

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S AND GENDER ACTIVISM
AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: New Zealand

**Transcript of Anjum Rahman
Interviewer: Nicky Newton**

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Anjum Rahman was born in the village of Mahuwara in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Her family moved to New Zealand from Canada in 1972 when she was five years old. She became a naturalised New Zealand citizen in 1976. She was a chartered accountant for 30 years, working with a range of entities in the commercial, farming, and not-for-profit sectors. Rahman was a founding member of the New Zealand Islamic Women's Council, an organisation formed in 1990 to bring Muslim women together and represent their concerns and was the media spokesperson. She is also a founding member of the Shama Ethnic Women's Trust and served as a trustee on its board from 2002 until 2019. Shama supports ethnic minority women through its social work service, life-skills classes, and community development. Rahman has worked in the area of sexual violence prevention both as a volunteer and as part of Government working groups. Rahman was a spokesperson for the Muslim community following the Christchurch mosque shootings in March 2019, in which 51 people were killed and 40 injured. In media interviews following the attack, she voiced frustration at the failure of the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service and other government agencies to take concerns about violence towards the Muslim community, Islamophobia, and the rise of the alt-right in New Zealand seriously. In response to the attacks, Rahman established the organisation Inclusive Aotearoa Collective Tāhono to combat discrimination. Anjum was an active member of the Waikato Interfaith Council for over a decade, and was a trustee of the Trust that governs Hamilton's community access broadcaster, Free FM. She is currently a trustee of Trust Waikato, the largest funder in the region, and on the governing council of InternetNZ. She is a member of international committees dealing with violent extremist content online, being the co-chair of the Christchurch Call Advisory Network and a member of the Independent Advisory Committee of the Global Internet Forum for Countering Terrorism. In the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours, Rahman was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to ethnic communities and women; she was also shortlisted for the New Zealander of the Year Award.

Nicky Newton is an Associate Professor of Psychology, who was born and raised in Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Nicky trained and performed as a classical flute player in New Zealand, Australia, and Austria. She played with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in the 1990s, before a hand injury curtailed her career. After moving to the United States, Nicky gained a PhD in psychology from the University of Michigan (2011). She has held research and teaching positions at Youngstown State University, Northwestern University, University of Michigan, and Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada). Most recently, she moved back to Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and is currently a Research Fellow with the Health, Work, and Retirement Study based at Massey University. Nicky uses quantitative and qualitative approaches to research relationships between personality, social roles, gender, life transitions, and well-being across the latter half of adulthood. Recent projects include a multi-faceted study of older Canadian women's lives, an examination of stressful events and well-being among mid-to-later life women in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and a case study of the life of an Ann Arbor-based community activist. She recently co-edited, with Jamila Bookwala, *Reflections from Pioneering Women in Psychology* (2022), a volume of 26 essays from trailblazing women in the field.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Politics and the Law, and Racial Identity

Nicky Newton: All right. Oh, we'll do this on camera because I'm recording now. I failed to ask you how you prefer to be addressed.

Anjum Rahman: My name is Anjum.

NN: Anjum. Okay. We're here with Anjum this morning. It's morning in New Zealand¹. Before we start the interview, I just want to make sure that you agreed to or I have your permission to record this interview and that you're okay with actually conducting the interview. If you could just give me a verbal yes, that would be great.

AR: Yes, I'm happy with all of that.

NN: Thanks, Anjum. The first section is about your life, the background about your life. As you think about where you are today, how would you depict the journey that brought you to this point? That is, what are the central commitments in your life? What does your career look like? What do you consider your most significant lifetime achievements professionally? Now there are three sub-questions there, I realize, and if we forget, I will remind, okay?

AR: Yes. It might be helpful to pop them on the chat as well, if you can-

NN: Oh, okay, I can do that.

AR: Something that has defined my life is my parents' decision to migrate here. I was five years old, so I didn't get a say in that decision, but they chose to migrate to New Zealand. We land up in a place in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton,² where we're the first Muslim³ family to arrive. I went to two primary schools, the second one where I was the only person who was not Pākehā⁴ or Māori⁵. It was this feeling of real isolation and of being very different from everyone around me. I think that has-- more than anything-- that has defined my life, that I didn't have those cultural reference points, I didn't have those role models in my day-to-day life from my teachers and society as such and media. Struggling to find a place for myself and to find myself, really defined my life. That real cultural tension of-- and this is common to all people who migrate-- they want to hold on to the culture that

¹ New Zealand is a country located in the Pacific Ocean. It consists of 2 large islands and many smaller islands. It is known for being one of the largest island countries. ("New Zealand." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand. Accessed 12 September 2023.)

² Hamilton is a city on the North Island of New Zealand. Its Māori name is Kirikiriroa. ("Hamilton, New Zealand." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamilton,_New_Zealand. Accessed 11 April 2023.)

³ Muslim refers to people whose religion is Islam. ("Muslims." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslims>. Accessed 12 September 2023.)

⁴ A non-Māori New Zealander; typically a white New Zealander. ("Pākehā." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C4%81keh%C4%81>. Accessed 11 April 2023.)

⁵ Indigenous people of New Zealand that migrated from Polynesia during the mid-14th century. ("Māori people." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81ori_people#:~:text=M%C4%81ori%20\(%2F%CB%88ma%CA%8Ar,between%20roughly%201320%20and%201350](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%81ori_people#:~:text=M%C4%81ori%20(%2F%CB%88ma%CA%8Ar,between%20roughly%201320%20and%201350). Accessed 11 April 2023.)

they were from and what they're familiar with. I think it's a matter of safety, it's a matter of their identity. That's what they know. How do I fit in with that, while still wanting to fit in with the society that I'm living in and growing up in, which is very different? Navigating those spaces. In the midst of all of that, and growing up in the '70s and '80s, there was all those issues, generally around gender, misogyny, lack of aspirations for women, lack of opportunities, cultural conversations around us abandoning our children to hip careers and whether that was a terrible thing or not, whether we were capable of leadership positions, because we were too emotionally unstable, and trying to fight for all of those things. Then within that, dealing with the racism. Sometimes it wasn't even within that, it was outside of that, but it was both things. The racism within feminism, as well as wider racism, as well as Islamophobia⁶. We went through this whole period of Muslim, what's that? Never heard of it, halal⁷, uh, what? To then, "Oh, my God. Who are these Muslims? They want to kill all of us, they're terrorists. They believe awful things." Suddenly being too much known and known for all the wrong things. As we moved into the 2000s, that was a huge aspect of my life, the absolute othering and the having to fight for space, and fight for the right to be, and the right to make choices, without being put down and absolutely slammed for those choices by women. I used to blog; I was a regular blogger. I had my own blog, but I also blogged a feminist blog called the Hand Mirror⁸ with, I think there was only one other woman of color, and there was a lot of white women. That was an interesting experience. Again, that was often isolating as well. I think, for me, being given that context and that background, I think my life commitments have been-- In 2017, I heard this term "social disrupter,"⁹ and it just settled on me it's just like, yes, that's what I am. I see my role in any and every space almost as one of really pushing people on the assumptions and on the things that they think are universal, and that they take for granted as universal truths, because they haven't been exposed to anything else. Challenging the way they think, and challenging what is possible, and what they might not have considered. I do that in every space. I do that in Muslim women spaces; and I advocate for other things. I do it in Pākehā spaces, I do it everywhere, whether it's on my-- I was an accountant for 30 years, that was my main job. Oh my God, the documents and the papers, and challenging-- Every single space I earn, I've just not been able to sit back. There are very few days, some days you really, really don't have the teaspoons¹⁰, you don't have the energy, and so you let it go. But mostly I don't. What that means, then, is

⁶ Islamophobia refers to bias against or dislike towards Islam and its practitioners. ("Islamophobia." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamophobia>. Accessed 12 September 2023.)

⁷ An Arabic term meaning 'permissible' that typically refers to Islamic dietary restrictions. ("Halal." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halal>. Accessed 11 April 2023.)

⁸ The Hand Mirror is a political blog originating in New Zealand that was started to help encourage women to blog. It is considered a left-wing/progressive blog and was started in 2008. ("About." The Hand Mirror. <http://thehandmirror.blogspot.com/p/about.html>. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

⁹ The term 'social disrupter' refers to an individual who challenges normal society through different ways of thinking. It usually indicates a change in societal thinking. ("Social disruption." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_disruption. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

¹⁰ The phrase 'don't have the teaspoons' is a saying that refers to the amount of energy an individual has. This phrase is often used in regards to people who are affected by a chronic illness or something that is not visible to others. ("Spoon theory." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spoon_theory. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

that people push back. In the end, people are made to feel uncomfortable and they push back. And they challenge and they don't want to accept that how they do things and the way they think, aren't the right way.

NN: And that there is only one right way to think.

AR: That's right. Or that there are other ways of looking at these things at all, challenges that senses of comfort that everyone was like them and everyone thinks this must be right, because I've never had that, so there's never been a boundary for me. I've never had that experience of, this is just a universal uniform thing that everyone does and thinks, is not my experience. That's why I'm able to do that. Because I don't have that set of boundaries around me. I think a lot of activists-- that is what we do is pushing those boundaries, pushing those ways of viewing the world and what is possible.

NN: Is a little bit of that the spaces in which you work, can you talk a little bit to each of those because you have many different spaces in which you work. Can you talk a little about that, and many different facets in which you work, correct?

