

[Bonus Episode: Tis the Season for Feeling Feelings](#)

December 20, 2017

Hannah (Host): [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Hey babes, I'm coming to you today as promised with a special little holiday mini-sode. Let me start with a couple of announcements up front. I'm definitely coming back in January with a new season of *Secret Feminist Agenda*. As I mentioned in episode 15, we were taking a hiatus to start to figure out how exactly we were going to go about peer reviewing the podcast and we have a little bit of work left to do on the sort of more formal academic press side of things, but my collaborator Siobhan and I agreed that it made sense to just start the podcast back up. And honestly, I've been pretty impatient. I really miss doing this every week and I really miss talking to you all.

That said, you have really come through with the peer review on the podcast website. There are 43 comments and counting and they are thoughtful and engaged and nuanced and generous, and I have loved reading them and I can't wait to come back and respond to them and think about the things that you've said and try to bring in the kinds of guests that you've asked for. For now, I just wanted to sort of pop into your podcast feed briefly and chat with you about the holidays.

Now, I feel like the traditional holiday episode of a podcast might be, mmm, festive? Maybe there'll be some jingle bells. Maybe there will be an exchange of gifts. Okay. I've just listened to the holiday episode of Stop Podcasting Yourself and there's jingle bells and an exchange of gifts. Or you know, if you're *Witch, Please* in our single existing holiday episode, there's a surreal fever dream of musical mashup and genre play. If you've never listened to that episode, don't unless you're a deep *Witch, Please* fan because it's kind of nonsense, the most delightful of nonsense. But in the spirit of *Secret Feminist Agenda's* sort of feminist killjoy ethos, let me tell you what my secret feminist agenda is for these holidays. [Music: "White Wine in the Sun" by Tim Minchin]

Hannah (Host): What my secret feminist agenda is this holiday and what I hope you can adopt for yourselves is resisting the emotional coercion of this season that tells you to feel any way other than the way that you feel. One of the hardest things about the holidays is the weird emotional black mail thing that goes on where you feel like you must be relentlessly cheery and if you aren't for any number of super-duper valid reasons, then not only do you have to, you know, deal with whatever that sadness or depression or anger or loneliness is, but then you also have to deal with like this weird guilt about failing to register emotion correctly in accordance with the festive season. And that's just like a one, two punch of emotional manipulation. It's just a lot... and the thing is that we don't actually have to do it, that we can just say, "No, thank you, relentless cheeriness. I'm actually good this year." I've been trying this this year, you know, I try not to tell you not to mention agendas that I'm not attempting myself, so I've been trying that this year and that's part of my sort of larger project this year of making

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

Christmas, which is the, for the time being, the seasonal holiday that I celebrate. So I'm trying to make Christmas, starting to try to make some of my own Christmas traditions. Maybe that will mean actually not celebrating Christmas, maybe it will mean celebrating Solstice in future years, which registers for me more at a personal level.

Um, but I'm still emotionally attached to Christmas because of how important it was to my family growing up. Uh, but Christmas has been really hard for me for a really long time because it was my mom's favorite holiday and she did an incredible job of making it something really, really special and important for all of us. She died when I was 16 and at that point I sort of took over doing the emotional labor of making Christmas feel special and exciting for my family until I got to an age where I realized that that just left me exhausted and angry and lonely and sad as I poured all of this time and energy into trying to make the holiday special for other people and it didn't really get reciprocated, and trying to figure out what this holiday means for me on my own is a challenge. But I think it's a good challenge? I think it's a good adult challenge. I think it's part of the larger project of, like, making a life for yourself that doesn't necessarily tie into the familiar scripts that you've been fed of what a good and happy life looks like. I think it is hard also to figure out what adult Christmas looks like when you are single and childless and living in a city where you don't have super-duper deep roots yet. But I'm also aware that I'm not going to put roots down in Vancouver unless I commit to it and say like, this is my home. I live here now. So what does Christmas look like for me here? And I can tell you right now, it looks like my now expanding family have two cats, my two terrible children getting in fights and then giving each other times out. Just a side note, I don't particularly like referring to cats as children, but I do like calling them my terrible children, so I'm leaning into that. It looks like a little Christmas tree. It looks like, you know, some lit candles and it looks like an extra dose this week of outings and time with my friends, which is really lovely and heartwarming.

