



'This is not new and that is the problem': A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

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Introduction

This study focuses on how women communicate and are represented in political contexts; in particular gender stereotyping, the gendered nature of political institutions, and how these can lead to structural sexism. I will be looking at a speech by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez that addresses sexism from prominent male colleagues, suggesting that political institutions are not doing enough to challenge sexist, and also racist, discourses that remain dominant in many parts of society. For this reason, it is important to continue research in language, gender and politics to hold these institutions to an account. Discourse has the power to resist dominant ideologies and therefore, critical research, as well as the work of politicians like Ocasio-Cortez, can challenge normative discourses that often limit marginalised groups.

Through analysis of the data relating to concepts of intersectionality, gender stereotypes and the specific linguistic and rhetorical devices used in the speech, I will argue that the spoken discourse can be described as 'feminist', while demonstrating how women face gendered discrimination in political contexts.

Background

A critical focus on women in politics, and the role of language and discourse in constructing gendered political identities, is an ongoing area of research (Wilson and Boxer 2015: 1). My analysis rests in the current stage of gender and politics research, in particular, looking into the gendered nature of political institutions and processes (Wilson and Boxer 2015: 5). As political institutions have been male dominated for so long, 'masculinist' discourses, discourses historically associated with men and that exclude and marginalise women (Walsh

2001: 18) have become hegemonic. Hegemony is the dominance of ideologies belonging to a particular social group being accepted as the norm (Gramsci 1971, Femia 1987). Female politicians have to adhere to institutional speech conditions but also navigate gendered stereotypes in these political settings. For instance, men typically have a stronger sense of their entitlement to exercise authority and therefore, can more confidently express their views compared to women (Cameron and Shaw 2015: 8). Foucault (1981) sees discourse as an instrument of power as ideological messages are encoded in language. An advantage of Foucault's theory of discourse and power in feminist linguistics is that it enables resistance to gender stereotyping (Mullany 2007: 37), as discourse also has the potential to undermine and challenge. The resistance to dominant masculinist discourse raises questions of what happens when women interact and represent themselves in political settings.

Numerically, the participation of women in politics is increasing. 2018, when Ocasio-Cortez was first elected, witnessed a notable increase in women officials and in 2020, 101 women were elected to the House of Representatives (Center For American Women and Politics 2020). Not to mention Kamala Harris who will be the first woman, and black and Asian American, to be Vice-President (BBC 2020). Participation, however, does not necessarily mean equality, relating to the differences between symbolic representation (Phillips 1995) and substantive representation (Mackay 2005). Symbolic representation refers to the increase in participation by the growing number of women in political positions. Although, just because women have access to the vote and become political figures in many societies, it does not mean they will due to systemic social inequalities, such as access to education (Wilson and Boxer 2015: 3). In contrast, substantive representation is women acting on behalf of other women to 'ensure that women's interests, needs and concerns are more fully represented in the policy process' and by 'acting' like women, they seek to change masculinist political behaviours (Mackay 2005: 101). A limiting stereotype, however, is that women are better at handling 'softer' 'women's' issues like social policy, due to being more

empathic, while men are more adept for 'heavier' issues like defence (Hayes 2011: 135). Women engaging in political contexts, therefore, navigate gendered stereotypes that perpetuate ideas of the gender binary, often simply to be taken seriously in male-dominated environments.

Women in professional contexts face the invisible barrier of the double bind. If they interact in a stereotypically feminine manner, as collaborative and indirect for instance, or in a typically masculine way, such as confrontational and direct (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 574), they are likely to be negatively evaluated in both instances (Mullany 2007: 32). The double bind comes from the research of Lakoff (1975), regularly cited in discussions of gender difference and stereotypes. Gender difference perspectives often take an essentialist view and therefore, presume a homogenous gender experience as biological sex was seen as determining gender. Lakoff (1975) argues that there is a female speech style distinguished by certain linguistic markers, such as hesitations and tag questions. These have the effect of weakening the force of an utterance, resulting in a lack of authority from the speaker (Cameron 2006; Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary 1988). There are some limitations of Lakoff's ideas and methodology, as representative of the early phase of language and gender research. A reliance on gender stereotypes, such as women being passive, raises the question of whether other factors such as age and ethnicity are as significant on an individual's speech style. Furthermore, generally, women do not fall into one homogenous group using the same style of speech to communicate. When looking at how gender stereotypes are arguably still at play in political contexts, it is important to consider intersectionality and a wider relationship between gender and other identity factors as well as the context of an interaction.