AR: Yes, that's right. I do call myself a feminist and I think I got there by the time when I was 12, 13, in terms of-- I also credit my mom for that, because I think she also pushed for a lot of things. When you think about her growing up in the '50s and '60s and the things that she had to push for, at that time in rural India¹¹, she was a real battler. I must have picked that up from her. By the time I was in my early 20s is when the conversations around the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand¹² were happening. It was 1989, 1990 when most of those first meetings were happening. Even at that age, pushing for women's spaces in the mosque¹³, pushing for women to ever right to NSA in the fears of the community, the right for representation, everywhere was male-dominated, our community was no different. Pushing for things within that context. It wasn't just me, there was a whole lot of women in the community that got together, and we all felt like we needed to be organized, and we needed to have a voice. That was how that organization came about. That would probably be one of the earliest organizations where I was active. I became the first secretary. I went up for president and lost that vote, and then as consolation prize, I got to be secretary. I did later become a winner; we didn't call it president, we called it national coordinator. I did become that for a few years. I've always had a strong role-- well, not always, I'd say from around 2003, 2004, I started building a media profile. Possibly even a bit earlier than that: 2002. The reason I did that

¹¹ India is a country located in southern Asia. It is bordered by China, Pakistan, and Nepal. India is regarded as one of the largest and most populated countries in the world. ("India." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India>. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

¹² The Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand was created in 1991 for the purpose of helping provide opportunities for and representation of Muslim women. ("IWCNZ History." IWCNZ. <https://iwcnz.org.nz/iwcnz-history/>. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

¹³ A mosque is defined as an area specific to prayer for Muslim people. ("Mosque." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosque>. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

was because of the absolute hostility after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks¹⁴ in the US¹⁵. Then the Bali bombings in Indonesia¹⁶, that one brought it close to home for Aotearoa¹⁷. That one was-- Australians died and people were familiar with and it was just that much more hitting home. The hostility after that was next level and what I felt like is that our community didn't have a voice. People were talking about us in media, on *Nine To Noon*¹⁸, on various other opinion pieces, we were being talked about. We did not get to speak, and we didn't get to challenge. Two things happened. There was media training available. I did that. I worked with a group of people on how we could get a media voice. Then I started writing opinion pieces that would appear in the *Waikato Times*¹⁹ at times here and there. I did a joint one for the *Sunday Star Times*²⁰, ended up on Willie Jackson's *Eye to Eye*²¹ on political issue. As part of that having a voice, I then got into politics. I was directed there by the first Muslim MP²² we had, Dr. Ashraf Choudhary²³, who was a friend of my dad's. I said to him, "I need to get more involved in the world." I think my overwhelming feeling after that tragic event was that I couldn't bear to see my kids having to live in fear and feeling ashamed of who they are. It was one of those things-- even though I didn't have the words, that I thought, if I want the world to be different, I have to make it different. That was all going around at the same time. I did enter politics. I

¹⁴ On September 11, 2001, 4 airplanes were taken over by an extremist group that observed Islam. As a result, over 2,000 people died with New York and Washington having experienced the most amount of deaths. ("September 11 attacks." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/September-11-attacks>. Accessed 14 September 2023.)

¹⁵ The United States is a country in North America. It consists of 50 states and many other territories. It is one of the largest countries in the world. ("United States." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

¹⁶ In 2002, 3 bombs were set off in Bali that killed more than 200 people. The bombs were set off by a terrorist Islamic organization. ("2002 Bali Bombings." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/2002-Bali-Bombings>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

¹⁷ Aotearoa is a term from the Māori language that translates to New Zealand. ("*Aotearoa*." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aotearoa>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

¹⁸ Nine to Noon is a podcast/radio segment that addresses news both locally and globally. This radio segment is a part of Radio New Zealand, a broadcast company. ("Nine to Noon." RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

¹⁹ The *Waikato Times* is a newspaper that originated in Hamilton, New Zealand. It was started in 1872 and circulates everyday. ("*Waikato Times*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waikato_Times. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²⁰ The *Sunday Star-Times* is circulated on a weekly basis in Auckland, New Zealand. It was established in 1994 and consists of both local and global news. ("*Sunday Star-Times*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday_Star-Times. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²¹ *Eye to Eye* was a segment of New Zealand television that was hosted by Willie Jackson. This segment considered news and world events through a Māori perspective. ("*Eye to Eye with Willie Jackson*." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eye_to_Eye_with_Willie_Jackson#:~:text=Eye%20to%20Eye%20with%20Willie%20Jackson%2C%20or%20more%20simply%20Eye.a%20M%C4%81ori%20point%20of%20vie w.&text=Willie%20Jackson%2C%20or%20back%20up,were%20usually%20prominent%20M%C4%81ori%20people. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²² MP stands for a member of parliament. This refers to an individual who the people of the country choose to represent them in government. ("MP." Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/mp>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²³ Dr. Ashraf Choudhary is a scientist from New Zealand who also served as a MP. He is known for being the first MP of New Zealand from South Asia. ("Ashraf Choudhary." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashraf_Choudhary. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

ended up being a candidate in 2005, 2008 and 2014, unsuccessfully every time. Then I learned how to make submissions²⁴. I had done a submission, which led me to being on a political show, which gave me more media exposure and so on. Also around the early 2000s, another thing, I was going through some stuff in my personal life and met up with other women and these conversations around being minority women of color, and there just weren't the social services available that understood us and could provide us the help and support that we needed. That's how I got into this group of women that worked towards setting up the Hamilton Ethnic Women's Center Trust Shama²⁵. That was our vision, that women ethnic minority women would have a place to come to where they didn't have to feel ashamed or embarrassed about the accent or about the things that they needed that mainstream culture didn't provide or didn't provide in a way that worked for them. They felt understood. That was a really hard slog²⁶ and it took a lot of time. Now it is a thriving organization, two centers in Hamilton, a National Project on Sexual Violence Prevention, Youth Development²⁷, all sorts of wonderful programs and support. None of us believed it at the time. At the time, we put forward our vision and then sat back and we can't do this. It's too big and it's too hard. We actually got someone to come in to mediate for us. He said to us, "How do you eat an elephant?" [laughs] "What are you talking about, Dude?"

NN: Heard this. Yes.

AR: Yes. He said, "You eat an elephant one teaspoonful at a time to start." Now we have the elephant. That's it.

NN: That's so wonderful. Anjum, what would you say is your most significant contribution so far, or your most significant achievement professionally so far, because it sounds as though you've got a lot still. There's a lot percolating there.

²⁴ A submission is defined as a something, often a document of agreement, that is given to a judge for consideration. ("Submission Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/submission>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²⁵ The Shama Hamilton Ethnic Womens Centre Trust, or Shama, is an organization that was founded in 2002 for the purpose of creating an area where women of different ethnicities can find comfort and safety. Shama also provides different services such as social work and legal advice for free for women. ("Shama Hamilton Ethnic Womens Centre Trust." Volunteering Waikato. <https://volunteeringwaikato.org.nz/organisations/profiles/1223-shama-hamilton-ethnic-womens-centre-trust#:~:text=Shama%20was%20established%20in%202002,meet%20and%20bring%20their%20child ren>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²⁶ Slog refers to working hard for a long period of time. ("Slog definition and meaning." Collins English Dictionary. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/slog#:~:text=slog%20NOUN%20%2Fsl%20%2F%20%2F-%20%2F-if%20you%20describe%20a%20task%20as%20a%20slog%20%20you%20mean,but%20it%20was%20a%20slog>. Accessed 18 September 2023.)

²⁷ The Shama organization helps provide funding and support for different cultural communities so they help combat sexual violence in their communities. There are initiatives in Hamilton, Christchurch, and more cities across New Zealand. ("Prevention Initiatives." Shama. <https://shama.org.nz/cd/projects/prevention/>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

AR: Yes. It's hard to say, isn't it? Because a lot of the work that I do, and when I talk about being a social disruptor and challenging and so on, I don't often get to see the end results of that. You know what I mean? That's interesting. I think, when I had built up all of these connections through politics, profile, through media, governance skills. Part of my journey through politics was I needed to be in and aware of community and issues. I started getting into governance roles, which I already had from a Summit Women Council, and then from Shama Women's Trust. I got involved in interfaith²⁸, I did all of these things. Then the Christchurch mosque attacks²⁹ happened. I can't even describe; I don't even have the words of what that was like. But in that moment, I was in Tāmaki Makaurau³⁰, Auckland³¹ when the attacks were happening. I was at a governance training at Foundation North³². One of my roles is as a trustee of Trust Waikato³³, which is a big funder for our region. I was just-- as the presenter was talking, this part of this training, I just looked at my phone and saw a couple missed calls from numbers I didn't know. Because of my experience with media, I was like, "Ooh, that means something must be happening somewhere." I can only think that it's media. I'd been got onto my Twitter³⁴ surreptitiously in the meeting. I just opened my computer and looked at Twitter and that's how I found out. I packed all my stuff, said, "Look, there's something happening in Christchurch."³⁵ I need to go, I'm sorry, there seems to be a tragedy or shooting. I need to go and deal with some media." Then TVNZ³⁶, I think. turned up there and to interview me and that was me for a month. It was just back to back media nonstop, all around the world. The attacks happened on Friday 15th of March, and I was listening to all the statements and so on. We'd as Islamic Womens Council, we'd been

²⁸ The Inter-Faith council was created so that individuals from different backgrounds had a safe space to meet and socialize. ("Home." Auckland Inter-Faith Council.

<http://www.aucklandinterfaithcouncil.org.nz/>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

²⁹ On March 15 of 2019, mass shootings in 2 mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand occurred on the same day. The attack was orchestrated by an individual who was regarded as a white supremacist and killed more than 50 people. ("Christchurch mosque shootings." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christchurch_mosque_shootings. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³⁰ Tāmaki Makaurau is the Māori name for Auckland, New Zealand. ("Tāmaki Makaurau." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C4%81maki_Makaurau. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³¹ Auckland is a city located in New Zealand. It is one of the largest cities in the country and is one the North Island, 1 of 2 main islands that make up New Zealand. ("Auckland." Wikipedia.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³² Foundation North is an organization that is dedicated to helping fund projects that will help communities in the cities of Auckland and Northland thrive. ("About The Foundation." Foundation North.

<https://www.foundationnorth.org.nz/about-us/about-the-foundation>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³³ Trust Waikato is a New Zealand governmental trust that is monitored by a group of people to help fund community projects in New Zealand. ("Trust Waikato History." Trust Waikato.

<https://www.trustwaikato.co.nz/trust-waikato-history>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³⁴ Twitter, now called X, is a social media application in which individuals can post pictures, videos, or text. These posts are referred to as tweets within the application. ("Twitter." Wikipedia.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³⁵ Christchurch is a city in New Zealand. It is one of the largest cities on the South Island, 1 of 2 main islands that make up New Zealand. ("Christchurch." Wikipedia.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christchurch>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³⁶ TVNZ, or Television New Zealand, is a network that airs television programs throughout New Zealand and other areas through the Pacific Ocean. ("TVNZ." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TVNZ>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

doing a lot of advocacy. I was not in a lead role in that. My colleague Aliya Danziesen³⁷ was, but I was a planning supporting role. We had endless government meetings where we talked about the Islamophobia, the perceptions that Kiwi's³⁸ had a Muslims and how negative they were and what that meant. We scheduled it out for them in terms of-- These are the areas where all of this is impacting. This is what we need you to do. This is what we can look for. We hadn't got far, we hadn't got anywhere really. We kept saying it's urgent, but it was the bureaucratic processes. It was a lack of willingness to just say yes.

