

Episode 1.14 Doctor Who & Planning Podcasts in Pools with Eugenia and Toya

October 21, 2017

Hannah (Host): [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Hi darlings, I don't know about you, but I'm real tired. Gord Downie's death, Quebec passing Bill 62, and of course the #MeToo campaign has made this just an exhausting week. I kind of don't want to, but I feel like I need to talk about #MeToo, so content warning right up front for sexual violence. Don't worry though, because I'm going to keep it short and then segue into a conversation with two rad feminists that is actually going to make your week a lot better, I promise. But first let me tell you what my secret feminist agenda is this week. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]

Hannah (Host): So, [sigh] if you are on Facebook, chances are over the past couple of days you've watched your feed fill up with women posting #MeToo, and that's part of a campaign started I believe in the wake of the revelations about Harvey Weinstein and a rejuvenation of the ongoing conversation about rape culture and about the incredible commonness of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The campaign was essentially to draw attention to the extraordinarily high number of women who have experienced sexual violence in some form, and of course, part of that conversation was also that that sexual violence is experienced in unusually high rates, not just by women, but by women of color, by Indigenous women, by trans people, by nonbinary people, that obviously this isn't sort of like a cis woman problem, but certainly that women and people who are read as feminized are often available to heightened sexual harassment and heightened sexual violence. I keep wanting to put in sort of asides of a friend of mine pointed out on Facebook that, that isn't to suggest that sort of trans masculine people aren't available to harassment, aren't vulnerable to harassment and sexual violence because that would obviously be patently false. Anyway.

Okay. So #MeToo. It was just a horrific unfurling of just everyone, I mean everyone. I can't say that a woman I know didn't post it. It felt like everyone. And it was hard to see, but also a conversation that a lot of people were having was the fact that for many of us, it was fundamentally unsurprising, that of course we know this. We exchange these conversations. We experience this violence as part of our everyday lives and the question is, for whom is this revelation? I mean, I definitely saw a lot of men on my Facebook feed saying that they found it shocking and I find that shocking because if you didn't know this was an experience every woman in your life has had, then you haven't been listening to women because it's not shocking for any of us. And another conversation, another really important conversation that I saw unfolding a lot was, why is it that it's constantly on us to bear our pain? This is, I've seen a quote from Lindy West going around quite a bit that says, "I wish women didn't have to rip our pants open and show you everything and let you ogle our pain for you to believe

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

us about predation and trauma." And that's something I've been seeing a lot of women say that like, how come in order to raise awareness around this, we all have to publicly confess our traumatic pasts?

And part of that conversation has also been, and this is, this is the part that I think is really key to moving this conversation forward, is that rape culture operates in the passive voice. Rape culture is about women who have been harassed. Women who have been assaulted. Women who have been raped. It so rarely turns that around, switches that into the active voice and says, "who is assaulting, who is harassing, who is raping?" If every woman that you know has been harassed and/or assaulted, that means a lot of the men that you know are doing that harassment and that assault, and that's a piece of the conversation that people really, really don't want to have, that makes people profoundly uncomfortable. It's one thing to say you believe women. Another thing to say that you thus believe them about a particular man, but trying to figure out, you know, what's next? What... how do we actually have conversations around the realities of this violence? It's incredibly difficult to do. It's incredibly difficult for people to really wrap their heads around.

I saw a lot of people on social media calling upon the men in their lives to really step up and acknowledge the ways in which they've been complicit with these kinds of violence and I've seen some men doing it and I think that that's a really, really urgent part of moving this conversation forward, is more men facing up to the ways in which they're complicit in rape culture. Um, but of course men have been socialized not to see it, not to recognize their own actions as part of this violence. I had an experience at a conference earlier this year where I was in Dublin and I was walking back to my Airbnb alone quite late at night and was grabbed by a drunk guy. Um, it was fine. It was scary, obviously, getting grabbed by a stranger is never a fun experience. I shoved him away and went home and had little cry in my Airbnb because that's terrifying and it really sucks to be reminded of the ways in which you were vulnerable in public spaces. But the thing that made me extra super mad that day was that I had walked home alone and not waited for my friends because I was getting hassled by a male colleague of mine, not in any way that was easy to put my finger on, but in the way that so often makes us uncomfortable. He sort of wouldn't leave me alone, wouldn't stop, wouldn't let me disengage and go have a conversation with somebody else, was just sort of always seeking me out, always aggressively engaging me in conversation. Just making my experience of that social gathering really uncomfortable and really almost sort of confrontational feeling to the point where I opted to walk home by myself at 2:00 AM rather than continue to engage in conversation with this person, and it made me so mad to think that he wouldn't think of what he was doing as a kind of harassment, but that it was bad enough that it drove me away into this really vulnerable situation and in some ways it feels like it's those acts that I want to see men acknowledging. It's those, those forms of aggression, those forms of making women's so uncomfortable that they opt out, and those are the kinds of gendered microaggressions that we're so used to encountering in our day to day live that is often really difficult for us to name. I even struggle for the language right now to say exactly how

