



Episode 1,022: Myths and Lunacies of Feminism

Guest: Karen Straughan

WOODS: I've had a lot of requests for you, and I am nothing if not a man of the people, so I decided, what the heck? Let's go ahead and do it. Now, you, like me, have been, shall we say, misrepresented by your enemies. It's hard to believe genial people like you and me could have enemies, but this is the world we live in. So I want to give you a chance, first of all, to describe yourself, your background, and what your point of view is, the way you look at the world, that makes you different from the mainstream.

STRAUGHAN: Okay, well, I'm just your typical working-class girl. I was raised by working-class, lower middle-class parents who managed to do very well for themselves through hard work and saving and frugality. I waited tables. I have a high school diploma. Waited tables for years and years and years; was a cook for a while, as well. Raised three kids. Stumbled across the men's movement online back in 2008 or 2009 and got really interested in it. And I learned through my investigations just how much influence feminism and particularly the very strange and unrealistic versions of feminist theory have made their way, how much influences they have over law and policy and all kinds of things – journalism, social work, and all of that, and mainstream opinion. So I just decided I was going to start talking about it, and it just happened to work for me. So there you go.

WOODS: Yeah, you put out a lot of content. You've generated a lot of controversy of the really best kind. The thing is, when somebody says, "I'm anti-feminist," typically if I look closely at what the person believes, the person almost always is a feminist of some stripe, because almost everybody today would say that – you know, we think of the rights women have. There's agreement on, let's say, a lot of them. I mean, obviously abortion is controversial, questions like that, but in terms of a woman being able to accept employment on terms that are satisfactory to her, things like that, almost nobody would dispute that today. So I feel certain that your opponents would say to you that it's easy for you to traipse around condemning feminism, when in fact feminism made it possible for you to have a voice in the first place. Have you heard that complaint?

STRAUGHAN: I always hear that complaint, and I should be grateful for the sacrifices of my feminist foremothers and all of this stuff. The issue that I have with that is that many of the feminists in the first wave among suffragettes were working women. They were educated women. So then, all of a sudden in the 1960s, feminists are telling us

women have never been allowed to work, women have never been allowed to be educated, women have never been allowed to be doctors or lawyers.

Well, I'm sorry. I know of suffragettes from the 1910s, the 1895s who were doctors, who were lawyers, who were practicing those professions. You can go all the way back to the 1400s and find female master blacksmiths and female master tinsmiths out there on the rosters of the guilds. They were allowed to work. They were allowed to be educated. They were allowed to ply trades. They were allowed to own property. They were allowed to do all kinds of things that we've been told that women were never allowed to do.

And so essentially, when I look at some of the feminist foremothers of the movement – Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton – these were highly educated women. They were very politically active women. They were active in the abolitionist movement. They were active in the temperance movement. They managed to convince an entire country to consider prohibiting alcohol before women even had the vote. So I mean, you're looking at you need to thank those women for giving you a voice. Well, who are they thanking for giving them a voice? Because they obviously had a voice at that time, and a strong, political voice.

So I think that we've just been misinformed and miseducated as to what the world was really like for women back then. And I honestly don't know that we owe those things to the suffragettes and the early feminists when most of the changes that they made were changes regarding removing the obligations of women, giving women – a friend of mine defined first wave feminism as giving women the same rights as men without any of the obligations or responsibilities men had under the law. Second wave feminism was about removing all of women's traditional responsibilities. And third wave feminism seems to be about imposing more responsibilities on men.

So this is really what I look at when I look at the feminist movement in its totality, and I don't know how grateful I should be for early feminists giving me the right to vote without having to be drafted, without having any obligation to the society that I live in, giving me property rights within marriage that make me essentially a single woman in terms of my rights to my income and property but still entitle me to the full financial support of my husband, which is what they did. And that even goes to the tax burden on my income and property. That's his responsibility, not mine. And he doesn't even have a right to demand documentation of my income and property because that's my private information, and I own that as a single woman even though I enjoy all the entitlements of a married woman.