It was part of that negative perception of us as well, that I'm absolutely sure made them think. If we go out and fund and do this for Muslims, everyone's going to be like, "Why are you giving them special treatment and these people? Whatever, we heard it as well. Then these attacks happened, and we'd always talked about, prior to the attacks, we'd always talked about: if something happens we made sure we kept every single email, all communication. If something happens, we're going to go public, we're going to tell people what we did. They didn't listen to us. So 17th of March, I was asked by Radio New Zealand³⁹ to write an Opinion Piece. I just went there. I just did it and I named everything we did. I put on-- I named people or positions that we'd met. That was really scary, because I was putting myself up against the most powerful public servant in the land, as well as other very powerful public servants, as well as politicians. Yes. I was absolutely scared, but I knew it needed to be said, and I didn't even have support necessarily from some people in my community.

NN: Right. Yes.

AR: Because one, some of them had good relationships with certain government departments, but also there was that sense of fanning the flames after a horrific incident. But what I felt like is: if I hadn't spoken, then the narrative would've been set.

NN: Yes. Now, can you remind me what year was that?

AR: That was 2019.

NN: Yes.

³⁷ Aliya Danzeisen is the national coordinator for the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand. In the past Danzeisen worked as a lawyer and other leadership roles within other grassroots organizations. ("Allyn 'Aliya' Danzeisen." LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/allyn-aliya-danzeisen-28a9b150/?originalSubdomain=nz>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³⁸ Kiwi is a term often used by individuals from New Zealand to refer to themselves or other individuals from New Zealand. ("Kiwi (nickname)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiwi_\(nickname\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiwi_(nickname)). Accessed 19 September 2023.)

³⁹ Radio New Zealand, or RNZ, is a radio company in New Zealand that primarily provides information about local and global news. The AM broadcast is funded by the New Zealand government as it is used to air hearings of the government. ("Radio New Zealand." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_New_Zealand. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

AR: Yes. If I hadn't spoken then, then the narrative would've been, this isn't us, this isn't who we are. They are us, they are whatever... [unintelligible], and this absolute...it's a foreigner, it's not us. It's not our responsibility. We don't need to self-reflect or so on. I could see that coming through and I was like, we cannot have this.

NN: Yes. I wasn't in the country at the time, and I really remember hearing, well, no, it was in Australian, it's wasn't a New Zealander. Let's just palm it off on Australia.

AR: Yes. I needed to put in the broader Aotearoa context in which he had been able to come into this country and do all those things without being detected. My first feeling was how could he do this, and nobody know? Especially when we had been saying, we had said to the minister of SISGCSB⁴⁰, et cetera, who was not the Prime Minister at that point, which was unusual. That's a whole nother story. We had specifically said to him, we are concerned about what is happening overseas. We're concerned with what we are seeing. We'd said that March 2017, in January 2017 was the Quebec Mosque shooting⁴¹. There were other incidences of violence around the world that were causing us a lot of concern. He just brushed it off and said, no, that's over there. That's not something we need to be worried about. We definitely-- we had raised it. Then that piece also got published on the Spinoff⁴². It got published in a Australian Newspaper, and it went viral and it got the attention of international media, which is why then I was ending up on BBC⁴³ and CNN⁴⁴ in Kazakhstan⁴⁵ and Turkey⁴⁶ and all sorts of media everywhere. I did not turn down a single media request. I did them all. I don't go to Christchurch. I asked,

⁴⁰ The NZSIS is the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service and GCSB is the Government Connections Security Bureau. Currently, New Zealand politician Andrew Little is the leader of both governmental organizations. However, Chris Hipkins was the previous leader of both organizations before he became Prime Minister of the country. ("Minister of National Security and Intelligence (New Zealand)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_National_Security_and_Intelligence_\(New_Zealand\)#:~:text=Cbris%20Hipkins%20has%20held%20the,the%20NZSIS%20and%20GCSB%20portfolios](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_National_Security_and_Intelligence_(New_Zealand)#:~:text=Cbris%20Hipkins%20has%20held%20the,the%20NZSIS%20and%20GCSB%20portfolios). Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁴¹ In January of 2017, a mosque in Quebec, Canada was the site of a shooting. Six individuals were killed and this shooting started widespread conversations concerning terrorism and Islamophobia. ("Quebec City mosque shooting." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quebec_City_mosque_shooting. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

⁴² *The Spinoff* is a New Zealand magazine that was started in 2014. The magazine circulates online and provides information on local news and commentary concerning politics. ("*The Spinoff*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spinoff. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

⁴³ BBC, or British Broadcasting Corporation, is a broadcasting company located mainly in London. BBC has programs both on television and radio as well as a website online. Programs airing on BBC can be seen around the world. ("BBC." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

⁴⁴ CNN, or Cable News Network is a news company mainly in the US. CNN provides news via a news channel and a website that can be accessed from across the world. (CNN." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CNN>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

⁴⁵ Kazakhstan is a country in Asia. It is bordered by Russia, China, and smaller countries as well. It is considered one of the largest countries in the world. ("Kazakhstan." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

⁴⁶ Turkey is a country located on the continents of Europe and Asia. It is bordered by the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, Greece, and many middle eastern countries. ("Turkey." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

and the people who were there that I was talked to, were like, no, you stay where you are. There's heaps of people down here. You do what you're doing in terms of media. Yes. I don't know. It doesn't feel like an achievement. I couldn't call that an achievement. But it's one of the most important things that I did in my life at what I think was an incredibly crucial time, was to speak truth to power. At a time that was incredibly needed. It is what led me to start this organization, Inclusive Aotearoa Collective⁴⁷, which I would call a significant achievement. [laughs]

NN: Can you tell us a bit about the organization? What does the organization do? What's its mission?

AR: Yes. Basically what we are trying to do is create an art here in New Zealand, where everyone feels like they belong. That's what we want to see. In all those endless meetings with government prior to March 15th, our ask, we had to come up with what is it that we want from them. Our main ask, and it was to the second in charge of the Department of Internal Affairs at that time in August 2017, was that the government developed a national strategy for diversity and inclusion is the words that we use then, we don't use that now because it feels too much like corporate speak, and there are issues. Yes. Because what we said was: if you solved this stuff for us, these solutions will work across a whole range of communities but with a few tweaks for their particular needs. What you should do as a national strategy for diversity and inclusion; well, you know how that went. Then a week or so, I think it was a week after the attacks when the Minister of Ethnic Communities⁴⁸ came to visit us. I said it to her then. We were talking about this, it's now even more critical than ever that government invests in a strategy for diversity and inclusion. I still didn't hear anything. I ended up on this healing course call. I did in 2017 a leadership course with the Leadership New Zealand Trust⁴⁹. The person that, the teacher as it were, who had led us, she put on a healing call. I missed the first one, and so I saw the second one, I was like, yes, okay, I'm going to that. I ended up pouring my heart out. They were all issued that she was like, "I'm too new here, this whole call's going to be how we can support you," [laughs] which was really sweet. [laughs] I went through it and as part of that, I said, "I discovered to do this strategy and they didn't do it, and they're still not doing it, amongst all my grief and rage." A couple of people on that call were from foundational funder. I had arranged to talk to one of them because she had worked in government. I wanted some answers. I needed answers. We

⁴⁷ Inclusive Aotearoa Collective is an organization that is dedicated to making New Zealand more socially inclusive to individuals from all backgrounds. ("About us." Inclusive Aotearoa Collective. <http://inclusiveaotearoa.nz/about-us/#our-vision>. Accessed 19 September 2023.)

⁴⁸ The Minister of Ethnic Communities is the individual in the New Zealand government who is responsible for promoting inclusivity and diversity. The current Minister of Ethnic Communities is Hon Radhakrishnan. ("About us." Ministry for Ethnic Communities. <https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/about-us/#:~:text=Our%20Minister-.The%20Minister%20for%20Diversity%2C%20Inclusion%20and,Communities%2C%20is%20Hon%20P.riyanca%20Radhakrishnan>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁴⁹ Leadership New Zealand is an organization that provides programs in which leaders in the New Zealand community can network and help each other. ("About Us." Leadership New Zealand. <https://www.leadershipnz.co.nz/about/about-us>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

talked the next day. I started asking her some questions like, "Never mind about that, the strategy that you're talking about, [laughs] how about if we do it outside of government? How about if we just do it in the community? And the jaw dropped. "Oh, yes, that sounds great." [laughs] Then that was me. That was me. In April 2019, started working with their help. I had a lot of support from them to develop the proposal. In May, yes, mid-May, 2019, sorry, this all 2019, mid-May, 2019, I presented it as a keynote at the Philanthropy New Zealand Conference⁵⁰. Plus I also got to present it to a meeting of the chairs and Cs of the community trusts, because I'm on the board of Trust Waikato as well. There's a sister trust, the community trust. They have the connections and they were really keen and the community trust, our CE⁵¹ approached me to say I was the only Muslim person who was a trustee of any of the 11 or 12 community trusts across the country and they all wanted to hear from me [laughs] to what they should be doing. It happened I'd already had this conversation with Foundation also. I said, "Well, Dennis⁵², nice that you asked." I think my feeling was: I was seeing a lot of people doing a lot of things. After a tragedy, everyone has the sense of they want to be doing something. Oh, let's have everybody wear a hijab⁵³ day., or let's do a rock concert for, goodness sake [laughs] to raise funds, which was a beautiful idea, but they didn't think about the culture and community that it was about, and that's the danger of rushing in. They did raise a lot of money and it was a beautiful concert and all of that, but I felt like everyone's just rushing to do something because they want to be doing something. That doing something is how we deal with our grief. We want to make it bigger. I knew, absolute certainty, that the answers to this were not in doing something quickly, that it needed a long-term solution. Our organization really is about, how do we bring diverse communities together to work on common issues, build that understanding, because it is only through that collective action that these things are going to be solved? That's what we do The first thing we did is, in 2020, in amongst COVID⁵⁴, we visited 46 towns and cities. We talked to people from every diversity you could think of, we even talked to a men's rights group, we talked to everyone like we've met that we claim, that we met all the different types of diversity they were. Then we met, whereabouts we might find these people so that we could talk to them. We talked to people that were senior

⁵⁰ The Philanthropy New Zealand Conference is an event in which individuals in the philanthropy area can meet to learn more about other opportunities within the philanthropy field. ("What We Do." Philanthropy New Zealand. <https://philanthropy.org.nz/what-we-do>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵¹ CE is an acronym that stands for the Chief Executive. The CE is the head of administration in particular areas of a company. ("CE." Wikipedia.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CE#:~:text=as%20Halo%3A%20CE-Job%20titles,government%2C%20common%20in%20the%20U.S>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵² Dennis Turton is the current Chief Executive of Trust Waikato. He is the main representative of the Trust. ("Dennis Turton." Trust Waikato. <https://www.trustwaikato.co.nz/dennis-turton>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁵³ A hijab is a scarf that is worn around the head of some Muslim women for religious purposes. ("Hijab." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hijab>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵⁴ COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus that is known for being very contagious. Symptoms of COVID-19 are very similar to that of a cold or a flu. (About COVID-19." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/about-covid-19.html>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

managers and leaders, we talked to people that have been in gangs and out of prison and drug, recovering drug addicts, like the range mental health, physical health, rainbow communities⁵⁵, youth [crosstalk]. Everything that we could reach. All of that information is on our website, so we find out we've got a database, but that is what informed us in terms of saying, "Okay, now we want to build these community networks." We've got some good networks going that we're supporting; there's one around media, there's one around women leaders in systems change. I'm really excited about that we hopefully getting out a not-white paper. Hopefully, willing to learn around the experiences of leadership in that space, how often it is women and how overworked and underpaid we are and what needs to-- where everyone agrees there's a general agreement, that systems change is critical. It is still in that place of women's work, and the way women's work is treated. This is our effort to shift that, so systems change in the way we do systems change. So lots of stuff.

