Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Welcome everyone to podcast number three of your AFR 320C course, Power and Place in Making Texas History. For this one, we'll be talking about gender, sexuality, but also feminism and the necessity of feminism and patriarchy and all of that good stuff. So what is the first question?

Question: What is sex? What is gender? Are they interchangeable? Hold on a second. Before we get started with this, are we able to ask that question here? Can I ask about what sex? Sex?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: Are we supposed to talk about that?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes. I think we're all adults here.

Dr. Gordon: At least you and I are. I don't know about anybody out there. All right, but be careful.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes. So sex is the assigned label given at birth based on medical factors like genitalia, hormones, and chromosomes. And this label is usually assigned by medical personnel through anatomical difference. That is what is driving differentiation in sex when a human being is in the womb or especially once they're outside of it. So sex is treated as a binary due to most humans having either XX, which are considered female, or XY, which are considered male, sex chromosomes. However, there's a lot of diversity in the makeup of sexual chromosomes within humanity, just like there are a whole bunch of racial labels for human beings. There is intersex people, for example, intersexuality, that very much just disproves that sex in itself is a binary. And our rules about sexual diversity were established before our full medical and social understandings of sex could be gathered and taught, unfortunately. So this hurts people that fall outside of this, quote, unquote binary and further entrenches our ideas of gender.

Dr. Gordon: Hold on a second. So what you're saying is sex is biological. Is that what you're saying?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: There is a biological component of it, but it's not binary.

Dr. Gordon: But play that out for me. I didn't ask about binary. I asked about biological.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So there's a sort of social component in the terms that you are assigned a sex due to what a doctor or the obstetrician might see in a sonogram or sometimes that can be wrong. They can see something in a sonogram that then is incorrect. So there's a very social and human component to that, but it is based off of chromosomes, which is part of human biology.

Dr. Gordon: So you're saying that somebody who's XX is female and someone who XY is a male and that's it. Is that what you're saying?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: No.

Dr. Gordon: You're not.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: No.

Dr. Gordon: All right.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Because while sex is reduced to this binary to a lot of the medical field and thus the social understanding of this category, there is gender. And gender is different from sex.

Dr. Gordon: I thought gender and sex were the same thing. So you're going to have to do something about that.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: No, they are not the same things.

Dr. Gordon: They're not.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So gender is a socially and culturally constructed assignation.

Dr. Gordon: But sex is not? Sex is sort of.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah, it's a little bit complicated, like most everything, because your doctor is supposed to assign a sex to you, but that might be wrong if, for example, you're intersex, because it's about what is seen not about the actual chromosomes. They don't test our chromosomes when we're born, for example. So gender then is a fully social and cultural construction, that is meant to correspond with the assigned sex of a human in the eyes of medicine, society at large and even the law. So gender is actually a spectrum, not a binary, and it's not biological.

Dr. Gordon: Spectrum is a pretty big word. What does that mean?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So spectrum means it's not an either or type of thing. There are multiple types of genders and gender categories. It is not biological, like I said. And so there is a understanding of gender as something that is inherent, but the roles that we see or that we expect from these genders of male and female, which is a traditional binary, are recognized within this binary, but they're not inherent, they're learned. When I was born, my sex was XX and my gender was female. And I do identify as that, but the roles within femininity or womanhood, I don't meet all of those roles. I wasn't necessarily socialized with all of those roles.

Dr. Gordon: So when you say that gender is not biological, so you're basically saying it's a social construct or a cultural construct. Does that mean that genders have different meanings across different cultures?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Gordon: You got any examples of that?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So for example, there's cultures in Africa and in Asia, and even in Latin America, like indigenous cultures, that have more than two genders, still to this day, that they respect and acknowledge and are still seen within their communities. So gender is, as I said, a social construct just like race. And so this gender binary that is socially understood acts as a normative system of classifying gender into these two discrete, distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine. So specific roles attached to these polar opposites of this binary has a range of behaviors, attitudes, or presentations that are deemed appropriate or acceptable for someone to be engaged in based on their perceived sex and thus gender. So these roles are how we not only learn gender, but how our genders are policed and expected to be performed and reproduced within our societies.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: But because gender is not actually a binary, there are people that do not meet those roles, that they refuse roles, that they mix the role. There's a lot of going in and out of expectations when it comes to gender. And so sex and gender are related to each other, but they're not interchangeable.