Nash (2008) defines intersectionality as 'the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of gender, race, class and sexuality' (2). Identity, therefore, is made up of these intersecting 'vectors' that reinforce one another. Post-structuralist views see gender as performative (Butler 1990), and as a social construct, that challenges the

essentialist view of gender. If gender is established within interaction, female politicians can signal their identity as a woman, and other identity positions, through language. Ocasio-Cortez signals her identity position as a woman of colour in her speech when highlighting the discrimination of underrepresented groups. Intersectionality theorises the broad categories of 'woman' by emphasising these additional factors that influence individual experience; as social processes that reinforce each other and shape the dimensions of women's experience (Nash 2008; Crenshaw 1991). I will draw upon these concepts in my analysis of a political speech that is arguably 'feminist' in its message through its linguistic and stylistic features.

Methodology

I am analysing a speech by Ocasio-Cortez to the House of Representatives in July 2020, addressing the sexist verbal remarks by Ted Yoho. She had planned to ignore them, including the gendered and pejorative term 'fucking bitch'; however, Yoho's non-apology changed her mind (The Washington Post 2020). Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) was elected in 2018 as Congresswoman for the 14th District of New York and was the youngest woman ever elected to Congress (CNN 2018). Moreover, AOC positions herself as a woman in politics advocating feminist issues. She sponsors the 'Each Woman Act' that, if made into legislation, makes reproductive healthcare more accessible and she supports 'preventing the discrimination against any individual on any basis, including sexual orientation or gender-identity' (Ocasio-Cortez.house.gov n.d). Reproductive and LGBTQI+ rights are feminist concerns, as well as the belief that the subordination of women is not inevitable; it can and should be changed through political action (Cameron 2018: 11).

I will be taking a qualitative approach to the data, looking at her speech and how it responds to sexism. Qualitative analysis looks at smaller sets of data and the meanings and functions of language in particular communicative contexts (Sauntson 2020: 58). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical framework that problematises texts and treats language as a social practice influencing how we perceive the world. According to Fowler

(1991), language is a 'reality-creating practice' (62). Speakers, therefore, can discursively construct social realities through language. This is particularly relevant in political contexts wherein policies are created and enacted in language. Furthermore, female politicians often see themselves as representing women in the public-sphere, therefore wanting to legitimise their view of reality (Dodson 2006). Language correlates with power and how certain social groups, often men as the dominant voice in political bodies, discursively construct reality and maintain power is examined in CDA (Wilson and Boxer 2015: 4). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is a strand of CDA informed by the field of language, gender and sexuality (Sauntson 2020: 49). Lazar (2005) argues that one of its aims is to reveal the gendered nature of many social practices that discursively maintain the gender order. The gender order consists of dominant forms of masculinities and femininities that create a system of ideological and social practices (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004). Political institutions uphold many aspects of the gender order, despite often appearing neutral and inclusive. For instance, Ocasio-Cortez being able to give her speech in the House and the increase in female political candidates. Her speech, however, addresses the gender order and draws attention to gaps in gender equality.

In my analysis, I will also be drawing on some principles of conversational analysis (CA). CA focuses on the participants in the data and claims about social variables should be shown as relevant to participants before being emphasised as significant (Stoeke and Smithson 2001: 219). In other words, gender, and other social factors in CA are not automatically assumed to be crucial to the analysis. Stoeke and Smithson (2001) highlight concerns that feminist researchers may have with conversational analysis as it has a 'potential incompatibility with a feminist approach to data analysis' (221). Feminist linguists typically stress their commitment to social change and, therefore, draw on their own experiences and values, which CA seeks to avoid by taking a more participant-focused approach. In light of the interdisciplinary field of language, gender and politics, I will be taking a broad methodological approach, drawing on post-structuralist ideas, including

intersectionality (Sunderland and Litosselti 2008: 4-5), as well as conversational and critical discourse analysis frameworks. Ocasio-Cortez responds to gendered discrimination in a political context and therefore, through feminist critical discourse analysis, I will argue that certain speeches by women politicians are examples of feminist practice.