NN: You've answered about 10,000 questions that I have, and most of the questions that I still have in the script that I have. I should ask you and you can not answer if you'd prefer not to. So Jacinda Ardern⁵⁶ had a very public face after the mosque killings and I wondered if her actions as being the face of leadership at that time; were they satisfactory to you; did you meet her? Did you get to speak with her? Or did you have--

AR: Not in the immediate aftermath, but after a while, we did manage to get a meeting with her and met her a few times, but I already knew her from the Labor Party⁵⁷. [laughs] I was a candidate when she had her first campaign Matamata-Piako⁵⁸ and I remember going to Ngāruawāhia⁵⁹ to support one of the events she put on. We knew each other, but as I said, I wasn't successful in politics, she was the ultimate success. I won't give her like A plus, I would give her an 85% I wouldn't give her 100% by any means, but in terms of how she was able to carry the country and articulate the very fact that she was probably the first world leader to name a White mass murderer a terrorist and to clearly say this was a terrorist attack, was huge. I think that clear, calm, concise

⁵⁵ Rainbow community refers to all individuals within the LGBTQIA+ community. ("Glossary-Diversity and inclusion common rainbow terms." Te Kawa Mataaho. <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/guidance/glossary/diversity-and-inclusion/#:~:text=An%20umbrella%20term%20that%20covers,as%20well%20as%20an%20individual.> Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵⁶ Jacinda Ardern is a politician from New Zealand who was also the previous prime minister of the country from 2017-2023. ("Jacinda Ardern." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacinda_Ardern. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵⁷ The Labour Party is a political group in New Zealand that is considered more progressive. It is one of 2 main political parties in the country. ("New Zealand Labour Party." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_Labour_Party. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵⁸ Matamata-Piako is a district located near Hamilton, New Zealand. It is regarded as a government district. ("Matamata-Piako District." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matamata-Piako_District. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁵⁹ Ngāruawāhia is a town located on the North Island of New Zealand. It is one of the most urbanized regions in the country. ("Ngāruawāhia." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ng%C4%81ruaw%C4%81hia>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

and empathetic leadership, her enfolding of the community, like while I don't like the words "they are us," I do like that concept of this happened to Kiwis, this happened to New Zealanders, was an attack on New Zealand. She certainly had that intention of removing the othering around our community and I thought that was crucial. The arms legislation⁶⁰ that she managed to get through within a month: critical. I think absolutely she was the best leader for that time. I think. I would have to say that she absolutely was. Where I was frustrated, incredibly frustrated, is so that piece went out and made in New Zealand there was a lot of commentary, a lot of media interest, a lot of questions started getting asked. Then she immediately then announced-- I think even before the end of March, a Royal Commission of Inquiry⁶¹ into the mosque attacks and what that meant, was that no public servants had to answer any questions. Now the response was, no ministers and no media had to provide answers, because now it was subject to a Royal Commission.

NN: I didn't realize that, that complicates the issue, especially for you--

AR: What it means for accountability and for the hard questions in-- and that was really frustrating. Then, so we had, at the same time, two royal commissions going, so we had the Royal Commission, into children abused on state care⁶². The Royal Commission into the Christchurch mosque attacks. Those aren't the legal names, of both of those commissions. The state care Royal Commission, consulted on the terms of reference and people that had been subjected to abuse, got to put in submissions and have some say, as to what those terms of reference would be. We did not get any say, cabinet⁶³ decided those terms of reference without any consultation, and they limited the scope and they were not enough questions asked about enough things. Not only did it shut down questions, but the scope was so narrow. When I read them, I thought there was leeway for the Royal Commission to look into a whole variety of things, but they really pretty much stuck to the letter of the terms of reference. For example, the role of social media companies did not get investigated. They did investigate the perpetrators' actions on

⁶⁰ In 2019, following the Christchurch Mosque attacks, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern supported legislation for stricter gun laws and more regulations concerning guns. ("New Zealand's PM Ardern acts to tighten gun laws further, six months after attack." Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-newzealand-shooting/new-zealands-pm-ardern-acts-to-tighten-gun-laws-further-six-months-after-attack-idUSKCN1VY092>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁶¹ A royal commission is a public investigation into a specific issue. These inquiries are not frequent and the investigation is not headed by the government. ("About royal commissions." Royal Commissions. <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/about-royal-commissions>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁶² The royal commission investigation into child abuse took place over several years and concluded in June of 2023. This investigation looked into the abuse children faced in religious institutions during the late 1900s. ("Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith - based Institutions." New Zealand Police. <https://www.police.govt.nz/about-us/investigations-and-reviews/commissions-inquiry/royal-commission-inquiry-historical-abuse#:~:text=The%20Royal%20Commission%20of%20Inquiry,institutions%20between%201950%20and%201999>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁶³ The Cabinet refers to a group of ministers in senior positions. The Cabinet is highly influential and many articles of legislation that have been recommended by the cabinet has been passed. ("Cabinet of New Zealand." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_New_Zealand. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

social media. There's a whole chapter of where he was on Facebook⁶⁴, on YouTube⁶⁵, he himself credits YouTube for his thinking, but no one has asked those social media companies, and I don't know that even the government will have the power and clout⁶⁶ to do so, to produce what their algorithms were putting in front of him once he started clicking on certain things. I've seen this done by one journalist at least about other journalists; David Farrier⁶⁷ was one who I've seen do it and I think he did it with Billy Te Kahika [Jr.]⁶⁸ to do an in depth search of the posts and the likes and the shares of a person, and to see how they develop, and where they were. And I've seen it, I think it was in the *Washington Post*⁶⁹, where this guy had 12,000 pieces of data that he checked on a single person who had sent him a direct death threat. And he said three years ago, this person was reasonably progressive, empathetic person just going through his Facebook account, how was it that he then became a person that sent me this direct death threat? Where's the accountability around it? There isn't. So that was never looked into and so I guess the failure to some extent, is around the systemic change, although which is not to say they haven't done some, but now she's resigned, and the new Prime Minister has all bread and butter issues⁷⁰ and as soon as you hear bread and butter issues, that means all you identity politics folks can shut up for a bit now. That's what that means. That is coded language⁷¹. It's dog-whistling⁷². [crosstalk]

NN: I understand.

⁶⁴ Facebook is a social media application in which individuals can create a free account to post images or text within the application. ("Facebook." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁶⁵ Youtube is a website in which individuals can post videos for others to view. ("YouTube." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁶⁶ Clout is defined as the power or authority an individual has. ("Clout Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clout>. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁶⁷ David Farrier is a journalist from New Zealand. He has been a part of any documentaries as well. He is best known for his role in the series *Short Poppies*. ("David Farrier." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Farrier. Accessed 21 September 2023.)

⁶⁸ Billy TK is a musician from New Zealand. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he spread misinformation and conspiracy theories concerning the virus via his social media. ("How Billy TK plunged down the COVID conspiracy rabbit hole." The Spinoff. <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/14-09-2020/how-billy-tk-plunged-down-the-covid-conspiracy-rabbit-hole>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁶⁹ *The Washington Post* is a newspaper that started in America. The newspaper has received many literary awards and is known for its reports on American politics. ("*The Washington Post*." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Washington_Post. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁷⁰ The metaphor 'bread and butter issues' refers to issues that many individuals experience. ("Bread-and-butter issue." Vocabulary. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/bread-and-butter%20issue#:~:text=A%20bread%2Dand%2Dbutter%20issue,especially%20by%20politicians%20and%20journalists>. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷¹ Coded language is defined as words or language that is generally harmless but can be used negatively to describe other individuals. ("coded language." Language, Please. <https://languageplease.org/coded-language/#:~:text=Coded%20language%20consists%20of%20seemingly,seen%20as%20normal%20and%20harmless>. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷² Dog-whistling is defined as the use of coded language to prevent argument or disagreement with a group of people. ("Dog whistle (politics)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog_whistle_\(politics\)#:~:text=Article%20Talk,particular%20group%20without%20provoking%20opposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog_whistle_(politics)#:~:text=Article%20Talk,particular%20group%20without%20provoking%20opposition). Accessed 27 September 2023.)

AR: So MSD⁷³ has done this whole piece of work on social cohesion which is actually the strategy that I was talking about I finally got off their butts and did it because it was a recommendation of the Royal Commission which we as the Women's Council fed into. The hate speech stuff we fed into; that is on the back burner, I don't know what the social cohesion stuff is doing now, we haven't heard from the new PM⁷⁴. That fundamental systems change-- although, they've been trying in other areas outside of Royal Commission Christchurch—mosque protects⁷⁵ and so on, you have things like 3 waters⁷⁶, you have Māori health authority⁷⁷, those kinds of things. The pushback from Pākehā, New Zealand is so, it's expected. We saw it before back in the 2000s in the Helen Clark government⁷⁸, in the rise of Don Brash⁷⁹, and his speech at Orewa⁸⁰ and the aftermath of that.

NN: It's disappointing.