Question: What is patriarchy?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: That's a good question, and it's sometimes loaded. But according to black feminist scholar and theorist, bell hooks, patriarchy is a political system that insists that men are inherently dominating, superior to everything. And everyone deemed weak, especially females, and are endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. So patriarchy is this social system that has been imbued within politics, law, in interpersonal treatment within people, communities, et cetera, that is based on this idea of gender being this binary.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So there's men and there's women and men are inherently strong. They're a breadwinner or caretaker, well not caretaker, but they're in the public, they're making money. They are competitive with other men. They dominate their home when they're within the home. They have control over their wife for example, and their children, and even the sexuality of their wife and their children. And then women, they're homemakers, they are submissive to men in their lives, whether it be their father, their husband. They take care of the children, they nurture, they're softer. So patriarchy then is the system that tries to maintain that understanding of this binary of gender and its roles. So to bell hooks, patriarchy is also entangled with white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism, and heteronormativity, because she talks about various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. And those are very much part of white supremacy and imperialism and capitalism and heteronormativity because these systems are also meant to affirm manhood and affirm a patriarch and affirm the dominance of men.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So a society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, male centered and organizing itself around control, the control of others, the oppression of women, who are the apparent opposite to men. That is the key component of patriarchy, domination, control and this very stark delineation between what a man is and what they're allowed to do and expected to do, and then what a woman is and what they are allowed to do and expected to do. It's very stark and it's very violent and it has a negative effect on everybody.

Dr. Gordon: But patriarchy is always violent?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Like racism, it can be subtle. It can be institutional. It can be a thing of, out of sight out of mind, it's just how society works and I'm going with it. So there's no physical violence to that, but the effects of such a thing can be very violent upon women and children, or even non-binary people. So, yeah, and even for men.

Dr. Gordon: But I thought that, that's why a lot of women are looking to get married because they want be protected and provided for by men. So what's the problem there? Is that patriarchy?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Marriage is an institution.

Dr. Gordon: Yes.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: And marriage can serve patriarchy, especially before the ratification of same sex marriage, for example, it was very much like man and woman. We are maintaining not only heteronormativity, but we are maintaining the expectation that families are supposed to be composed of a certain way and that women have a certain role within a marriage and men have a certain role within a marriage.

Dr. Gordon: That's patriarchal?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes.

Dr. Gordon: So for women to have a role and men to have a role is patriarchal.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: What's patriarchal about that is that there is no choice in the role.

Dr. Gordon: All right. So no way to go back and forth. Maybe it also has something to do with what the differential value that's placed in them in those different roles probably has something to do with patriarchy as well. Maybe even the pay, right? So if the man's role is to go out and work, and they make $250,000 and the woman's role is to stay home and they make nothing, that seems a little problematic, and so patriarchal. Even though, it might be what people are striving for one way or another. Okay. I guess that makes sense to me.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: In many ways, you have this maintenance of patriarchy through marriage because of a lot of systems, not only things like taxation and law and wages. You can have a marriage composed of, for example, a cisgender man and a cisgender woman, and they're in love and making a family, and they agreed to come into this marriage. But the woman most likely is making less money than her husband. So that's something that perpetuates patriarchy within society at large, within the institution of marriage and just labor history, even. So there's a negative effect on everybody, which includes the men that are doing this oppression, whether or they are conscious of it or not, because-

Dr. Gordon: Maybe even beyond that. I take the point about a negative effect. But in the terms of a traditional nuclear family situation, heteronormative nuclear family situation, where there's a husband and a wife, the husband's role of protecting and providing may not necessarily be negative, but there certainly is a power differential involved. And what I understand about patriarchy is that patriarchy is about evaluating the power differentials that exist between people who are differently gendered.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah. Because men are valued, especially by other men when they can show that they're able of control, of competition, of accomplishment. And when they don't meet those values, they are considered a failure sometimes within their own, quote, unquote gender group. So what's the next question?