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

those interactions are feeling so uncomfortable to me that I felt like I had to leave, but I bet for many of you this resonates. I bet you had experiences yourself where you felt similarly like you needed to get out of a situation, even when you couldn't exactly put your finger on what was bad about it. You know, we've learned, we've learned to read our instincts, we've learned to trust ourselves, because we've had to, and meanwhile, for a lot of the men in our lives, they haven't had to learn how to understand the power politics at play in these kinds of interactions. So yeah, so the #MeToo campaign, real, real rough, but, um, I think the best you can hope and what I do hope is that it was eye-opening at least for some people, who may think a little bit more seriously about their own complicity in gender-based violence in the future. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]

Hannah (Host): All right, enough of that. Let's meet Eugenia and Toya, the hosts of *Woke Doctor Who*. Eugenia was once working on becoming a cognitive neuroscientist, but now she works in tech and gets her science jollies from blogging and contributing science-y pieces to *The Mary Sue*. Toya is a government worker to pay her bills, but the sexual health, wellness, and freedom of Black women and femmes is the passion of her heart, and the perfect red lipstick and a steaming cup of coffee or the closest she's ever gotten to seeing God in the flesh. They met through belly dance and bonded through nerdery. *Woke Doctor Who* is what happens when two nerd girls of color are left alone in a swimming pool. [Music: "Dr. Feelgood" by Aretha Franklin]

Hannah (Host): Fantastic. All right, I am recording me into this microphone and I am recording you onto this platform and everything is magical.

Group: Yay.

Eugenia (Guest): Hooray technology!

Hannah (Host): I mean, it is the future. It has turned out to be a lot bleaker than I had been led to believe, but you know what, in some ways, it's doing fine.

Group: [laughter]

Hannah (Host): Got this Skype at least. It's mostly a hellscape, but it we've got Skype. [laughter]

Eugenia (Guest): [laughter] It is mostly a hellscape.

Group: [laughter]

Eugenia (Guest): I feel like I need that on my wall somewhere. It is mostly a hellscape, but we have Skype.

Toya (Guest): But we have Skype, so we're doing well.

Hannah (Host): [Technical difficulties] [Exhale in frustration] Oh, we don't even have Skype.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Group: [laughter]

Hannah (Host): God damn it, we've got nothing.

Toya (Guest): We're over here talking about flying cars and jet packs.

Eugenia (Guest): Yes, we are.

Hannah (Host): Okay. I'm already crying just a little bit, which is great.

Group: [laughter]

Hannah (Host): It's morning here. I've got to just get it together. All right. Can we start off by getting the two of you to introduce yourselves so that people know whose voice is whose?

Toya (Guest): Okay. So this is Toya and this is my voice.

Eugenia (Guest): and this is Eugenia. This is my voice.

Hannah (Host): That was absolutely perfect. [laughter] You are crushing it. So, the two of you make a podcast called *Woke Doctor Who* and we sort of found one another on the Internet when I was saying that I really wanted some people more qualified than me to have a conversation about the casting of the new doctor and I think some people pointed me in your direction and were like, "Oh, we know who's qualified." And I agree. You were very, you're very qualified for this conversation. I've been listening to your podcast. It is great.

Toya & Eugenia: Oh great. Awesome.

Hannah (Host): Can you tell us a little bit about *Woke Doctor Who*, why you decided to start it, what it's been like making it?

Toya (Guest): Sure. So Eugenia and I met through the belly dance community actually, so we were both belly dancers, or are both belly dancers, and became friends that way and found that we both were lovers of *Doctor Who* and we're having all of these conversations about it, but not just about the latest episode, but kind of about all of the characters in the Who-niverse and what we thought about the representation of women and the representation of folks of color, and at one point said to ourselves, these conversations are really interesting. We should share them with other folks.