AR: Yes. You would think 20 years on-- no, maybe 15 to 16 years on that things might be different, but they really aren't. It is frustrating. It's how people in power, and systems of power are able to self-sustain, and maintain themselves, and withstand attack. I think the one thing that we managed to get through in Aotearoa. There had been things we got through, but getting through the MMP legislation was huge. That was the systems change piece and all the activists that worked on that huge kudos to them. The Waitangi

⁷³ The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) is an organization in New Zealand that is dedicated to helping individuals through income support, loans, helping with housing, and more. ("About MSD." Ministry of Social Development. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/index.html>. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷⁴ The current Prime Minister of New Zealand is Chris Hipkins, He started his term in 2023 and previously was a part of New Zealand parliament. ("Chris Hipkins." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Hipkins/. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷⁵ Following the mosque shootings in Christchurch, Muslims protested in cities across Pakistan criticizing the attacks. ("Christchurch mosque shootings: Anger and protests around the world." NZ Herald. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/christchurch-mosque-shootings-anger-and-protests-around-the-world/2F3MSBYIXFIU37AFOTYAKR4CAU/>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

⁷⁶ Three waters, now known as the Water Services Reform Programme, is a governmental New Zealand program that helps to manage water sanitation in the country. ("Water Services Reform Programme." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_Services_Reform_Programme. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷⁷ The Māori health authority is an organization that works with the government to make sure that Māori individuals receive good healthcare is respect to Māori health. ("Te Aka Whai Ora / Māori Health Authority." Future of Health. <https://www.futureofhealth.govt.nz/maori-health-authority/>. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷⁸ Helen Clark is a politician from New Zealand who served as the Prime Minister of the country from 1999 to 2008. She is known for her long term as Prime Minister and being one of only 2 women to have been Prime Minister at that time. ("Helen Clark." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Clark. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁷⁹ Don Brash is a politician from New Zealand who led the National political party of New Zealand. He is known for his stance against the partnership between New Zealand and the Māori people. ("Don Brash." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Brash. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

⁸⁰ Don Brash's speech at Orewa mentioned the relationship between New Zealand and the Māori people. In particular, he was against this relationship and did not support any legislation that helped the Māori people. ("Orewa Speech." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orewa_Speech. Accessed 27 September 2023.)

Tribunal⁸¹, and setting up of that, another huge piece of systems change. Unfortunately, it doesn't have teeth, it does not have enforcement powers [laughs] which is another systemic way that power [laughs] protects itself.

NN: I guess, again, I should do a little bit of explanation for the viewers at home. The MMP system⁸² came in, now, correct me if I'm wrong, in the 1990s, that first switch.

AR: I think it was 1993ish that we voted for it and 1996 was the first election. That was under the Mixed Member Proportional system that allowed parties to have MPs⁸³ that were not electorate MPs, so that the makeup of Parliament reflected the percentage of the vote that they got, rather than the electorates that they had won.

NN: And New Zealand had been a very much a two-party--labor, and national, or so-called progressives, and so-called conservatives basically.

AR: Yes, very much. This allowed for a lot more spectrum. It allowed for the rise of Winston Peters⁸⁴, which was not a great thing, but it also meant there was a green party⁸⁵, and before that, the Alliance Party⁸⁶ that got into power. It also meant that individual parties now had to fight for votes from marginalized communities, whereas before they didn't; they only had to pitch to marginal seats, right? Every vote didn't count. They only had to focus on the marginal seats, and they only had to focus on the majority vote, in the marginal seats, right? Where we grew up in Kirikiriroa, it was just a safe National seat, I always voted, I've never not voted. I always knew under the old system that my vote would not make the slightest bit of difference. Whereas under

⁸¹ The Waitangi Tribunal is a subdivision of the Ministry of Justice that deals specifically with complaints or issues made by the Māori concerning New Zealand. ("Waitangi Tribunal." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waitangi_Tribunal. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸² MMP, or mixed-member proportional representation, is a governmental system in which individuals can vote locally and for the political party so that more members can be allocated to that party for equal representation. ("Mixed-member proportional representation." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed-member_proportional_representation. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸³ MP stands for a Member of Parliament. A MP is elected by individuals living in a certain area to represent them in government. ("Members of Parliament (UK)." UK Parliament. <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/mp/>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸⁴ Winston Peters is a politician from New Zealand who was the Deputy Prime Minister of the country from 2017-2020, under Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. He was very active in the New Zealand government under various positions such as Minister of Foreign Affairs and as a Member of Parliament. ("Winston Peters." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston_Peters. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸⁵ The Green Party is a political party in New Zealand that is left-wing and many of its ideologies surround environmentalism and democracy. ("Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Party_of_Aotearoa_New_Zealand. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸⁶ The Alliance party was a political party in New Zealand from 1991 to 2015. It was a combination of 4 smaller political parties and was left-wing. ("Alliance (New Zealand political party)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_\(New_Zealand_political_party\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_(New_Zealand_political_party)). Accessed 28 September 2023.)

MMP, even if my electorate vote⁸⁷ doesn't make a difference, I know my party vote⁸⁸ will make a difference. That is why it is structural change, but it's not far enough at all. Certainly within our organization, and other spaces, I'm a great proponent of Matike Mai⁸⁹, which was the report put out by Dr. Moana Jackson⁹⁰, who has recently passed, around constitutional reform, and what would that would look like in a Te Tiriti⁹¹ context. I think it's critical; that's the next piece of structural change. He talks about the weakness of the Westminster system⁹², that has been transported to the Pacific, but is not meeting our needs. It's increasingly not globally, because it's been disrupted, and it's being disrupted in online spaces. One of the other things that I do, and was up early this morning, is I'm a co-chair of the Christchurch Call Advisory Network⁹³. The Christchurch Call to Action is really a forum of governments, tech platforms, and civil society organizations that focuses on reducing and removing terrorist, and violent extremist content online. In that space, then there's also the whole area of misinformation, disinformation, where disinformation is where someone deliberately puts out incorrect information, whereas misinformation is sharing something that you don't realize is incorrect. Another whole area which I'm not involved in is AI⁹⁴, and ethics and AI, and so on. There are all these things with machine learning, with algorithms, with community standards that platforms have, with state actors disrupting online spaces

⁸⁷ The electorate vote is a type of vote in which individuals vote for an individual to represent the area they reside in. This vote happens every 3 years. ("Vote in an election." New Zealand Government. [https://www.govt.nz/browse/engaging-with-government/enrol-and-vote-in-an-election/vote-in-an-election/#:~:text=Types%20of%20elections%20you%20can%20vote%20in&text=NZ%20general%20elections%20happen%20every.in%20\(called%20your%20electorate\)](https://www.govt.nz/browse/engaging-with-government/enrol-and-vote-in-an-election/vote-in-an-election/#:~:text=Types%20of%20elections%20you%20can%20vote%20in&text=NZ%20general%20elections%20happen%20every.in%20(called%20your%20electorate)). Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸⁸ A party vote in a type of vote in which individual vote for a political party. This vote happens every 3 years along with the electorate vote. ("Vote in an election." New Zealand Government. [https://www.govt.nz/browse/engaging-with-government/enrol-and-vote-in-an-election/vote-in-an-election/#:~:text=Types%20of%20elections%20you%20can%20vote%20in&text=NZ%20general%20elections%20happen%20every.in%20\(called%20your%20electorate\)](https://www.govt.nz/browse/engaging-with-government/enrol-and-vote-in-an-election/vote-in-an-election/#:~:text=Types%20of%20elections%20you%20can%20vote%20in&text=NZ%20general%20elections%20happen%20every.in%20(called%20your%20electorate)). Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁸⁹ Matike Mai is an initiative created by the Māori to create a constitution for New Zealand that was more inclusive of the Māori people. ("Matike Mai Aotearoa." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matike_Mai_Aotearoa. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹⁰ Dr. Moana Jackson was a lawyer from New Zealand who advocated for the rights of the Māori people and specialized in constitutional law. ("Moana Jackson." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moana_Jackson. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹¹ Te Tiriti is the Māori name for the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi is document between the Māori people and New Zealand to give Māori people the same rights as British citizens in 1840. ("Treaty of Waitangi." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Waitangi. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹² The Westminster system is a model for a government that has a set of rules that should be followed to conduct a government. This model includes political parties, an executive branch, a head of state, and more. ("Westminster system." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_system. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹³ The Christchurch Call Advisory Network is a network of many civil organizations in New Zealand that gives advice to individuals concerning harmful or threatening content online. ("Christchurch Call Advisory Network." Christchurch Call. <https://www.christchurchcall.com/our-community/christchurch-call-advisory-network/>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹⁴ AI, or artificial intelligence, refers to machines and their intelligence. Many applications use AI, such as Google. ("Artificial intelligence." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_intelligence. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

through paid trolls⁹⁵, and other activity that is really designed to damage democracies, and decision-making. We really do need to think about how we address that, and how we make that kind of structural change. Recently, there's been a follow-up to Matike Mai; the Human Rights Commission published last month two reports around anti-racism. The report from the Māori group is called Maranga Mai⁹⁶, and I'd really recommend people read that and think about it because it's the next progression of thinking from Matike Mai. Ultimately, and even in the feminist space, we know all about needing structural and systemic change. We fight for it. I recently gave a speech out of Whakatane⁹⁷, and I said, "You know this, and you understand it. What are we doing about systemic and structural change for people dealing with racism"? I could give you the stats, I'd have to look them up, but at the moment, in 2020 in our country, Pākehā women were paid more than Māori men, more than Pacifica⁹⁸ men, and more than Asian men. And so, as a feminist, if what you're fighting for is pay equity, how does that sit well with you? If it doesn't sit well with you, what are you doing about it in your activism? Because I can't see it, I don't see it. It's interesting, there's the MindTheGap's campaign⁹⁹, and our organization Inclusive Aotearoa was asked to give our logo and our support. When I saw the first draft, I was like, "You haven't talked about the ethnic pay gap. Where's your conversation about gender-diverse communities? What about disabled people have a huge pay--they've got the biggest pay gap. Where's your thinking around that, and how are you advocating for disabled women? How are you advocating in terms of ethnicity"? Pacifica women are the lowest paid behind all the Māori men, and Asian men, and Asian women, Māori women. Pacifica sit at 67 cents to the dollar of Pākehā men, whereas Pākehā women sit at 88 cents to the dollar. I think in terms of that feminist journey, there's a piece in the *Women's Studies Journal* that's based on an interview with me where it's called *Decolonizing Feminism*.¹⁰⁰ Someone's written a response to it in the same issue which I hadn't realized they were going to do that also was basically around how we shouldn't focus on decolonization. She makes her own

⁹⁵ A troll is an individual online who posts false or accusatory information for the purpose of harassing others. ("Definition of Internet Troll." PCMag. <https://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/internet-troll>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹⁶ Maranga Mai is a group part of the Human Rights Commission that gathers research concerning the effects of colonization on racism and white supremacy on the Māori community. ("Maranga Mai!" Human Rights Commission. <https://tikatangata.org.nz/our-work/maranga-mai>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹⁷ Whakatane is a town in the North Island of New Zealand. This town has a high population of Māori individuals. ("Whakatane." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whakat%C4%81ne>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹⁸ Pacifica refers to individuals from the Pacifica Islander region. These regions include Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. ("Pasifika." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasifika#:~:text=Pasifika%20may%20refer%20to%3A,peoples%20living%20in%20New%20Zealand>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