Question: What is feminism? How many waves and types does it have?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So according to bell hooks, which we just talked about, feminism is the end to sexism, sexist exploitation, and sexist oppression. So simply put, is the end of patriarchy. And by extension, capitalism, white supremacy, imperialism, and heteronormativity, which are very much linked all together to form the society that we live in. So feminism is a response to patriarchy and it has multiple waves and types. So the first wave of feminism is the one that began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the goal of establishing the humanity of women and for them to achieve both social and political mobility. Now, what kind of women are these, that are doing or pushing for this equality? Are they all women? Are they only a specific type of woman?

Dr. Gordon: They're mostly white women, I think, although I think some black women wanted to participate, but I'm not sure that that went that well.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah. So this idea of establishing the humanity of women and the achievement of social and political mobility for them did not include black women because they'd been masculinized, quote, unquote, by the forced manual labor that they did during enslavement. So this meant that they were never a part of something that is called the cult of true womanhood. This cult was something that offered protection, patriarchal protection, to white, middle, to upper class women who had never worked and had benefited from this as a result of patriarchy. So this first wave had suffragette figures like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. And they were white, middle class to wealthy women that were fighting for their right to vote and to own property. And so their activism made the ratification of the 19th Amendment possible, which was the one that declared that women could vote.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: However, this first wave, because black women had been outside of the cult of true womanhood, they viewed the issues of women and the issues of black people post abolition as two disconnected issues. So racism within this movement was heavily experienced and testified against by people like Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells who are early black feminists here in the United States. These issues of race, and by extension class, were very staunch in this wave because these women, like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, they were very much classed. Their fight for the vote and for political and social mobility was also leaving out white working class women who were working hours upon hours in and very hot and inhumane factories, for example.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: And so this then bleeds into the second wave of feminism, which became notorious through the work and activism of women like Gloria Steinem, who is white, and Dorothy Pitman Hughes, who is black. And this second wave ran from the sixties and the seventies as a response to the suburban housewife expectation, of women post World War II and the longer history of patriarchal oppression in the States and across the globe. So their focus shifted a little bit and became more all encompassing by including things like full enfranchisement, autonomy over sexuality and family, better treatment and benefits in the workplace, and also of course, reproductive rights.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So this also then informs the third wave of feminism, which sprung up in the 1990s and 2000s as a response to the Supreme Court hearings of nominee, Clarence Thomas, and the testimony of Anita Hill who had experienced or had alleged sexual harassment while they were working together, back in the 1980s. So this third wave move towards a focus to individualism, but also diversity, like having the experience and the standpoint of women of color that had been long silenced in the feminist movement to have a voice and become more involved in the movement. And so from this third wave in the 1990s and 2000s, we see new feminist theories and practices like sex positivity, postmodern feminism, trans feminism, and intersectionality, which I'll talk about a little bit more later.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: And then now, arguably, we're in a fourth wave that examines the interlocking systems of power that impact traditionally marginalized groups. It springs up in the 2010s with a focus on privilege, on intersectionality, the body autonomy, body shaming, rape culture, and sexual harassment in public places. This wave fights hard against transphobia and queerphobia, as well as racism, classism, and ableism as a result. And it's interesting because it's fostered online movements in activism, like #MeToo, and #YesAllWomen. So through all of this transformation of feminism as a movement, you see how race and class, things like ability, sexuality, all play a role in what the focus is, who are the people that are at the forefront of the movement and what comes out of it.

