expression of the human spirit. It can tell our stories, any kind of art. And in my opinion, art stems from a very human need for beauty and meaning in life. We're inspired by beauty, and we all long for meaning and purpose in our lives. We cannot live without oxygen, and we cannot live without art.

CHERYL: Thanks for joining me for another episode of Stories from the brainreels. Find more handy info on brain injury and disability art and culture on my disability arts blog, WhoAmIToStopIt.com.

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