⁹⁹ Mind the Gap is a campaign that is dedicated to promoting inclusivity and diversity within the workforce. ("Mind the Gap." Baker McKenzie. <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/insight/publications/2022/06/mind-the-gap-campaign-improve-inclusion-diversity>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹⁰⁰ In 2020, Nishhza Thiruselvam wrote an article for Women's Studies Journal New Zealand in response to the question asked by Anjum Rahman, "How do we go about decolonizing feminism?". ("Decolonising white feminism: A response to Anjum Rahman." The University of Auckland New Zealand. <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/63639>. Accessed 10 June 2024.)

good point. My experience of feminism, particularly through the 2000s, and earlier, is an absolute embedded colonialism within White feminism¹⁰¹ that we have achieved liberation, we have the answers. Now, we're going to go, and save all the other women in the world because we know it all, which is absolutely awful. Yes. There's also the neoliberalizing of feminism¹⁰² so that it's become about individual choices rather than systemic, and structural change, that we should support all choices of women. Which if you read the piece: actually, shouldn't we be about providing women with better choices, rather than supporting all choices? Recognize systemic, and structural disadvantages, and giving them better choices, right? If your choice to do sex work is because women take so much longer to pay off their student loans than men do-- they take longer because women get paid less. There's a gender pay gap, they get less leadership positions, they get less opportunities because of systemic and structural misogyny, and sexism. We haven't given you a good choice; in a fair, and balanced world where there's not discrimination, and that is still your choice. I might not agree with it, but that is your choice, right? When you have these systemic disadvantages, then people aren't actually freely making a choice; they're making a choice within a context that is unfair. Also similarly, I talk about it around the burqa¹⁰³. I was like, we can support, and I do support the choice of women to wear a burqa. I don't agree with it and I don't think it's a feminist choice. Again, then it's about: are we giving them the best choices, and have we reduced discrimination? Are they able to make that choice in a context of more freedom? Then after that, if that is still their choice, that's their choice.

NN: It's not just about equality, it's about equity, and actually providing a range of choices rather.

AR: Providing good choices. Like really solid. This is what you could do and this is there as well, and if that's what you want to do. Sure, but not because you're under pressure because you've got to pay the bills or because someone's telling you you're going to go straight to hell if you don't or whatever it is. I have the spoken word poem on spiritual abuse, which is a composite of things that I've heard from a lot of different faiths and the way that any scripture—it's is not a Muslim thing at all because I have seen it in multiple faith as the way that faith is used to abuse and to reduce options and to reduce choices for women. Which is why when I said at the beginning that I also take my social disruption to spaces like the Muslim community. That's what it's about.

¹⁰¹ White feminism is defined as feminism that specifically relates to focuses on white women and ignores the experience of women of color ("White feminism." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_feminism#:~:text=White%20feminism%20is%20a%20term,and%20women%20lacking%20other%20privileges. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹⁰² The neoliberalizing of feminism refers to feminism that focuses on the white, middle-class women and ignores the discrimination faced by minority women. ("Neoliberal feminism." Wikipedia. https://wiki.ubc.ca/Neoliberal_feminism. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹⁰³ A burqa is a piece of clothing that covers women from head to toe. The burqa is used by some Muslim women. ("Burqa." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burqa>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

NN: Gosh. As you're talking here, I'm thinking, does she sleep at all? [laughs]

AR: I sleep very badly. I feel like I could have been Prime Minister of New Zealand if I could sleep, [laughs] I don't sleep well. I've never, not since I was a teenager.

NN: Oh, gosh. You're doing so many things. One question I can retrieve from the next block of questions, which is about your work, is around change. It seems to me that it's diversified or grown as you've become more aware of different spaces, or as you've moved into different spaces, but so: has your work changed? Has the change in your work been shaped by your personal experiences and vice versa? Has your work change affected your personal experience, and in what ways then?

AR: My personal experiences definitely have shaped my work. I think I've talked about that in terms of that feeling of always being someone that didn't fit in, always being different. It's interesting that I can sit with a bunch of migrant women of color and feel completely out of place, because I've grown up here, so their experiences are [laughs] not my experiences. It's really hard. Even now, it's not easy for me to find a space where I feel like I can just really relax, these are my people, without having to adapt or without having to be on guard. Just be ready for when it's coming. To that extent has, and then yes, external events. As I said, the World Trade Center attacks and Christchurch mosque attacks. Though there's so many external things that have happened that have shaped what I've done a lot. My work experience, it's more the out-of-work experience I'd have to say for all the years that I was an accountant, all the stuff that I was doing with the Shama Women's Center Trust, with Islamic Women's Council, with the Interfaith Council. I was on the board of Community Access Broadcasters¹⁰⁴; it was all unpaid work-- politics. It was all unpaid work.

NN: That doesn't take away from it though. Work in the broadest context.

AR: I think politics, for me, it was so heartbreaking, and it was so hard, but I learned so much. I learned about policy, I learned about submissions. I got to sit in the room, particularly with the way the Labor Party was structured. They had all these different sectors. I could listen to and hear about what the policy issues were for all these different communities. It gave me, in a sense, that exposure that I didn't have, and it also made me go into a lot of spaces that I wouldn't have gone into. I also stood for local government once and didn't get in. Again, if you're going to stand for local government, you have to be out in community spaces, and meeting with a whole lot of different communities. I had great mentors that one, gave me access to things or let me know when things were on. I got to hear about a whole lot of stuff. When I started this project, I felt like I just had everything that I had done in my life feed into this point and

¹⁰⁴ Community Access Media Alliance is an organization that advocates for and defends representation in media stations across Aotearoa. ("About Us." Community Access Media Alliance. <https://cama.nz/about-us/>. Accessed 10 June 2024.)

informed what I'm doing here, very much. It's been a privilege. Even pain has been a privilege. I guess you grow and so on. I wish I could've been more successful. I don't know if I would've achieved more.

NN: What you're doing, it sounds like it's very satisfying for you right now, and you have all the skills, and you can employ those skills and that's--

AR: Well, it's really hard. I've really struggled. I can't tell you that the last three years in running this organization, has been really great. I feel like I'm not a natural leader or I would say I'm not a natural people manager. That's a different thing.

NN: Yes, it is.

AR: I have really struggled with that. Remember, by trade I'm an accountant, and when you're an accountant, you have deadlines, you have legislation, you count every six minutes of your time. There's a lot of judgment with interpreting the law, whether it's the Income Tax Act or the GST Act¹⁰⁵ or the whatever pieces of tax and other business legislation that there is, but even so, it's quite structured. Then to move into this space when nobody has been doing this stuff, it's uncharted territory, it's unstructured, and to try and lead a team, and get stuff done. I have really, really struggled, but finally this year I feel like I've got to a space where we have the right people, we've got the right vision. One of the things that I wanted to do with my organization was to live the values, and show and practice what it is that we want Aotearoa New Zealand to be. A strong part of that for me, right from the beginning was how do we model and honor te Tiriti [meaning the Treaty of Waitangi] what would that look like? That's been an interesting and very challenging journey, but I now have a tangata whenua¹⁰⁶ [Maori for "people of the land"] with co-lead. It took us a while, took us say at least three or four months to get to the right place, but he's fabulous. I've been able to say, "I hate doing this. Can you take that on? I don't like human resource. I don't like people management." I don't know. I'm kind of just the person I've told you once, why do I need to tell you again, which doesn't work? I'm also very laissez-faire¹⁰⁷ as well. Just go work it out. Where people want direction and they want structure and I'm just like, "Well I don't know." [laughs] I think he'll bring, and he has been a CE in a lot of organizations. He brings this whole set of skills. We're very lucky to have him. I think we will complement each other really well. That has been given me a lot of comfort this year and we've just come out of

¹⁰⁵ The GST Act is a 15% tax that is placed on any goods and services that originate from New Zealand. ("Non-resident businesses and GST." Inland Revenue. [https://www.ird.govt.nz/international-tax/business/non-resident-businesses-and-gst#:~:text=Goods%20and%20services%20tax%20\(GST,page%20covers%20the%20following%20topics](https://www.ird.govt.nz/international-tax/business/non-resident-businesses-and-gst#:~:text=Goods%20and%20services%20tax%20(GST,page%20covers%20the%20following%20topics). Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹⁰⁶ Tangata whenua is a Māori phrase that refers to people who were the first settlers on an area of land. ("Tangata whenua." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tangata_wenua. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹⁰⁷ Laissez-faire is a French term that is used to refer to people doing as they choose. ("Laissez-faire Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/laissez-faire>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

a two-day, two-night team retreat in Whangaparāoa¹⁰⁸. Which was lovely. The work is challenging. If all of this was easy and simple to do, we'd have done it. Like about a thousand or more years ago, we'd have done it. Every day I'm challenged and every day, again with the social disruptor thing, I'm now on the board or the governing council of Internet New Zealand¹⁰⁹, I've got the Trust Waikato. I'm now in paid governance roles and I'm challenging people in those spaces and getting-- that is what it is. I'm on that maximum stress level a lot of the time. That is difficult. Not to mention that you still get the street harassment. I just had an incident a couple of weeks ago of this person standing in my face, yelling at me, abusively. That one really shook me, it really shook me. It's not easy. There were so many times where I was just like, I can't do this. I could have just been an accountant. I used to work part-time as an accountant from 9:00 until 3:00, so that I had time to do all these governance and volunteer things that I was doing. I was like just: be an accountant, just come home, watch Netflix¹¹⁰, live my life. I have brought this on myself.

NN: Many people who really appreciate that you didn't just continue.

AR: Also, with the being in the media is always fun as well with the hate emails, and I'm so lucky that I get shielded from a lot of that. It goes to one of my team members because that's public-facing email. Sometimes I've had hate mail in the post because my workplace as an accountant would have me featured. They'd send mail to there. I've had to report things to police and stuff. It is challenging, but it is also really rewarding. You sit in a room, go to d, you sit in a room and watch people being challenged and see things spark.

NN: The light bulbs. Yes.

AR: Or just the reflection. You can see that reflection happening and getting a lot of positive feedback as well around that stuff. After the Christchurch mosque attacks, I was like, "I'm not going to be polite anymore. I'm not going to make people feel unsafe, but I'm not going to mollycoddle¹¹¹ their feelings. I'm happy with making them feel uncomfortable."

NN: People aren't being polite to you, so how much do you be polite in return?

