



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Sen. Krueger Hosts Forum On The War Against Women

LIZ KRUEGER November 17, 2015

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New York – Last night, State Senator Liz Krueger hosted a forum titled “Counterattack: The Media, The War on Women, & How to Fight Back.” The even was held at the Baruch College Newman Conference Center. Full video of the event is [available here](#).

Anti-woman sentiment in America keeps escalating, from Donald Trump’s misogyny to Jeb Bush’s claim that we spend too much on women’s health care to Carly Fiorina’s opposition to equal pay bills. Pro-woman laws like paid family leave have been blocked, while state-level abortion restrictions tighten and Congress sponsors witch hunts against Planned Parenthood. In response, last night's forum addressed whether it has become a winning strategy to attack women for political gain? What does the data show about women as an electorate? Have women moved far enough up the equality ladder for a new generation of men to feel threatened? And how does anti-woman sentiment negatively impact men?

"Somehow, between the media covering it and the approach being considered 'countercultural' by some on the right, attacking and insulting women has become not only acceptable, but a way for candidates to get attention for their campaigns," said **Senator Krueger**. "Somehow the clock got stopped, and even pushed backward a bit; we must continue to move it in the right direction."

Senator Krueger moderated a panel of political analysts, pollsters, media experts, and satirists, including Katie Halper, comedian, writer, and host of The Katie Halper Show on WBAI; Feminista Jones, social worker, author, and community activist; Tanya Melich, political analyst and author of The Republican War Against Women: An Insider's Report from Behind the Lines; and Ariel Chesler, attorney and writer. In addition to reflecting on anti-woman rhetoric, panelists addressed action that can be taken to fight back in the war against women.

"The answer to how we deal with the war on women is we fight back," said **Senator Krueger**. "We educate women, we support women. Women are not going to continue to allow themselves to be second class citizens in any part of this great country."

Feminista Jones is a mental health social worker, sex-positive feminist writer, and community activist, as well as an award-winning blogger and author of the novel Push the Button. She spoke about how attacks on women in general affect African American women and members of the LGBT community, and shared her experience of the backlash directed at outspoken feminists, particularly women of color. She said she "uses social media to push this message that feminism is for everyone, that it is vitally important, that it has never been more important than it is right now." But opponents of women's empowerment "are going on social media and they are working very hard to silence people like me," said Jones. "I believe that my voice matters, and so I'm here fighting alongside all of you to make sure that all women are accounted for."

Ariel Chesler is an attorney, a working dad of two daughters, and the son of groundbreaking feminist author and psychologist Phyllis Chesler. His writing has appeared in Time Magazine, The Huffington Post, The Good Men Project, and other publications. "Everything we're talking about here, the root of it is in childhood," Chesler said. "Children ultimately

learn that males are important and normal, and females are lesser and abnormal." Chesler also spoke about the negative effects of sexism on men's lives. "Until women are free, men will not be free," he said. "This is because the other side of misogyny is toxic masculinity. Men are directly harmed by values that limit their ability to be their whole selves."

Katie Halper is a comedian, writer, filmmaker, and history teacher, as well as the host of The Katie Halper Show on WBAI. Her writing has appeared in Salon, The New York Times, The Nation, Jezebel, Feministing, and more. Addressing the reticence of many people to engage with feminism, Halper stated that it is inaccurate to think that "you're a feminist if you're a woman and you just believe in equal pay - that's just self-interest and having a brain." She went on to say that, "being a feminist requires more of an engagement in lots of issues." At the same time, many women refuse to identify as feminists because of the stereotype that feminists are angry or unattractive, Halper said. "As a comedian, there is lots of discussion about women being funny or not funny," said Halper. But the issue is simply that women are underrepresented in the media. "I'm very much of the belief that women are not as encouraged to be funny," said Halper. "It's not [perceived as] a desirable trait."

Tanya Melich is one of the founders of the modern women's political movement and a nationally recognized authority on women in politics. She is one of the first people to document the Republican party's strategy to use the backlash against the women's movement as a tool to win elections, as described in her book, *The Republican War Against Women*. She set the current anti-woman rhetoric in historical perspective. "The first backlash strategy was against the Civil Rights movement," said Melich. "But they needed something else, and the issue that they picked was women." From the time of President Ronald Reagan onward, Melich continued, "if you were a Republican and you happened to be a feminist, or happened to be for Civil Rights and people of color issues, it became harder and harder to get support." On the current anti-woman actions throughout the US, Melich said

that feminists "can change all of this, but we have to focus on changing part of the way the governance system and the electoral system works."

Following the presentations by the panelists, there was a question and answer session moderated by Senator Krueger.

The forum was co-sponsored by Brooklyn College Women's Center, Eleanor's Legacy, Family Planning Advocates of NYS, Gray Panthers, Women & Gender Studies Dept. at Hunter College, Planned Parenthood of NYC Action Fund, NARAL Pro-Choice NY, Queens College Women & Gender Studies Program, Sarah Lawrence College Graduate Program in Women's & Gender History, Women's Center for Gender Justice at John Jay College, and Women's City Club of NY.

Additional co-sponsors included Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Senators Brad Hoylman and José Serrano, Assembly Members Deborah Glick, Richard N. Gottfried, Dan Quart and Rebecca Seawright, and Council Members Daniel Garodnick, Corey Johnson, Ben Kallos and Helen Rosenthal.

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