Group: [laughter]

Toya (Guest): We should record these, and so we did. [laughter]

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Eugenia (Guest): [laughter} And so I have an extension to that story because we've been talking a lot, I think, when we saw each other at events like in person, and then we would talk a lot on Facebook. We would just sort of like, direct message each other and be like "Isn't this some crap?" "Yeah."
- Group: [laughter}
- Hannah (Host): So much of the *Doctor Who* fandom. [laughter}
- Eugenia (Guest): We ended up hanging out with a mutual friend of ours at a spa that is in Columbia, Maryland, close to where Toya lives, and I had been having this idea of brewing in my mind of, what if we could do a podcast together and so we were there in the pool, [inaudible] [laughter] I said, "Hey, Toya would you be interested in doing a *Doctor Who* podcast?"
- Toya (Guest): Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): Oh it's perfect.
- Eugenia (Guest): It's so funny because I essentially like proposed to my podcast partner in the pool.
- Toya (Guest): In the pool! It was very romantic. It was great.
- Hannah (Host): That's really beautiful. I was also, I was really afraid that the direction this anecdote was going was, "Yeah, so we started making it right there in the pool" and I was like, "Oh no, electrocution risk."
- Group: [laughter]
- Toya (Guest): Not quite then. [laughter]
- Hannah (Host): I need to have more faith. That's beautiful. I love the way that. It's just like there was already this conversation happening and already this friendship built around this fandom, and then you were like, "This is fascinating. We're really interesting. Other people want to hear this" because I think that's where a lot of podcasts came from, but I think the people whose default reaction, "I'm really fascinating. People want to hear what I have to say" tends to be white men, who just assume most people think they're fascinating and want to hear what they say and I'm really, really delighted that more people, particularly women of color, are saying like, "Hey, actually we're legitimately fascinating and like people legitimately want to hear what have to say."
- Toya (Guest): [laughter] You know, the thing about that is it also came with some fear though, because we're now exposing ourselves to the Internet, which isn't always the kindest place

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Hannah (Host): [laughter]
- Toya (Guest): and we are exposing ourselves as members of a fandom that is a long standing one, a very loud one. We're telling them that the thing that you love isn't perfect, so we knew that that was going to come with some backlash.
- Hannah (Host): Can you tell me what that's been like? Has there been backlash?
- Toya (Guest): Not too much yet?
- Eugenia (Guest): Was one. There was one that I remember very clearly and it was very funny because our podcast producer—this happened on Facebook—he was very quick with a response, but one of his friends apparently gave our podcast to try, as a favor to our producer Justin, and he was like, "well, it's just," and criticized us for not doing our research.
- Toya (Guest): Well, you know, if you're looking for scholarly research and readings about *Doctor Who*, then you've come to the wrong place. Like, that's not, that's not what our podcast is about. It is really about two women who are actual fans of this thing that is a worldwide phenomenon and how we bring our lived experience to that thing. And so we're two women of color; we don't need to research what it's like to be women of color. We live it. And so we know our responses to this thing and we don't have to read anything to validate our reactions to it.
- Eugenia (Guest): Right, and nor do we feel like we should, you know—I think a lot of the ways—where that critique came from was the idea that, you know, Toya, at the very least you mentioned at the beginning of our podcast that, um, you haven't seen like all the classic *Who*, but it doesn't matter because this is being created in the time that we live in, like very clearly. Like, this past season as an example, it comes out of whatever point in time it's made in, and so the expectation that we should have learned all of the breadth of where *Doctor Who* came from before being able to have an opinion on this current season is ridiculous.
- Toya (Guest): Yeah. We don't need to have seen episodes from 1975 to know that the episode made in 2017 about a Black woman at the point of a gun is a good thing.
- Eugenia (Guest): Yeah, you know, you don't want to see the one in 1970, right? Because it's probably worse.
- Toya (Guest): Because it's probably worse.
- Hannah (Host): [laughter] Listen, our critique is not going to be gentler from the 1970s *Doctor Who*. It really reminds me of, there's this great piece by Constance Grady. It's called "Why We're Terrified of Fanfiction" and it's about the difference between—she defines these two different sort of modes of fandom and she talks about curative fandom and transformative fandom. Curative fandom which is

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

like these fandoms like *Doctor Who*, like *Star Trek*, and the way that predominantly sort of white male fans relate to them through this idea that you need to like exhaustively know every detail and then you get to like test other people's fandom by like quizzing them on stuff, and that women and particularly women of color who are fans are more likely to be transformative fans, which is to say to write fanfiction, to do fan art, to do fan films, to do this kind of work that's about imagining your fandom differently, because you love the thing, but you also don't see yourself in it. And that mode of fandom of like, "I'm going to take this thing I love and then I'm gonna like tear it apart and imagine it differently" tends to be really threatening to people because it's about, it's about people who are deliberately left out of mainstream culture insisting on finding a place in it.