¹⁰⁸ Whangaparaoa is a suburb near Auckland. It is surrounded mainly by water and is a known tourist destination in the country. ("Whangaparaoa Peninsula." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whangaparaoa_Peninsula. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹⁰⁹ Internet New Zealand is an organization that makes sure that any websites ending with '.nz' are reserved for businesses in New Zealand. The organization also makes sure that any money received from the '.nz' ending is given back to the community. ("About InternetNZ." Internetnz.

<https://internetnz.nz/about-internetnz/>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹¹⁰ Netflix is an application in which subscribed users can access a variety of television shows and movies. ("Netflix." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netflix>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹¹¹ Mollycoddle refers to being excessively considerate of other individual's feelings. ("Mollycoddle Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mollycoddle>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

AR: The people I'm making feel uncomfortable are people I don't know. They haven't been impolite to me, but they are people in positions of power and influence often. Especially when I'm invited to speak. These are people that I think, here are people that will go out into the community, can I change their thinking? Can I get them to rethink? I find that really rewarding, and I find the groups of people that we bring together, there's a lot of it. Having a media voice is hugely, despite all the abuse or whatever, I know what it felt like to not have a voice and to be talked about as a community and how awful that was and the impact that had offline, off media, in terms of abuse and violence. We face that. We face the consequences of it. They never did.

NN: We should probably try and get back to the script [laughter], and thinking about feminism in a way. How do you understand the term feminism?

AR: How I understand it, some of it has to do with freedom, some of it is to do with opportunity. For me, it's about being able to dream and then being able to follow those dreams. For too many women, those options are cut off. Like, it's one thing that you can't achieve your dreams, because I also know what it's like to fail and that's also part of life and learning. It's one thing if you fail because you couldn't get there or you didn't have the ability or Peter's Principle¹¹², you've reached your level of competence, and that's where you're going to be and that's okay. Maybe you need to change your dream to something that you're better at, or get more training, or whatever it is. To not be able to follow your dream and achieve what you want to achieve because other people are putting unnecessary barriers in front of you just because of who you are. To me, that is the essence of what feminism should be about. To me, feminism-- it's like racism. When people think about racism, they immediately boil it down to someone saying something mean to someone else, without any understanding of power, and privilege, and systems, and structures, and history and intergenerational trauma, all of those things. Which is why when people use the words reverse racism, all you can do is laugh at their ignorance. It's really interesting the way that proponents of racism now can place themselves as victims, as can the proponents of sexism can now place themselves as victims and use the language of victimization, because of the fundamental lack of understanding of power, of systems, of intergenerational privilege, and intergenerational trauma.

NN: You write about this. I just read a piece that you wrote, possibly for *The Spinoff*, I'm not sure, about the reports that just came out about the treaty.

AR: How do we take the racism out of feminism? Because that's important. How do we take the Islamophobia out? How do we stop needing to go and save other people, and think about how-- one acknowledge, the agency that they already have and the fights

¹¹² The Peter Principle is the idea that individuals can continuously get promoted and move further along the hierarchy of their career until the skills that they have acquired are not useful for other jobs. ("Peter principle." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_principle/. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

that they already make, and maybe just give more voice, promote their voice rather than jumping in there, being the answer to everything? We need that humility.

NN: Yes. Listening to voices. Listening to voices who haven't been heard before. Yes, that's important.

AR: Because that's one thing: when we do our work and I'm very clear on and with all of our groups, we don't tell them what to do and we never purport to have the answers. I firmly believe that communities and people in communities have the answers. They know the answers. Our job as facilitators is to bring that out, get them to talk, and get them to think about what support they need, how they can make it happen. We do the grunt work, but the agency-- because we thought about it a lot in 2019 as we're setting it up, even as we had those conversations about belonging, as where does the power in the room sit? We've been through any number of government consultations and local government, where the power firmly sat with government or local government. We got to have our--if they'd even take up most of the time. Now we've been in consultations where we got to speak for about 15 minutes in a 1-hour meeting. Thinking about where should the power sit and how can we put it there? It should always sit with participants for us, if it's a conversation, if it's a constellation-- has to, again, sit with people in the room and we are their facilitators. If they ask us for advice, we'll give it. That's to me that's how you work. That's how you work with communities. When it's my turn to be the participant, then I want the power to be sitting with me and my fellow participants. When I'm not, then just that ability to step back is so critical and to listen to understand, not listen to refute and to sit with being uncomfortable and being challenged and being, "Okay, I have to rethink this. It's not that they're wrong, it's that I need to rethink."

NN: Fair enough. I'm going to ask you now about the relationship between feminist scholarship and activism. How do you perceive that relationship, and maybe how has it affected your work?

AR: I'm really not in any way very connected to feminist scholarship. No, I shouldn't say that actually. Ha ha ha, because I'm an advisor on a research project, [laughs], how did I say that? The research project is a fabulous one conducted by minority women about ethnic minority women politicians. Which is why they asked me to be an advisor because of my experience in politics. I'm going to make some comments about research in general. What I have felt-- and we get contacted by researchers all the time. People want to know, they want to research on Muslim women, they want to research on ethnic minority women. They want to do all sorts of things. The way that research is set up and designed, traditionally how it has been, it gives very little power again, to the communities. What we have felt like is guinea pigs¹¹³ that are being researched on predominantly by Pākehā researchers, who get funding and promotions and publicity

¹¹³ The phrase 'guinea pigs' can refer to individuals who are experimented on. ("Guinea Pig - Meaning, Idiom & Expression Origin." Grammarist. <https://grammarist.com/idiom/guinea-pig/>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

through researching on us. They do not promote people from our communities. They do not change the structure or do anything. They just promote their own careers. If you talk to Māori communities and other communities, they will talk to you about how research findings have been weaponized against them and used to further perpetuate racism, to justify racism. That has been done for centuries. That is not a new thing. You go back to the eugenics¹¹⁴ and all the other bullshit. We have evolutionary psychology or biology, sorry, all of those things. The institution and the researcher get to decide on the research questions. They get to decide the research methodology. They get to interpret the results. They get to present and write the results. All we get to be are guinea pigs in the process. I'm really not comfortable with that at all. Even though I'm an advisor on this, for me it's at least it's ethnic women, ethnic minority women of color that are leading this, and one's made a professor, and you know how unusual that is in this country. It is, sadly, very, very unusual. She's probably one of less than five, I would bet, if you went looking. If was to engage with feminist scholars, that's what I want to hear from them. How are you changing that dynamic so we're not the guinea pigs anymore.

NN: Yes.

AR: How do we get to define the research question for you, and how do we inform what works and doesn't work, and how do we do that without having to give our free labor all the time? Because one thing that I can tell you for sure, people of color are expected to labor for free, where Pākehā people get massive consulting fees for doing the same work.

**NN: I feel really bad now. You've made me feel really bad for research, but I--
Wow.**

AR: I'm not wrong though.

NN: No, you're not wrong. If it's helpful, I think there is more awareness that the people in the room need to be different and listened to. There is awareness. We just need to actually put it into practice.

AR: Absolutely understanding the bias, right? Because when you think about that whole debate around mātauranga Māori¹¹⁵ and the letter of seven academics¹¹⁶ and whatever,

¹¹⁴ Eugenics is a practice in which individuals explore how to increase the rate of specific characteristics that are regarded as desirable in the human genome. There is much controversy surrounding this practice. ("Eugenics." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹¹⁵ Mātauranga Māori refers to traditions, beliefs, and any knowledge from the Māori culture and perspective. ("Mātauranga Māori." tākai. <https://www.takai.nz/find-resources/articles/matauranga-maori/#:~:text=M%C4%81tauranga%20M%C4%81ori%20literally%20translated%20means,M%C4%81ori%20cultural%20points%20of%20view>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹¹⁶ In 2021, a letter was published in the *New Zealand Listener* that received much controversy for stating that Mātauranga Māori cannot be scientific. This letter was authored by seven academics from the University of Auckland. ("Listener letter on science." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listener_letter_on_science. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

and to think of science as something objective, without realizing that even the way that you define your research question sits with all of this bias. I remember one researcher that we absolutely rejected straight out of hand because the whole proposal, or the one-pager that she sent to us talked about ethnic minority women as victims, right? Particularly migrant women as victims. It was like "Hello, excuse me, have you met any of us?"

NN: Did she paint herself as the savior?

AR: I don't know. No. She was the researcher, researching us. This was the narrative that she put about us within her research. It was like, "Oh, no, sorry, go and rethink, and have a look at all the wonderful things that we are doing and who we are." Which is not to say that there aren't some who are victims, but that's one thing with the Ethnic Women's Trust, that was a core kaupapa¹¹⁷, a core value that we went from, it was actually called a strengths-based approach. Apparently, she had the jargon [laughs], I don't know what it was called, but it was very much that we go from the approach that ethnic women are strongly powerful. They have agency but from time to time they need support.

NN: Yes.

AR: That is the ethos that we approach our communities with, which is a huge different ethos to, and I've heard it from ethnic minority women of color. I've heard it from Pākehā women. Oh, these poor women who have to-- "We're not as lucky as you." And the thing is, I think one of the reasons that they do that is because it works. The reason why ethnic minority women of color put out that message is because that's what gets them the support and the funding. Because they make Pākehā women who have powerful positions feel like the savior, and then they'll give them what they need. Again, that becomes that structural thing.

NN: You're reifying that particular structure rather than--

AR: Challenging it and being poor. We're not poor. We've got a thriving center. [laughs] We've been able to articulate that streets-based approach and to say, this is how we work and this is how we see women.

NN: I have one more large-ish topic, and that is connections to international forms of activism and perhaps scholarship, although let's focus on the activism. Do you have connections with other activists in different organizations in different countries?