Analysis: Political Contexts and Sexist Language

The political 'discursive environment' involves a range of gendered identities that are presented for different social purposes within an institutional setting (Wilson and Boxer 2015: 5). The gendered nature of political contexts and the process of gendering occurs discursively through language. For instance, the terms of address 'Congressman' and 'Congresswoman' convey aspects of the gender order; there is a difference between a 'man' and a 'woman' categorised by these terms. This reiterates the idea of language being a 'reality-creating practice' (Fowler 1991: 62). The terms of reference mark a gendered difference and by using them consistently, this implied 'reality' of a binary difference between men and women becomes normative. The communicative context of the US House of Representatives is shown to be significant through the formal register and context-specific phrases. The participants are referred to using political terms of address, such as 'Speaker' (l. 1), 'the chair' (l. 2) and 'Representative' (l. 90). Speech participants in political contexts have to adhere to certain institutional speech conditions, such as designated times for addressing the floor. The directive speech act 'Speaker, I seek a question of personal privilege' (l. 1) requests approval to give the speech at that stage and by doing so, adheres to these speech conditions. Moreover, a request for 'personal privilege' suggests what the participant wants to say is significant to the dignity and integrity of the House (Wickham 2019: 423). Ocasio-Cortez argues that the act against her by a Congressman highlights how discrimination is 'cultural' (l. 36) and supported by individuals in high political positions by accepting abuse against women. As discourse has the power to challenge dominant ideologies, Ocasio-Cortez arguably aims to address the need for resistance to sexist

ideologies in her spoken discourse. According to Lakoff (1975), the female speech style displays a lack of assertiveness through requesting approval; however, in this case, seeking approval relates to the institutional context. Assumptions about female language, therefore, should be applied with caution, considering other contextual factors related to the participant and the function of their language use. The representative speech act 'Dehumanizing language is not new, and what we are seeing is that incidents like these are happening in a pattern' (l. 43-4) indicates how ideologies become normative and hegemonic. The active noun phrase 'happening in a pattern' suggests that these examples of sexism can be traced, while the present tense stresses how they are still happening, and when discourses and attitudes are repeated, they become accepted.

In addition, the assertive speech act 'It is cultural. It is a culture of lack of impunity, of accepting of violence and violent language against women, and an entire structure of power that supports that' (l. 36-8) declares that this issue of violent and sexist language against women is embedded in social power structures. Sexism is 'discrimination on the grounds of sex, on the basis of assumptions that women are both different from and inferior to men' (Talbot 2019: 34). The assertive speech act represents this 'culture' as a fact; the reality of the state of a society that does not condemn these incidences of sexism. The noun phrase 'a culture of a lack of impunity, of accepting of violence' suggests that this sexist incident is not isolated, and that political institutions are responsible for upholding discriminatory discourses. AOC later refers to examples of abuse she has received in other everyday contexts and the repetition of the preposition 'of' implies that sexism is widely prevalent due to the repetitive tone of the utterance, reinforcing that this is not a one-off example.

She does not directly describe the language as 'sexist'; however, the remarks are gendered in their connotations and relate to negative associations of women and female politicians. For instance, 'he called me disgusting, he called me crazy, he called me out of my mind, and he called me dangerous' (l. 12-13). The anaphora, repetition of the verb phrase 'he called me', draws attention to the derogatory verbal remarks and the personal

pronoun 'he' as the subject positions Yoho as the agent in the clause and therefore, in the degrading utterances AOC is repeating to the audience. The lexical field of negative adjectives 'disgusting', 'crazy' and 'dangerous' arguably have sexist connotations. In particular, 'crazy' has gendered undertones, related to women being stereotypically represented as irrational and emotional. Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) argue that a woman's anger is often seen as a product of her personality, making her incompetent in leadership positions. The idiomatic expression 'out of my mind' suggests that, due to Ocasio-Cortez being a woman, her passionate attitude stems from irrationality and psychological flaws. Moreover, presumably, Yoho and AOC have differences of opinion, not just due to their gender but also their party affiliations. Hayes (2011) studies how both gender and party stereotypes can influence how candidates are perceived and argues that Democratic candidates are viewed as more representative of 'feminine' qualities, such as compassion and empathy. Ocasio-Cortez, however, has become known for her direct manner, such as scrutinising Mark Zuckerberg on Facebook's fact-checking policies (The Independent 2019), responding to attempts to undermine her credibility and apparently, off-record, warned Yoho that 'You do that to me again, I won't be so nice next time.' (Ruiz, Vanity Fair 2020). She arguably flouts many stereotypes related to women in politics and female speech styles. She uses direct speech acts, can be confrontational in responding to discrimination and is task-orientated as a Democrat Congresswoman hoping to bring about social change, such as the Green New Deal. These stereotypes, such as the ones identified by Holmes and Stubbe (2003) and wider social expectations related to the gender order, still affect perceptions of women in political contexts. This recent example demonstrates the need for continued research to show how these institutions are still inherently gendered, and sexist, despite appearances of inclusivity and equality.