These were not fair changes that were brought about by early feminists in any way, shape, or form. Did they need to make changes? Yes. But did the changes have to happen in that way? No, they did not.

WOODS: So how would you describe your fundamental, just root disagreement with feminism as we know it today? Now, I know that if I were down in the weeds of feminism, I would discover all different varieties. It's not just one thing, and I'm sure they fight among themselves the way libertarians fight among themselves. But to the casual observer, it seems like there is one, shrill ideology coming from most of them.

What's the primary – where's it coming from fundamentally? What's the fundamental problem, the fundamental mistake, misconception, or what?

STRAUGHAN: Well, okay, like you do have disagreement between different groups of feminists the same way you have disagreement between Christians as to whether transubstantiation actually exists and how do you define the Trinity and all of these things. So you do have disagreements that are kind of surface-level disagreements, but in the main, everybody who calls themselves a Christian believes that Christ was the son of God and he died for our sins. Like, this is a foundational belief.

And one of the foundational beliefs of feminists is patriarchy and a very specific definition of patriarchy that does not necessarily involve – I would suggest that, okay, if we're going to call it a patriarchy just for the sake of argument, the motivations behind that system were about survival for both sexes and in particular children and society's. They were not systems of oppression that singled out women that gave men all of the power in society and where men privileged themselves and men that they had never even met at the expense of their own wives, daughters, sisters, mothers. And this is really the fundamental – it's the foundation of feminist belief, is that men and men alone constructed a society that operates to subjugate, subordinate, and oppress women for the benefit of all men.

And this is just not how – I just can't even imagine what a woman must think about men and their nature as human beings if they believe that men would go out of their way to harm their female loved ones, the people that they form their most intimate connections and bonds with right from the time that they're nursing at their mothers' breasts and build a system that oppresses those people for the benefit of some schmuck down the street that you don't even know and all other men. It just does not compute with me. That has not been my experience of men in my life. I have met some men who were jerks. I have met plenty more men who are decent people who care about the women and girls in their lives.

So I think that that seems to be the basis. It's actually a Marxist model of society based entirely on conflict theory. You take bourgeoisie and proletariat, you replace it with men and women, and there you go. Take it to academia and see what you can do with it. And I just don't see society and the relationship between men and women operating in that way at all.

WOODS: You know, I want to ask you kind of an off-the-wall question. Here we've been doing basics and fundamentals and now I just want to throw current events at you. I realize you're in Canada, but news from the U.S., for better or worse, it just gets everywhere.

STRAUGHAN: We're Canada's hat, so yeah, we hear a lot of stuff.

WOODS: [laughing] Well, I'll tell you, this whole thing about Hollywood and Harvey Weinstein and all the rest of it is unfolding at a dramatic pace. And I knew – I knew there was something rotten at the core of everybody's alleged horror at Trump's remarks, low-class remarks about women, and I thought, of all people to be criticizing him, I thought, these I am certain are the biggest hypocrites in the world. And now we're all hearing people saying, "I'm shocked to learn of his behavior." If you're shocked

when something that systematic is going on, then you're an idiot. I mean, it seems to me impossible to believe these people were unaware of what was going on, but yet these are people who they can't say enough about Trump. Now, a few of them have spoken out, I'll grant you, but it turns out there's going to be a lot more that's going to be dug up. And I'm just curious about your overall thoughts about that situation.

STRAUGHAN: Well, I'm always skeptical when it comes to claims of sexual misconduct against a high-profile man, but when I listened to the recording made by I believe it was Ambra Gutierrez, that kind of clinched it for me, that this guy Weinstein, he's a scumbag. His conduct might not have risen to the level of a felony, but it may well have. And I am inclined to believe that the casting couch – it's a cliché for a reason because it exists in Hollywood – that he had his casting couch and that there were women who were wronged by him, 100%.