AR: Yes. Not really in the feminist space. My international work, as I said, is with the Christchurch Call Advisory Network. Parallel to that is a separate organization called the

¹¹⁷ Kaupapa is a Māori term that is defined as a policy, topic or issue. ("kaupapa." Te Aka Māori Dictionary. <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/2439>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism¹¹⁸. So the Christchurch Call was started by the governments in New Zealand and France¹¹⁹. There's a whole series of commitments and governments and tech platforms have signed up to those commitments. Then there's a civil society of that. Then Global Internet Forum, we call it GIFCT, that was set up by the tech platforms, and in particular by the big four, which was Google¹²⁰, Microsoft¹²¹, Meta¹²², it was Facebook then, and Twitter. Basically, one of the key things that they do is they share these hashes, which are like digital fingerprints, which allows them to remove content from each other's platforms like they share those amongst them. If somebody flags something and they have a whole lot of procedures and processes and stuff around that. They have an independent advisory committee, which again, has no voting rights and no teeth and whatever, but they consult with us, and I think it's important for their structure to have it there. For the optics and so on. I'm a vice chair of the independent advisory committee. Those are the two main areas where I'm working internationally. In those spaces, what is absolutely clear is it doesn't matter what spectrum of extremism you go for, what faith, what ideology, what-- whatever. I would say it's not really faith, it's all ideology. Anyway: they all hate women. You can go from incels¹²³ to whatever McVeighs¹²⁴, and so on across the world, Hindu extremism¹²⁵, what happened to the Rohingya¹²⁶, Tigray¹²⁷, whatever. The common

¹¹⁸ The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism is an organization that is dedicated to ensuring that violent individuals or terrorists do not use the internet to their advantage. ("About." GIFCT. <https://gifct.org/about/>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹¹⁹ France is a country in Europe. It has territories across the world and is known for having one of the largest regions of water that France itself is only allowed to explore. ("France." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²⁰ Google is a company that specializes mainly in computer software, artificial intelligence, and more. It is regarded as one of the most powerful companies in its field. ("Google." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²¹ Microsoft is a company that specializes in computer software. It is known for being one of that largest software companies in America. ("Microsoft." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²² Meta is a technology company that owns Facebook, among other social media applications such as Instagram and What's App. ("Meta Platforms." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta_Platforms. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²³ An incel is defined as a man who is not sexually active, not by choice, and is visibly angry towards individuals who are sexually active. ("Incel Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/incel>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²⁴ Timothy McVeigh was a US terrorist who orchestrated and carried out a bombing in a federal building in Oklahoma. Over 150 people died, and McVeigh was ultimately sentenced to death. ("Timothy McVeigh." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_McVeigh. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹²⁵ Hindu extremism is defined as acts of terrorism that are motivated by Hinduism. ("Hindu terrorism." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_terrorism. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²⁶ In India, many Rohingya Muslims have taken refugee. Since current Prime Minister Modi has been in rule, many groups of people that support Hindu nationalism have expressed their discontentment by taking to social media. ("India Crackdown Forces Rohingya Refugees to Go Underground, Flee to Bangladesh." VOA News. <https://www.voanews.com/a/india-crackdown-forces-rohingya-refugees-to-go-underground-flee-to-bangladesh/6606459.html#:~:text=Pro%2DHindutva%20groups%20accused%20Rohingya,were%20found%20to%20be%20false>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²⁷ Tigray is a region located in the country of Ethiopia. In 2020, the Ethiopian military invaded and destroyed many parts of Tigray, leading many Tigray residents to leave the country. ("Tigray Conflict." Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/tag/tigray-conflict>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

thread is that they hate women. What's happening even more now is that women are being co-opted into these movements. Women are hating women. They're buying into it all. All of these gains of feminism are being lost in that space. When you hear women argue for Andrew Tate¹²⁸. And Jordan Peterson¹²⁹ and so on, what does that mean? Where are we going? It's interesting with Covid as well, that has been used as a disinformation vector in a way to co-opt. So the catalyst was the protests in Ontario¹³⁰, trying to strike, a convoy that spread around, but also what was happening at the same time connected to the Trump¹³¹ government was the QAnon conspiracy¹³² stuff, which was way out there, but it was really spreading. Then that coalesced with the vaccine disinformation¹³³. Then when that protest got to Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, New Zealand¹³⁴, you found all these disparate groups and white supremacists and people of color and so on, all bound together. If we go back to some of those videos and the way that women are talking and you look at Chantelle Baker¹³⁵, Hannah Spierer¹³⁶ and Liz Gunn¹³⁷ and so on, and like it's what does that mean for feminism? They're not

¹²⁸ Andrew Tate is a previous kickboxer. He is known for being removed from many social media applications for his derogatory comments towards women. ("Andrew Tate." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Tate. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹²⁹ Jordan Peterson is a psychologist from Canada. He is known for his conservative beliefs in both politics and culture. ("Jordan Peterson." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_Peterson. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹³⁰ In January of 2023, a protest outside the College of Psychologists of Ontario took place in support of free speech for Jordan Peterson. ("WARMINGTON: Protestors brave cold to back embattled Jordan Peterson." Toronto SUN. <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/warmington-protestors-brave-cold-to-back-embattled-jordan-peterson>. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹³¹ Donald Trump is a politician and former president of America. He supports many nationalist and populist beliefs. Many of his beliefs have been controversial. ("Donald Trump." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump. Accessed 28 September 2023.)

¹³² The QAnon conspiracy theory started in conservative groups in America. The conspiracy theory states that a group of child molesters run a sex trafficking ring that worked against Donald Trump. ("QAnon." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QAnon>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹³³ Much of the COVID-19 vaccine disinformation has been rooted in how the vaccine was created and how beneficial the vaccine would be. The disinformation has spread very quickly through the use of social media. ("How to Address COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-departments/addressing-vaccine-misinformation.html>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹³⁴ In 2021, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was visiting cities in New Zealand to encourage individuals to get the COVID-19 vaccine. She was met with protests against the vaccine in Whanganui, New Zealand. ("PM Jacinda Ardern's trip to Whanganui, Hunterville promoting vaccine interrupted by protestors." Stuff. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/126876536/pm-jacinda-arderns-trip-to-whanganui-hunterville-promoting-vaccine-interrupted-by-protestors>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹³⁵ Chantelle Baker is a social media personality from New Zealand. She is known for spreading misinformation concerning the vaccine and being the daughter of the New Conservative political party leader. ("Chantelle Baker." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chantelle_Baker. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹³⁶ Hanna Spierer used to be an activist against Islamophobia, but now promotes the QAnon conspiracy theory and does not support the COVID-19 vaccine. ("From potential environmental activist to conspiracy theorist: What happened to Hanna Spierer?." Stuff. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/129765330/from-potential-environmental-activist-to-conspiracy-theorist-what-happened-to-hannah-spiierer>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹³⁷ Liz Gunn is a politician from New Zealand who leads the NZ Loyal political party. She supports conspiracy theories and does not support vaccinations. ("Liz Gunn." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liz_Gunn. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

promoting all the things that were fought for in the seventies and eighties and nineties, they aren't. They are actually regressing, like some of those women talking about allowing the men to lead and taking a backseat and how can we support our men. I'm not kidding you. I'm not saying that the people that I've named were the ones saying that exactly. There were other people at the protest. I saw all the videos that were saying that. In the international space, there's a strong recognition of this gendered aspect. Then you bring into that what's been happening with the last 18 months or so on is this huge rise in transphobia¹³⁸, and the use of the trans communities, and in a really awful way. It's like, it's not us, it's them now. They're the next target, and very unprotected. Which is why I challenge the mind gaps people. Around this space. The thing is: when I think about what we do in that belonging inclusion. It's not about agreeing with people. It's not about accepting everyone and saying, "Oh yes, it's all okay." It's about valuing people with our differences, being able to fundamentally disagree and simply the value of a human being.

NN: Yes. I think that that's really important, and I think what we're seeing in the States having lived there in the area for 22 years, I totally agree with that, but it seems like the polarization that it's, you can't accept somebody else if they have different political views, for example. Yes. That's a fundamental, so how do you make that work, Anjum?

AR: Yes. It's not easy, certainly. I think what was the biggest example for me, and lived experience in that area is working in the unpaid space.

NN: Yes.

AR: We all accepted that everyone believes different things. There's two ways to do interfaith. There's this view that there's one truth and that we are all approaching it from different paths, but each path is equally valid and we're all going in the same way. Then there's another way of thinking about it is that we all think each other is going to hell because we are right. But we still see the intrinsic value and humanity in each other. We still have a lot of things, a lot of values in common, and we are going to work in that space of what we have in common so that we can live with each other.

NN: Yes.

AR: All right. Maybe I'm a terrible person for not believing the first one, but for me, that second one was more valuable because I can sit in the room with someone-- I have views about the politics of Palestine¹³⁹ and Palestinian human rights and all of those

¹³⁸ Transphobia is defined as prejudice and discrimination projected towards transgender individuals. ("Transphobia Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transphobia>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹³⁹ Palestine is a state in western Asia. For many years, Palestine has been a part of conflict with Israel for the Jerusalem which has led to violence in the state. ("State of Palestine." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Palestine. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

things, and yet I can sit in the room with people that I know have fundamental opposing views. They know me. We both know that we are both outside of the interfaith space are strong activists and advocates, but we can sit in the room and love each other and support each other and work on projects. We worked on some fabulous projects. To me, it can be done that you can fundamentally disagree with people and find a way to connect to them on something else.

NN: Yes. Right.

AR: Market aside, like my best friends growing up, they were Hindu¹⁴⁰ and we just never talked about religion. We just didn't, you have yours and we have ours, and that's a no-go; we will talk about and love each other and support each other and all the other things. Yes, I do think it's possible. It's about, for us, how do we do it is we are getting people in the room together, we're finding those common things that they all think, "Yes, we need to change that. We need to work on that. Let's focus on those things and put aside everything else."

NN: Right. Yes. Hey, thanks. I think probably we've come to the end of my questions. Do you have any questions for me or any further comments about the work that you do?

AR: No, I don't. Yes. I don't think so. I guess one of my--so I have this issue within the international spaces that I work in, but sometimes things are called global. What they mean by global is Europe and US and Canada maybe. If we really need to: Australia.

NN: Right.

AR: How global are you really?

¹⁴⁰ Hinduism is a religion originating from India. It is one of the largest and oldest religions in the world. ("Hinduism." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

NN: I'm not all that informed about Global Feminisms¹⁴¹, but I will tell you, there's Nigerian¹⁴² people interviews, there's interviews from China¹⁴³, Russia¹⁴⁴--golly, I'm not naming as many as I could. Poland¹⁴⁵.

AR: Is it people from those countries doing the interview? It's Nigerian woman interviewing Nigerian?

NN: Yes.

AR: Oh, that's cool. That's a step in the right direction.

¹⁴¹ The Global Feminisms Project started at the University of Michigan and aims to record histories of women's activists from all around the world. ("About the Global Feminisms Project." Global Feminisms Project. <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/globalfeminisms/about/>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹⁴² Nigerian refers to individuals from the country of Nigeria. It is located in western Africa. It is one of the most populated countries in the world and is home to one of the largest cities in the country as well. ("Nigeria." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹⁴³ China is a country located in eastern Asia. It is highly populated and one of the largest countries in the world by land area. ("China." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹⁴⁴ Russia is a country located in both Europe and Asia. It is one of the most populated and largest countries in the world. ("Russia." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia#External_links. Accessed 29 September 2023.)

¹⁴⁵ Poland is a country located in Europe. It is a part of the European Union and is made up of 16 provinces. ("Poland." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland>. Accessed 29 September 2023.)