Eugenia (Guest): Yeah. That is fascinating. I love it. I'm going to have to dig this paper up or is it a book or a paper?

Hannah (Host): It's an article. It's on *Vox*. I can send you—I'll send you the link. It's great.

Eugenia (Guest): Because that's... I would love to see that, especially in this day and age when we're starting to see more women creators and then more people of color creators too. It's very interesting because we're finding more and more representation. The example that immediately popped into my mind is what's happened around the *Steven Universe* fandom, like with a female creator and having such great representation in the show. Like, I think 90% of the voice actors are women of color and so, and then they're even portrayed on screen being of color and so it's very interesting to think about it that way. Now that there's a shift in terms of creators, of who is actually behind the camera or behind the, you know, in the writing and creating these things.

Toya (Guest): I think our podcast kind of falls in line with that because even though it's not fanfic and we're not re-making *Doctor Who*, this is us saying we would like to see ourselves in this world, um, and if we are inserting ourselves in this world as the people we already are, as two women and as two women of color, how would we relate to that? What is this show say to us if we are the ones who are being the viewers, the ones who are engaging with it? And I think that they make a show basically for who they think their audience is, which primarily is white men, and so they make a show that feels good for them. It doesn't particularly feel good for the rest of us.

Eugenia (Guest): Right.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. So, what is it like for you sort of still maintaining this fan relationship to *Doctor Who*, while having the sort of critique of it, this experience of not actually being or feeling included in it?

Toya (Guest): Well, Eugenia and I've actually been kind of talking about that lately as two proud Ravenclaws. [laughter] So, we are also huge Harry Potter fans by the way.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Group: [laughter]

Hannah (Host): Same.

Toya (Guest): And we were kind of engaging with it that way and I was just saying before we started this call with you is that part of my way of loving a thing is picking it apart, thinking about it, analyzing it and thinking about why I love it and the parts of it that I don't love and why I don't love those things. Those are the way that I engage with texts, with books, with TV shows, with movies, with whatever is by picking it apart in my nerdy way. So even with all of the problematic things I found about *Doctor Who*, I think the task of creating this podcast has actually helped me to love it more. It's the same way I think about my love for my country and the fact

Hannah (Host): [laughter]

Toya (Guest): the fact that we're tearing it apart, and I reference all of the awful things about it, as a woman and as a Black woman, is actually a mark of my love for it, because I can say, here are all the ways in which you are awful and here are the ways I desperately want you to be better, and it's the same thing with *Doctor Who*. I love this thing so much. I love the imagination of it. I love the scope of it. I love the idea of all of these beings across time and space across the universe falling into each other's lives. That expansiveness is beautiful to me, and so all of the things that I find that are problematic in it, all it makes me want to do is say, "Here's how you can make this thing that I love even better for people like me. Here's how you can invite more of us into the universe with you," and that's the way I think about it. Like, so many more of us would want to be a part of this with you if you would be more welcoming to us.

Eugenia (Guest): Right, and it's not that love doesn't preclude us from wanting improvement.

Toya (Guest): Right.

Hannah (Host): [laughter]

Eugenia (Guest): You know, if you love someone, you want them to be the best they can be and you want them to be better. Like, anything without the improvement is essentially just infatuation, you know?

Toya (Guest): Basically.

Eugenia (Guest): And so, I mean, that's the thing that, you know, I think that we always... we always sort of get—you know, this is always a criticism within fandom, like you don't actually love this because you have these things wrong with it, but I think that criticism comes from a place of not actually understanding what love is.

Toya (Guest): And it's a request love us back.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