The fact is that this has essentially – and in Weinstein's case in particular, it was an open secret in Hollywood. I wouldn't even call it a secret. Word had spread through back channels. Everybody knew. Angelina Jolie said she went out of her way to warn new women coming into Hollywood away from him or warn them about his behavior and what he is like.

But what drives me crazy is, you know, we're talking about Matt Damon and we're talking about Ben Affleck and Rose McGowan's accusations that they helped Weinstein cover it up and all of this stuff. But every single woman who settled for money in return for signing a nondisclosure agreement and maybe swearing an affidavit that the incident they in their statement have claimed never happened, they also assisted in the cover up.

And to look at the entire situation and I see articles being written that this is just indicative of white male culture and all of this stuff, right, and it's sort of like Weinstein is in some way all white men that exist. No. He was facilitated not just by men, but by women. He was facilitated in his actions by his victims, who chose to – and a \$200,000 or a \$100,000 settlement is not punitive to a guy with that kind of money. He's not suffering for that. That's just the price of doing business for him.

So what justice are these women getting? They're just getting money. They're just getting money. And they are facilitating this guy and going out and doing it again to somebody else. And we need to take an honest look at how women participated in that system and helped perpetuate that disgusting system, rather than saying it's all about white men and their sense of entitlement to women's bodies and all of this other garbage that they talk about.

So I'm just revolted by the whole thing, and I'm revolted by the moral outrage from Hollywood about, *Oh my goodness, we had this monster in our midst?* You knew it. And there are a dozen more like him or more.

WOODS: All right, I want to follow up on this in just a minute after we thank our sponsor.

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I hate to burden you with internal libertarian drama, but let's just say last week an article appeared by a libertarian that made its way into *Newsweek*, and it was saying, Look, it's true, we'll agree Weinstein's a pig, but on the other hand, there's also Mike Pence. You say to yourself, what? What on earth parallel could you be drawing? Well, Mike Pence won't meet privately with women, and that's one side of the coin, and the other side of the coin is a guy who will meet privately with them just to use them as amusement parks, basically. So really, women have to choose. These are the two unpalatable choices we have now.

And I thought it's so bizarre that we would get news of an outright predator like this guy, and your first thought would be, *This gives me an opportunity to strike out at Mike Pence*. And the comments section was – what in the world? And this is the choice women have. Even if that were the choice women have, I think I would choose not to be molested. I don't think that would be much of a choice. But that's what we have to deal with. So you think you've got problems? We've got them over here too.

STRAUGHAN: Well, I honestly think those two things, Mike Pence and Weinstein, are related in that there's a reason why Mike Pence – and not just Mike Pence. Plenty of school teachers who are men will never have a meeting with a female student unless the classroom door is open or there is someone else in the room. University professors, same thing, leave the office door open. And it's because they do not want to be accused of some kind of misconduct, because it's very, very easy to believe that there is misconduct going on, and most school teachers and most university professors don't have the kind of resources in terms of status and power and money and lawyers and the ability to ruin people's careers just by denying them a role or firing them off a set – they don't have the kind of power to be able to get away with even just having an innocent meeting with a female student or a female employee with the office door closed. So what we have is we have these two polarities.

And what allows a man like Weinstein to behave the way he was behaving is not his maleness. It's not some kind of sense of entitlement that has been inculcated in him by the culture because he is a man. It is because he has money. It is because he has power. It is because he has privilege. It is because he is able to destroy people if he chooses. And because everybody wants something from him, as well. Everybody who goes to see him, it is essentially like every single woman who went into that room, any room alone with him, was asking for him to give them an A on her final test or whatever. And there are women who are willing to – and let's be honest – women who are willing to trade sex for benefit, and there are women who are not. There are women who are willing to make spurious allegations for their benefit, and there are women who are not.