For other people, it might look like a complete refusal to acknowledge the holiday on any level. And boy howdy, do I have your back if that is the thing that you want to do. If you want to say, "Nope, fuck all of this, I hate it. It's nauseating capitalism," then absolutely. I strongly endorse a fundamental refusal of all things holidays. You know, the other piece here is that I know a lot of people are, at this season, are traveling and spending time with their families and I know that that can be super-duper hard as well. Holidays are fraught times when you're alone and they're fraught times when you're with your family. They're fraught times around food. I know that that's a really, really difficult thing for people. You know, the fraught times around seeing family members you don't normally see. Gift giving is difficult. Like all of this, God, it's just—it can be so nice. It could be such a nice time of year if we just agreed to make it a primarily cookie and nog based economy and just to let everything else go, but that's not how we do. And so I just want to go back to that original, that original agenda, which is feeling however you feel. Just, just go ahead and feel however you feel about this holiday. Maybe you feel super-duper joyous and festive. I have moments. I've definitely had moments where I feel super-duper joyous and festive and grateful

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

and like I'm finding a community in the city and like that is a beautiful and wonderful thing. And then, you know, I'm walking down Granville and I watch a teenage girl and her mother walk by Christmas shopping arm and arm and I feel like somebody is rubbing sandpaper over my soul.

So, you know, [laughter] just, uh, just, just let those feelings be... just let those feelings be your feelings and as much as you can, just refuse all of the narratives that tell you that you have to feel a particular way because it's a particular time of year. Mmm, in the spirit of just letting yourself feel how you feel at Christmas, I put out a call on Twitter a little while ago asking people for their favorite sad and lonely Christmas songs about how everybody's sad and lonely at Christmas, and I've put those songs together, all the recommendations people sent, into just an absolutely emotionally vicious Spotify playlist that I'm going to share with you in the notes for this episode. You know, content warning for this playlist, every time I listen to it, I have a cry. But if that is where you are at, if what you need is a good festive cry, I really encourage you to go give it a listen. There's two different covers of, "In the Bleak Midwinter." So that tells you something about the tone, and in fact the song for this episode is a selection out of this playlist. And I selected it, not because it's my favorite but because it's the one that has made me cry the most and pretty much makes me cry every time I listen to it, and that is Tim Minchin's "White Wine in the Sun," which is actually like a really lovely sentiment, which is like, you know, if you don't really buy into Christmas there's still something really special, which is that you get together with your family and they are the people who make you feel safe.

Music: [Music: "White Wine in the Sun" by Tim Minchin "you, my baby girl, my jetlagged infant daughter, you'll be handed round the room like a puppy at a primary school and you won't understand, but you will learn someday that wherever you are and whatever you face, these are the people who'll make you feel safe in this world, my sweet blue-eyed girl."]

Hannah (Host): And it makes me cry because that is not my relationship to Christmas anymore, and not really my relationship to my immediate family, and so that makes me feel sad. But you know what? It's okay to feel sad at Christmas. That is totally fine. You are allowed to feel however you feel at Christmas and also all of the other times of the year, because pretending to feel a different way than you feel to make other people comfortable is one of the most garbage forms of gendered emotional labor that women are expected to do all the time, and it is a radical act to be sad and/or angry in ways that make people uncomfortable. That's, uh, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. Speaking of radical feminist acts, I'm really delighted to tell you that your friend and mine, Kaarina has come to our aid by preparing for us a very special holiday installment of Kaarina's Cozy Self-care Corner. [Music: Kaarina's Theme: loon hoots, instrument plays]

Kaarina: Hello and welcome to Kaarina's Cozy Self-care Corner. So I've missed you listeners and I hope you've missed me too. I've mostly been snuggling with my cat, reading comics, playing roller derby, the things I usually do, but now we're in winter and the holidays are here. They're already upon us and they just snuck

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

up on us. Like, when you're really focused on your work and your big brother just sneaks into the room and stands behind you until you freak out. I don't know if anybody else's big brother did that a million times, but that's how the holidays feel to me. They're just here, tripping you up, taking all your money, stressing you out. So I've been really struggling with what to tell you this episode because everybody's experience of the holidays is so different and it can vary based on your family, your relationship with them, travel, distance, money, food, alcohol, weather, friends, anniversaries of sad or difficult things, grief. Damn. There's a lot going on and through it all, there's a lot of expectations and a lot of obligations and we don't always feel capable of fulfilling them.