- Eugenia (Guest): Right.
- Toya (Guest): You know, like we love you; we want you to show that you love us back by considering us and wanting to invite us to be a part of this thing you've built.
- Hannah (Host): Absolutely. Beautifully put. So this segues quite well into the thing that I was particularly curious to talk about, which is the casting of the new doctor. The casting of Jodie Whittaker as the new doctor?
- Eugenia (Guest): Yes.
- Hannah (Host): And how this has been pitched as doing exactly the kind of thing that you were talking about, like trying to open up *Doctor Who* to members of the fandom who aren't white men and how it's been... I found the response troubling on most fronts because on the one hand we've got, like, the deep misogyny of a lot of responses, obviously, and on the other hand, we're getting this sort of classic like White Feminism™ response, which is "Um, yeah, it'll be great if eventually the doctor can be a person of color, but progress comes slowly." And the natural narrative there is that progress is always white women first, and like you can just, you can just hold on. So yeah. What were your reactions to the news about Jodie Whittaker being the new doctor?
- Eugenia (Guest): We cried.
- Toya & Eugenia: [laughter]
- Eugenia (Guest): I nearly fell down the stairs because I was so excited. [laughter] No, and that's the thing. Like, I mean, a lot of their... it came with, you know, a bunch of different—there was a bunch of different emotions all wrapped up in it because for us, we were just very excited, for me in particular, I don't speak for Toya. People try to do that enough. But I'm like, for me in particular, it was really exciting to see just movement, you know. I wanted to progress of any kind, you know, whether it was a Black man or it was a Middle Eastern man or it was a white woman or any, any progress was with something that already made me like—it achieved a little step on my happiness meter, just a little. But the issue on top of it is that, you know, instantly the thought was like, well, why not a Black man, you know? And then the difficulty in trying to parse that with, "Okay, I'm happy that something changed. Maybe this specific change was not what I was thinking, but I'm still okay with it being a change."
- Toya (Guest): Well, for me, it was kind of a double edge sword. On the one hand I screamed and cried initially. I was super excited and kind of burst into tears. Initially I was so happy to hear that the next doctor was a woman, I called and woke up my 14-year-old daughter, who is now a Whovian because of her mother, and told her the news, only hear her sleepy little voice say, "Yay, the doctor's a girl!" That made me cry.

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Group: [laughter]

Hannah (Host): Ohhhh.

Toya (Guest): I was so happy. For just a few minutes, I was purely happy, and then it hit me that the doctor is a woman, but the doctor is a white woman, and so I went through the classic thing that Black women always go through: so, are we women or are we Black? There's a phrase that goes something like, "All the women are white and all the Blacks are men," and so when you're a Black woman, you're caught in that intersection there, where I think to myself, should I be celebrating because the doctor is a woman and trying to ignore the fact that they're still yet to be a person of color in charge of the TARDIS, or should I be demanding that a person of color be put in the hero position? And so it was very hard for me to be purely celebratory, because almost immediately I saw Black Whovians and other Whovians of color saying, "Great, but when is it going to be us?" When are we going to be included? And so, I felt that, and I still feel it deeply even though I'm super excited about Jodie because I'd already seen her in other things and I love her as an actress. I'm excited to see how they will work with the doctor as a woman. This makes me think, how long is it going to take before it is a person of color in charge? And it really bothers me, given that the last companion was a Black woman and what happened to her, and so I'm thinking if a Black woman as the companion can be treated awfully, even if we had the doctor as a Black woman, how awful might that get with what they do for her in the writing room? Because if you still have white men in charge of writing, they don't know how to tell our stories, and how the fandom would react to being in charge.

Eugenia (Guest): And we've only, like the two of us, have really only started this conversation relatively recently about the importance of creators, of the creators actually being the ones that need to be representative. They're the ones that are going to cast the people of color, women of color, and it's really... it's very interesting because we, I think I literally said in one of our podcast—oh, actually the one that's coming out today possibly— "We know that white people cast white people." That's just how it works, and so, you know, we have a new show runner coming in, Chris Chibnall, who has in the past within the Who-niverse done well with the stories of women of color, but I'm not surprised that his first step was to cast a white woman, even if he wanted to make a little bit of progress, he still stuck with the white woman.

Toya (Guest): The white woman first progress. Yeah.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. I mean it's like, it's textbook how white dominance works. Um, and I do think that when we have conversations about representation, we tend to really focus on who's at the front of things and think less about who's in these gatekeeping positions. I teach in a publishing department and like the publishing industry is just to have this conversation, like a million years too late, about how the whiteness of publishers, different publishing houses' front lists is a reflection

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

of the whiteness of who works in the publishing industry, and even when a press says like, "Okay, cool, like we need to do better, we need to acquire more books by people of color." What books do they select? What's the editorial process like? How do they market those books? Those things are all informed by the whiteness of the publishing industry. You don't get transformation in cultural industries until people of color are in positions of power, not just sort of like the window dressing on things.