And so you look at Mike Pence, he's a straight-up guy. He absolutely, everything must be the appearance of propriety, absolutely 100%, because he does not want to find himself on the wrong end of a spurious allegation. Weinstein was able to maintain his revolving-door casting couch because he had the power to crush anybody who stuck their head up and said boo to him. So I mean, they are related, but yes, I agree. It's hard to find a comparison between two opposite ends of the spectrum. Mike Pence is powerful. Mike Pence is wealthy. Mike Pence is a standup guy who wants to make sure not only that he acts proper, but that everybody sees him acting proper. And Weinstein is the exact opposite.

WOODS: Let me draw something else from current events, the Boy Scouts decision. I don't know if you've probably had to deal with this one too, but now they're prepared to admit girls into the Cub Scouts and other things too. So I've seen different reactions to this. Of course there are some people who say this is a wonderful move for gender equality. There are other people who say this is another example of flattening out of all institutions so that they all look exactly the same.

But I've heard a third point of view from feminists who say, no, preserve the Girl Scouts, because the Boy Scouts, this isn't going to turn out to gender justice. This is actually intensifying the patriarchy because the Girl Scouts, which is a secular organization and which has donated and supports social justice groups, that has actually been a great incubator of feminism, whereas the Boy Scouts have been more traditionally associated with churches and conservative causes. So really, this is a way to divert girls into a more conservative, patriarchal sort of group and away from the radicalism of the Girl Scouts. So what do you think about that?

STRAUGHAN: Are you kidding?

WOODS: I just read that in *The New York Times* today. I just read that.

STRAUGHAN: Oh my God. Aren't the feminists the ones who are pushing for girls to be admitted into the — I guess maybe some feminists are and some feminists aren't. But in Canada, we've actually admitted girls into our Boy Scout troops for a few years now; I think seven years or something like that. And I find it really egregious, because they do want to preserve the all-girls space of the Girl Scouts or Girl Guides, I guess. They want to maintain that as an all-female environment.

But you see this all the way through from the 1700s onward with highly politicized women, is that they want to eradicate any area where men are with other men or boys are with other boys in an all-male culture. They want to get rid of that. And it's almost like they have this terror of what men would get up to without female supervision. You saw it with petitions to King George to ban coffee houses because men were congregating there and weren't living up to the standards expected of their wives and lovers. You saw all kinds of — any kinds of all-male space, they want to eradicate and bring under sort of feminine control and feminine observation, and it's a really horrible thing.

We just actually, there was a study published just recently that was highly publicized over the last couple of days, saying that bromances — so very close friendships between two young men — where they felt that this was good in the sense that it reduces homophobia and things like that among men, but at the same time, these men feel like they open up emotionally more to their guy friends than to their girlfriends, to their female lovers. And they share more with their guy friends emotionally than with their female lovers. And this is bad news for women, because this encourages men to only see women not as emotional support, not as a partner in life, but only as a sex object. And all of that other stuff that a wife would give you, they get from their bromantic partner. And I'm thinking, like, can we not allow men to even be buddies without talking about how it's bad for women?

WOODS: Yeah, that seems to be the problem. But on the other hand, I'm sure they would say this is how patriarchy replicates itself, is through precisely this, and that's why it needs to be broken up. And yeah, that is exactly what men get up to when women aren't around. They perpetuate their dominance of society, right?

STRAUGHAN: Um, well, that's what they think they do, but I don't think that that's what men do when they're alone together.

WOODS: [laughing] No, they really aren't. That is really not what they're up to.

STRAUGHAN: No, and here's the interesting thing, because I've looked way, way, way back when we split off from our last common ancestor that we shared with chimpanzees and bonobos, and I've looked at this from the progression socially. And one of the biggest things that has made human beings what we are is the ability of unrelated men, men who are not related to each other to not just tolerate each other, but to cooperate with each other. And male bonding outside the company of women is actually quite necessary for men to be able to maintain that. It is one of the things that is responsible for our ability to create societies and to create civilizations.