'Women's Rights are Human Rights': Female Politicians and Feminist Practice

Hillary Clinton declared 'Women's rights are human rights' at a UN conference in 1995, a speech that called out human rights violations and is a phrase still quoted today in the fight for global gender equality (Clinton 1996). Dodson (2006) found that women in Congress often see themselves as representatives for other women, identifying with women's interests and life experiences. This raises the question of what constitutes women's interests; nonetheless, Ocasio-Cortez positions herself as a woman standing for other silenced women. The repetition of the negated deontic modal verb phrase 'I could not allow my nieces, I could not allow the little girls that I go home to, I could not allow victims of verbal abuse' (l. 50-51) stresses this connection between her and other female voices, and the wider function of her speech in hopefully leading to social change. Furthermore, the rule of three increases the rhetorical force of the utterance. It gradually increases the group represented in the speech act, from her own family to any victim of abuse, suggesting the social significance of discrimination and her response in the House.

Contemporary feminist research often takes a feminist post-structuralist approach, which problematises gender binary categories and the specific processes whereby individuals are made into gendered subjects (Davies and Gannon 2005: 312). Moreover, through a focus on agency and subjectivity, intersectionality becomes increasingly relevant. AOC marks her intersecting identity as a woman of colour through the discrimination targeted at her. The representative speech acts on lines 40-43 quote further examples of verbal abuse she has received. For example, the distal deictic phrase 'whatever that is' is immensely dehumanising. The demonstrative determiner 'that' reduces her to something different from 'normal', likely having racial undertones. Ocasio-Cortez is Hispanic/Latina, suggesting that women like her do not belong in the political domain, and even in America and should therefore, 'go home'. The naming strategies, reinforced by the term of address 'President of the United States', that is usually honorific as a prestigious leadership role, exposes the discriminatory discourses in the upper echelons of the political structure, suggesting that these views are legitimate.

The media described her speech as 'the most important feminist speech in a generation' (Peck, Huffpost 2020) and as representing 'women who refuse to be silenced' (Mahdawi, The Guardian 2020). Notably, AOC in a recent interview aligns herself with Hillary Clinton, arguably one of the most prejudiced women in US politics, who faced criticism related to female stereotypes most of her career. Clinton's speech is also described as 'feminist', raising the question of what determines a 'feminist' discourse. In this case, Ocasio-Cortez subverts a masculinist discourse, the non-apology from Yoho and the abuse he gave her, into a commitment to fighting the dehumanising of others. The first-person pronouns position her as the active agent addressing these issues, recasting her gendered experience into advocating social change, starting by giving the speech in the House. Dodson (2006) highlights strategies to be taken in the areas of language and feminism, and women in politics more broadly, such as electing the 'right men' to accept women as equal colleagues and recognise the needs of underrepresented groups (254). AOC raises this idea of the 'right men' in the verdictive speech acts: 'having a daughter does not make a man decent. Having a wife does not make a decent man. Treating people with dignity and respect makes a decent man' (l. 76-8). Yoho argued that he would not treat women disrespectfully due to his own family; however, AOC undermines this attitude. She emphasises her subject position as a daughter, similar to Yoho's female family members, and the general feminist, liberal, belief of treating all people with respect. The repetition of the adjective 'decent' draws attention to the qualities that Yoho arguably lacks. This relates to the wider issue of hegemonic masculinist values dominating political institutions, such as a woman who is not passive being a 'bitch.' There are some negative consequences of women standing for 'women's issues', such as being undermined if they issue strong opinions due to the assumption that women avoid confrontation. Furthermore, there is a gap between women's political presence and their impact, especially in stereotypically masculine areas such as defence. Nonetheless, by voicing the interests of marginalised identities, female politicians

can become involved in feminist practice. Ocasio-Cortez and Clinton before her utilise their voices in the political public-sphere to attempt to re-gender the political landscape.

Discussion

My findings suggest that political speeches are carefully constructed examples of spoken discourse in an institutional domain through the specific examples of language use I have identified. The central purpose of the speech is to acknowledge Yoho's speech and highlight the sexist and racist discrimination in society that is upheld by political systems not condemning this behaviour. I aimed to show how the identity positioning of Ocasio-Cortez is made up of different identity factors, and the significance of the political context to the discourse. Assumptions about female speech styles, therefore, such as Lakoff (1975), should be approached critically. While the gender difference approach helped to form the field of language and gender, other concepts, such as intersectionality, are increasingly significant.