Toya (Guest): Yes, exactly. We just, we did part of our episode wrap—our season wrap up for this last season, we talked about representation and we said that often people think it's just if you see us on camera, that's enough, but if we are not represented in the storytellers, it doesn't really make a huge difference. Of course it matters for Black folks to see themselves on the television. It matters for Asian folks to see themselves in front of the camera. But if none of us are behind the camera, then the stories that are important to us are never going to be told, and what it's like to be a Black person, what it's like to be an Asian person, what it's like to be a woman, are always going to be told from the perspective of white men who really have no idea. All they see is what they can experience from the outside and they don't really know what it's like from the inside, and so the stories are never going to be told correctly or as intricately as they could be done if somebody was allowed to tell their own story.

Eugenia (Guest): Yeah, and I keep thinking to back to this anecdote about—what is his name, Jesse Williams, who was an actor on *Grey's Anatomy*, who... he had become very outspoken about civil rights and there were a lot of people that were fans of the show that were calling for him to be fired where the showrunner is a Black woman

Hannah (Host): Right. [laughter]

Eugenia (Guest): And she said, "We're not doing that," and then the president of ABC or something said, who was also a Black woman who also said, "No, we're not doing that." And so it's something that needs to happen, you know, all the way to the top for there ever to be really true representation. Like, they're not just the creator, not just the actors, or whoever is on the show itself, but even the leadership needs to reflect the diversity of the world

Group: [laughter]

Eugenia (Guest): for there to actually be progress, and it's very interesting because yeah, like you were saying, we always focus on the figure head, right? The person that's actually there in front of our face, and we underplay the importance of the people that are making the decisions.

Toya (Guest): Yeah. [Music: "Dr. Feelgood" by Aretha Franklin]

Hannah (Host): For more from Eugenia and Toya, check out @WokeDoctorWho on Twitter or head to wokedoctorwho.com to listen to all of their episodes. I really

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

recommend it. They're fantastic. And speaking of things you should listen to. It's time for more of Kaarina's Cozy Self-care Corner. [Music: Kaarina's Theme: loon hoots, instrument plays]

Kaarina: Hey listeners, welcome to Kaarina's Cozy Self-care Corner. Today, I'm having a hard time and I bet you are too. This week, this month, this life, it's hard. One thing I want to talk about is the ways that we respond to fear and discomfort. So, I am a big fan of the comic book series for *The Lumberjanes*. I love it so much and I bet you would too, if you haven't already found it. Uh, it's a comic series for all ages about a group of young girls and girl types and nonbinary children who take care of each other and fight supernatural beings and solve mysteries and they have so much fun doing it. And the character I relate to the most is Mel and Mel, I took my hair cut from Mel, that's how much I like her. And she looks pretty tough, she's got the plaid shirt and the denim vest and the tough haircut and the piercings, but she gets scared pretty easily. And when she's scared, whether it's of a ghost or a ghost story or something going wrong, a boat sinking or running into a monster, she voices those fears. She says, "I'm scared." She tells her friends that she's scared and her friends don't tell her that ghosts aren't real and they don't tell her that it's just a ghost story and they don't tell her that she has nothing to fear. They try to find ways to make her feel okay. So, they don't dismiss her fears as irrational. They just try to make her feel safe in that moment.

And that is a really great lesson and it's helped me and my partner. It's helped when I get very scared in the night because of nightmares about people breaking in; it helps when we see scary movies and I can't shake them; and it helps when he has severe anxiety about things that on the surface are totally irrational, but in his head have taken on a whole new meaning. Instead of dismissing each other's fears, we acknowledge them and you say, "How can I make you feel safe right now?" It really helps, and I'm thinking about that today as we read and share our stories of harassment and assault, because I'm thinking about the times when I was clearly uncomfortable or scared of men and aggressors around me, and in those moments bystanders would say, "He's harmless" or "Don't worry about it." And that didn't help me, because he wasn't harmless. He was already making me uncomfortable, right? If somebody is harassing you, they're already doing harm. In that moment, they're already the aggressor and you're already subject to their hostile and unwanted attention. So, I just want to say that I hear you, that I recognize your fear even when it seems irrational and that I want you to feel safe, and I hope that you can help the people around you feel safe, and I hope that they can help you feel safe too, and I hope that you find the kinds of friends that Mel has in the *Lumberjanes*. So, bye friends. [Music: Kaarina's Theme: loon hoots, instrument plays]

Hannah (Host): As always, you can find those notes and all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor and tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. And if you have the time, please consider rating or reviewing or recommending the podcast. We are more powerful together. The

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album, *Chub Rub*. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org, or follow them on Facebook. Eugenia and Toya's theme song is "Dr. Feelgood" by Aretha Franklin. And that's it for this week, babes. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]