So we're essentially trying to dismantle – or feminists are essentially trying to dismantle the one thing that has brought us to where we are. You look out your window – you look *at* your window and then through it and everything outside of it owes something to the unique ability among mammals, among animals in general of men to cooperate with each other. And all these feminists are trying to do is weaken that, undermine that, get underneath it and pick it apart and destroy it. What do they think is going to replace it? They have not thought any of this through. They are working from a set of false assumptions about men, about women, about society, about how things work, about how we got here, about why they work the way they did and why they're working the way they do now. They have no clue, and they're trying to break the system without even realizing what it's for. It's essentially like a kid taking a baseball bat to a giant piece of machinery and thinking that'll fix it. *If I just wreck it, I'll just build a new one.* Well, I don't think that that's possible. So I mean, I'm actually quite horrified by the fact that society has been willing to indulge these women, these feminist women who are trying to do this. It's kind of scary.

WOODS: But they're also indulging this new practice whereby parents are supporting young children in reidentifying as another gender. What are your thoughts on that?

STRAUGHAN: Well, I mean, okay, do I believe transgender people exist? Yes. Do I believe that the causes are rooted in biology? Yes. Do I believe that transitioning may be helpful to some of them? Yes. Do I believe that it would be a very nice thing, particularly in the case of male to female, if you could stop puberty and transition so that you would more readily pass? You don't have the square jaw; you don't have the Adam's apple; you don't have the deep voice. It would make things much, much easier. But the problem is that once puberty hits, these boys, they get a shot of testosterone. It's a period of extremely rapid brain development and neural pruning and rearrangement, and a lot of these boys who maybe felt that way when they were 11 change their minds during puberty.

So I mean, it's wishful thinking to think that a kid, a kid who's not authorized to decide what he eats for dinner, who's not authorized to decide what he – you know, to drink or vote or give his life for his country or make any of those decisions whatsoever, what time is bedtime – but we're allowing these children to decide something so permanent and so drastic to the point where now in Canada there is a bill – Bill 89, I believe – that would make parents who do not facilitate this, parents who do not go along with their child's decision that they are transgender, that would authorize child services to take those children away from those parents.

And I'm sorry, but this is just way too complicated an issue for us to legislate stuff like that, for us to say every kid who at age eight thinks they're the opposite sex is going to have that same belief, that same feeling of identity at age 14 or 15? No, it's way, way too complicated for that, and it's extremely frustrating to me, because it would be much easier on everybody for a child to go through puberty and change their mind than to have to deal with all of the other stuff that transitioning entails. So what you're doing is you're sacrificing this group of kids who change their mind – and it's a quite significant number of them. You're sacrificing the kids who would have changed their minds for the ones who would not. And I'm sorry, but that's just not okay, not okay at all.

WOODS: And you're saying that this is an issue that defies a sledgehammer-style response, but this kind of revolution in these areas of life, whether it's transgender or gender roles or whatever, is happening so quickly. And what's astonishing is not only how quickly it's happening, but how quickly everyone takes for granted that all right-thinking people now think this particular way –

STRAUGHAN: Yes.

WOODS: – a way nobody ever thought, ever in the past. Now everybody *must* think that way, and you can't have any outliers at all or those people must be destroyed. See, if I have an opponent out there, I write an article against that person and I think, all right, I showed that person, and then I go about the rest of my life. But I somehow feel like people on the other side aren't really that way. They really want to drive people out of society, hound them, get them fired, destroy their careers, destroy their good names, call them haters. And since nobody wants to be called a hater, it puts regular people, frankly, on the defensive all the time. *Well, why, look, I do this; I do that.* Nothing you say to these people is going to satisfy them. They want to destroy you. Am I exaggerating?