So here are the tips that I've come up with. Maybe they're helpful to you. Maybe they aren't. Maybe you want to offer your own tips online using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda on Twitter or maybe you just want to make your own list of things that work for you. So my holiday tips, number one, you don't have to drink and you don't have to pressure others to drink. I have a weird relationship to alcohol; I think most people do, and that's hard this time of year, because there's liquor literally around every corner, but if you're having people over, you know, offer them a drink and then leave it at that. Eat what you want. Food doesn't have a moral value and food shaming discourses so strong all the time, but this time of year, I know a lot of us struggle with our relationship with food, but I hope that the people around you keep their own struggles or their own moral discourse to themselves so that everybody else can negotiate their own relationship to food on their own terms and not feel pressure or shame from those around them. Dress cozy. I always make the mistake of packing a bunch of nice outfits like I'm going to look nice the whole holiday, and then I just want to wear a big hoodie and the softest pants and the biggest, coziest socks. So be ready. Be cozy and hoods are great for hiding. When things are just a little too much, just scoot on into your hoodie. Take a little moment. Go for walks. The one thing that my family does, our number one tradition, is that we always go for a walk after a big family meal and it's so nice because you've all been sitting around the table in these fixed seats, having these weird big conversations where maybe some people dominate and some people get left out and you don't have control over the conversation. Then you go outside into the darkness and there's the stars and maybe there's the snow and there's all the lights to look at and there's so much space and you can take your time and mingle with different people and have those quiet, calm moments or kind of a debrief with someone over the day or the dinner or the conversation that just happened, and it's just lovely.

And I know I said this in very first episode when I had my self-care corner, but I'm going to start the new year by writing a list of everything I accomplished in 2017 and not just accomplishments in terms of productivity, but things that I'm proud of. So, things that I work towards, or things that I tried, or ways where they took care of myself and the people around me. And I'm really looking forward to that. To be honest, I find New Year's Eve, like, the biggest let down in the world, but January 1st feels so fresh and so bright and it's a space to look forward, but it's also a space to look back and appreciate the person you are and the person

Secret Feminist Agenda Transcript

you're becoming, and just give yourself some credit. Thanks so much for listening. Be kind to yourselves. You're doing a good job. This is what my roller derby coach tells us all the time and it always, always feels good. So here I am to tell you that you are doing a good job. 2017 was hard, but you did a good job. You handled it so well. [Music: Kaarina's Theme: loon hoots, instrument plays]

Hannah (Host):

Alright. That is it for our little holiday mini-sode. I don't know exactly what date the first episode of the second season's gonna drop in January, but it should be in January, so that is exciting. Look forward to that. As always, you can find those notes and all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor and you can follow Kaarina on Twitter, which you should if you don't already, and that's at @kaarinasaurus. That's K A A R I N A S A U R U S I know that's tricky, but like Karina, like K A R I N A, Kaarina with two a's, saurus. You get it? That's good. It's a good name. And also if you'd like to tweet about the podcast, you should use the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. If you haven't already, there's still time to go and leave a comment on episode 15 and maybe with the second season coming up, this would be like a super good time to recommend the podcast to anybody who you think would like it and they can catch up on the first season over the holidays and then I can meet them in January. The podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album, *Chub Rub*. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org, or follow them on Facebook. And my theme song this week as I already mentioned, is Tim Minchin's "White Wine in the Sun." I've linked to the YouTube video as well on the show notes. Well, that is it for this episode and for 2017. I will be back in the new year. I can't wait. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]