A possible limitation of my research is relying on essentialist constructions of female identity, suggested through repetition of 'female' and 'woman.' The term 'womxn' is increasing due to its intersectional emphasis on foregrounding identities, such as transgender and non-binary people. Further research could consider alternative identities in political contexts, such as when a transgender woman positions herself in the masculinist political environment. For instance, Sarah McBride was elected as the first transgender senator this year (Henley, *The Guardian* 2020), suggesting that there are more resistant identities emerging, challenging the dominant heteronormative image of the white male politician. These developments will make further feminist critical analysis in political contexts rewarding by examining different identities.

Despite my argument and concepts like substantive representation (Mackay 2005) that reinforce this relation between women in politics and women's issues, it is important to

note that not all women take a 'feminist' approach. There are female politicians who 'reject the feminist label' (Dodson 2006: 253) and have different experiences, as well as constraints, that define their political participation. I have, therefore, attempted to be cautious in labelling Ocasio-Cortez as a feminist, especially as it can be used in misinformed and commodified ways in mainstream culture: you can find t-shirts online quoting this very speech. My analysis, however, along with contextual factors such as her policies, shows that the speech can be described as 'feminist.' Ocasio-Cortez constructs her identity as a woman and a 'daughter' (l. 65) too and uses spoken discourse to challenge the masculinist values that can limit female voices in political contexts.

Conclusion

Women who participate in the political 'discursive environment' (Wilson and Boxer 2015: 5) are shaped, represented and prejudiced by stereotypes based on presumptions that women are passive, non-confrontational and indirect. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a woman in politics attempting to break through the barrier of the double bind. She represents herself as direct and passionate, and committed to feminist values, such as challenging discrimination and abuse against women. This research emphasises that despite speeches often being described as 'feminist' for highlighting gender inequalities, the context of the discourse remains unequally gendered as women still face challenges in political settings, such as discrimination from male colleagues. Ocasio-Cortez claims that: 'this is not new and that is the problem' (l. 34). We are increasingly desensitised to this inequality as it has become normative after repeated acceptance, and it is this silence that she deems unacceptable.

Further research related to my findings could involve a comparative approach, looking at Yoho's non-apology speech to further analyse how AOC challenges it in her feminist political discourse. This would strengthen my argument that political institutions remain gendered in favour of men, by critically uncovering the ideologies in his discourse

that attempt to downplay the verbal abuse against a female politician. Political and gender equalities are interrelated: one cannot be achieved without the other. While political institutions may appear inclusive through female participation, more has to be done to resist gender stereotypes and discrimination in order to re-gender these contexts.

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Appendix

Available at: <<https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/rep-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-floor-speech-about-yoho-remarks-july-23>>

1 Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: Speaker, I seek recognition for a question of personal
privilege.

2 Speaker 2: The chair has been made aware of the valid base for the gentlewoman's
3 point of personal privilege. The gentlewoman from New York is recognized for one hour.
4

5 Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: Thank you Madam Speaker, and I would also like to
6 thank many of my colleagues for the opportunity to not only speak today but for the
7 many members from both sides of the aisle who have reached out to me in support
8 following an incident earlier this week. About two days ago, I was walking up the steps
9 of the Capitol when Representative Yoho suddenly turned a corner and he was
10 accompanied by Representative Roger Williams, and accosted me on the steps right here
11 in front of our nation's Capital. I was minding my own business, walking up the steps
12 and Representative Yoho put his finger in my face, he called me disgusting, he called me
13 crazy, he called me out of my mind, and he called me dangerous. Then he took a few
14 more steps and after I had recognized his comments as rude, he walked away and said
15 I'm rude, you're calling me rude. I took a few steps ahead and I walked inside and cast
16 my vote. Because my constituents send me here each and every day to fight for them
17 and to make sure that they are able to keep a roof over their head, that they're able to
18 feed their families and that they're able to carry their lives with dignity.
19