Question: What role does race have within feminism? What is black feminism? What is womanism?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: As I just pointed out, one of the things that plays a very important role within feminism is race. So the early feminists, they usually exploited the labor and intellect of black women while leaving their particular issues outside of the larger movement. You had a figure like Ida B. Wells, which I mentioned, showing up to marches with the suffragettes in the 1910s with other black women that were invested in getting rights like voting and owning property and things like that, and told to march in the back. They couldn't integrate or become central figures within the movement. And so the field of black feminism and womanism sprung up from this racist exclusion from the more mainstream and majority white feminist movement.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: And so black feminism was really articulated in the 1970s as a response to the sexism of the civil rights movement and the black power movement, because those movements were very male headed and a lot of media attention was given to the men that were in charge and in the center of organizations and events that led to the Civil Rights Act and all of those legal wins for people of color, especially black people in the United States. But also, the racism of the women's rights movement, like I said, and the homophobia of both, because there was a certain expectation of heteronormativity within both movements.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So black feminism then is I think one of the most important and earliest articulations of this was made by the Combahee River Collective, which was a group of black feminist activists and scholars that came together in the 1970s to write down and express a vision for black feminism and what a truly free and equal world would look like. So as part of their now famous statement, they declare quote, "We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression, and see as our particular task, the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major system of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the condition of our lives." So that right there is intersectionality. This statement was the basis for Kimberlé Crenshaw, who was a member of the Collective, to really define and bring the concept of intersectionality into black feminist texts and even legal texts because she's a legal scholar.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So out of that came womanism. And womanism is black women's response to not only mainstream feminism and the whiteness and racism that it presented historically, but also a response to the certain limits and even what I would call respectable elitism of black feminism, which eventually black feminism showed some limitations in terms of respectability and disrespectability and things like that. So we have author and poet, Alice Walker, who first used the term womanist in her short story, Coming Apart, in 1979. And she defines womanist as a black feminist or feminist of color. Then we have author and scholar, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, asserting that the womanist vision is to answer the ultimate question of how to equitably share power among the races and between the sexes, and this was in 1985. And then we have author and scholar, Clenora Hudson-Weems, publishing Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves, in 1995, where she rejects feminism as the theology of women from the African diaspora, because it is philosophically rooted in Eurocentric ideals.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So while they're all having different definitions of womanism as a politics, womanism at its essence is anti-oppressionist vernacular, non-ideological communitarian and spiritualized. So it's a offshoot of black feminism. And certainly, some womanists contemporarily don't necessarily identify themselves as a black feminist. They'd rather just use the term womanist, but there are a lot of black women that identify themselves as a black feminist or a feminist period that have a lot of these same beliefs as these initial pioneers when it comes to these concepts, like the Combahee River Collective, Alice Walker, Ogunyemi, and Hudson-Weems. So yeah, that's sort of an abridged version of feminism.

Dr. Gordon: Well, good. Can you sum up the whole proceedings here in this podcast?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah. We talked about how sex and gender are not the same thing. They're both usually seen as a binary, but there's a gamut of sexes and genders. But like race, they are specific categories or labels that are used to make up or control certainly members of society that assigns roles onto them, polices those roles in how they perform it or perform them. And this then allows for a system like patriarchy to become a social guidance that we all live under, that has connections to other systems like capitalism and white supremacy and imperialism and heteronormativity, but does have negative effects on women and children and other people. And certainly men themselves, because if they're not a successful patriarch, they're not a successful man. And then because of this system of patriarchy, we have feminism as a response and how feminism seeks to end patriarchy and its interlocking systems that allow it to exist.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: And how feminism in itself has evolved and transformed and become much more aware of these interlocking systems being important to feminism. We had the first wave that saw racism and sexism as two completely separate things. Then we had the second, third and fourth waves that are much more and more inclusive of those systems and the points of view of women and trans women and non-binary people that have to contend with patriarchy in very particular ways. And how they do feminism in a way that is best for them and how they best understand it. And then of course, we have the existence of black feminism as an offshoot of all of this and how even that, in itself, has of opinion and definition and practice, or practice in both scholarly circles and activist circles and just society at large.