STRAUGHAN: You're not exaggerating. As things have become more polarized between sort of the conservative viewpoint – I would say the socially conservative viewpoint versus the extremely socially progressive, free-for-all, anything-goes viewpoint – except for, you know, if you're a white, cisgendered, heterosexual male. Then nothing is okay for you to do. But these two sides have been polarizing over the last probably 15 years or so, and when you get into that situation of straight-up tribalism, you have defined your "us," you have defined your "them." The us is the people who agree with us; the them is anyone who disagrees at all. And because the rhetoric has gotten so extreme – so now it's not – conservative used to be a dirty word, but now we have to upgrade to Nazi and stuff like that.

So you have to dehumanize and vilify your opponent, and one of the things that I've seen happening more and more and more is that the social media does not help. Social media does a few things that make it very, very difficult for any kind of communication between two sides. The block button, the mute button, being able to pre-block people. There are things called blocklists or blockbots that, if you don't like one person, it will block them and every one of their followers and everyone who's associated with their followers, and you can go several levels deep, and essentially push one button and block hundreds or thousands of people from your social media who may disagree with you.

And I know one gentleman who has a YouTube channel. People go just out of curiosity to see if they're – they've never talked to him. They've never even heard of him. And they go to his Twitter account to see if they've already been blocked, and most of the time they have. And it's part of this multi-tiered blocking system that he's got going, that if you have ever liked a video by this person or if you follow somebody he disagrees with, you're also blocked. And this allows them to just congregate into this tight, tight echo chamber. Academia has turned into a massive echo chamber. Journalism, massively left-wing nowadays. Even centrists or neutral news sources will lean to the left. They'll be more sympathetic to the left.

So essentially what you have is this moving over of everything, and they're pushing all of the – and it's a purifying phase of this sort of way of thinking, where it's quite zealous and they are pushing any and all wrong-thinkers out. It's almost like we've got a Spanish Inquisition going right now in terms of this, and because I think that many of these beliefs, these ideological beliefs on the part of these people are – I think that they are not fact-based. I think that in large part they are faith-based. It doesn't have to involve a god to involve believing in something that doesn't exist. And I think that because of that, we're seeing a purifying process on that side in particular, and we're seeing a backlash on the extreme far right. White nationalists used to be that ugly inbred cousin that nobody would invite to Thanksgiving dinner. Now they're attracting more and more followers in response to what's going on in the far left.

WOODS: Tell me about your YouTube channel, which has an astonishing almost 175,000 subscribers. I mean, there are people who would kill to have a fraction of that. I guess you got started in 2010, and what kind of stuff are you doing over there? If people subscribe – which I think people should, and I'll link to the channel also at TomWoods.com/1022 – what can they expect to hear you doing?

STRAUGHAN: Oh, I spend a lot of time picking apart and dismantling feminist theories and social justice theories. I have recently gotten into educating certain feminists as to the law and as to how it works and why it works the way it does, things like due process, presumption of innocence, these things that allow us to have all this nice stuff like freedom and not being dragged off to jail and have the government demand you prove your innocence and then put you in jail when you fail – you know, all these nice things that we have that are currently under threat from social justice types and feminists, who would really like to make it so that if a woman points a finger at a man, he goes directly to prison. So I do a lot of education on that. I do a lot of explaining why I think feminists have it wrong and just detailing evolutionary psychology, why I think men and women behave the way they do, why I think human

beings perceive men and women the way we do. So a lot of that, so it's a big, huge mish-mash of different stuff. And I don't know, I guess some people like it.

WOODS: Oh yeah, I'm looking at some of the stuff right now and I'm thinking, well, I guess I will never, ever run out of stuff to listen to because I'm interested in so much of this stuff. Well, again, the channel is called Girl Writes What. You can go to YouTube and find it that way, or it's linked at TomWoods.com/1022, and you should get to know more about Karen because she is as every bit of interesting as she sounded in this conversation today. Thanks so much for your time. It's our first time ever talking, but I hope it won't be the last.

STRAUGHAN: Thank you so much for having me, Tom.