20 I walked back out and there were reporters in the front of the Capitol and in front of
21 reporters Representative Yoho called me, and I quote, "a f***ing b****." These were
22 the words that Representative Yoho levied against a congresswoman. The
23 congresswoman that not only represents New York's 14th Congressional District, but
24 every congresswoman and every woman in this country. Because all of us have had to
25 deal with this in some form, some way, some shape, at some point in our lives. I want to
26 be clear that Representative Yoho's comments were not deeply hurtful or piercing to me,
27 because I have worked a working class job. I have waited tables in restaurants. I have
28 ridden the subway. I have walked the streets in New York City, and this kind of language
29 is not new. I have encountered words uttered by Mr. Yoho and men uttering the same
30 words as Mr. Yoho while I was being harassed in restaurants. I have tossed men out of
31 bars that have used language like Mr. Yoho's and I have encountered this type of
32 harassment riding the subway in New York City.
33

34 This is not new, and that is the problem. Mr. Yoho was not alone. He was walking
35 shoulder to shoulder with Representative Roger Williams, and that's when we start to
36 see that this issue is not about one incident. It is cultural. It is a culture of lack of
37 impunity, of accepting of violence and violent language against women, and an entire
38 structure of power that supports that. Because not only have I been spoken to
39 disrespectfully, particularly by members of the Republican Party and elected officials in
40 the Republican Party, not just here, but the President of the United States last year told
41 me to go home to another country, with the implication that I don't even belong in
42 America. The governor of Florida, Governor DeSantis, before I even was sworn in, called
43 me a whatever that is. Dehumanizing language is not new, and what we are seeing is
44 that incidents like these are happening in a pattern. This is a pattern of an attitude
45 towards women and dehumanization of others.

46 So while I was not deeply hurt or offended by little comments that are made, when I
47 was reflecting on this, I honestly thought that I was just going to pack it up and go
48 home. It's just another day, right? But then yesterday, Representative Yoho decided to
49 come to the floor of the House of Representatives and make excuses for his behavior,
50 and that I could not let go. I could not allow my nieces, I could not allow the little girls
51 that I go home to, I could not allow victims of verbal abuse and worse to see that, to see
52 that excuse and to see our Congress accept it as legitimate and accept it as an apology
53 and to accept silence as a form of acceptance. I could not allow that to stand which is
54 why I am rising today to raise this point of personal privilege.

55

56 I do not need Representative Yoho to apologize to me. Clearly he does not want to.
57 Clearly when given the opportunity he will not and I will not stay up late at night waiting
58 for an apology from a man who has no remorse over calling women and using abusive
59 language towards women, but what I do have issue with is using women, our wives and
60 daughters, as shields and excuses for poor behavior. Mr. Yoho mentioned that he has a
61 wife and two daughters. I am two years younger than Mr. Yoho's youngest daughter. I
62 am someone's daughter too. My father, thankfully, is not alive to see how Mr. Yoho
63 treated his daughter. My mother got to see Mr. Yoho's disrespect on the floor of this
64 House towards me on television and I am here because I have to show my parents that I
65 am their daughter and that they did not raise me to accept abuse from men.

66

67 Now what I am here to say is that this harm that Mr. Yoho levied, it tried to levy against
68 me, was not just an incident directed at me, but when you do that to any woman, what
69 Mr. Yoho did was give permission to other men to do that to his daughters. In using that
70 language in front of the press, he gave permission to use that language against his wife,
71 his daughters, women in his community, and I am here to stand up to say that is not
72 acceptable. I do not care what your views are. It does not matter how much I disagree
73 or how much it incenses me or how much I feel that people are dehumanizing others. I
74 will not do that myself. I will not allow people to change and create hatred in our hearts.

75

76 And so what I believe is that having a daughter does not make a man decent. Having a
77 wife does not make a decent man. Treating people with dignity and respect makes a
78 decent man, and when a decent man messes up as we all are bound to do, he tries his
79 best and does apologize. Not to save face, not to win a vote, he apologizes genuinely to
80 repair and acknowledge the harm done so that we can all move on.

81

82 Lastly, what I want to express to Mr. Yoho is gratitude. I want to thank him for showing
83 the world that you can be a powerful man and accost women. You can have daughters
84 and accost women without remorse. You can be married and accost women. You can
85 take photos and project an image to the world of being a family man and accost women
86 without remorse and with a sense of impunity. It happens every day in this country. It
87 happened here on the steps of our nation's Capitol. It happens when individuals who
88 hold the highest office in this land admit, admit to hurting women and using this
89 language against all of us. Once again, I thank my colleagues for joining us today. I will
90 reserve the hour of my time and I will yield to my colleague, Representative Jayapal of
91 Washington. Thank you.