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ASIL ASSEMBLY AND KEYNOTE

The Assembly was convened at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 31, 2023, by ASIL President Gregory Shaffer, who introduced the Assembly Speaker, S. Mona Sinha of Equality Now, and the Assembly Discussant, Michele Bratcher Goodwin of the Law & Society Association.

Introductory Remarks by Gregory Shaffer*

Okay. Now is the moment we have been waiting for. It is my pleasure to welcome to the stage Sharmila Mona Sinha and Michele Goodwin for a keynote conversation. Mona Sinha is a globally recognized advocate, thought leader, and philanthropist who works tirelessly on behalf of gender equality in business and in society. She co-led the largest-to-date capital campaign for women's education, totaling nearly a half-a-billion dollars. Mona's career began in finance, spanning Morgan Stanley, Unilever, and the restructuring of Elizabeth Arden/Unilever, to her critical work today at the intersection of social justice and women's leadership. She has been described as having a muscle for finance and a passion for justice. She has worn many hats in advocating for human rights and advancement of girls and women. She currently serves as Board Chair of Women Moving Millions, a community of women who fund boldly, committing at least a million dollars each year to lifting the lives of women and girls, Chair of the ERA Coalition Fund for Women's Equality, and Vice Chair of the Executive Council of the Smithsonian's American Women's History Museum. Today Mona is Global Executive Director of Equality Now, a critically important feminist organization that uses law to promote and protect the human rights of all women and girls throughout the globe. She and her colleagues create, reform, challenge, and apply the law to establish enduring equality for women and girls throughout the world.

Mona will be in conversation with our discussant, Michele Goodwin. Michele is the Chancellor's Professor at the University of California, Irvine. She is the Abraham Pinanski Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School. She is Chair of the Board of the ACLU Los Angeles. She is the Incoming President of the Law and Society Association. She is an Executive Producer of Ms. Studios, and she is a regular presence on MSNBC. I do not know how she does it all. This past summer, Michelle won the ABA's Margaret Brent Award for her lifetime achievement, and believe me, there is so much more still to be done in this life.

So thank you so much if you could join us on the stage.

Remarks by Michele Bratcher Goodwin**

Hello everybody. Thank you so much for that very generous introduction, and I could not be more pleased than to be in conversation with you, Mona, and so for the benefit of our audience here, this will be a conversation that is also between friends and an intimate conversation. So you all get the benefit of a conversation that is deep and that involves the politics of our nation and the world but one that is also structured between friends.

* Professor at Georgetown Law; ASIL President.

** Law & Society Association.

Mona, with the work that you have done, it has been broad. It has been deep. You have your own story, which is intimate to the international space. I want to start off with the personal, before we get into the deeper professional. What has been part of your journey in coming to the United States? And if you will start there, because that in and of itself is a story: how you got here.

Remarks by S. Mona Sinha*

Thank you, Michele. Thank you. It is such a great honor to be here in this distinguished group of lawyers and people uplifting the law around the world.

I grew up in Calcutta in India as the third girl in a family of three children, and my maternal family is a very distinguished family in the legal field in India. So it is an area in which I am very deeply rooted because I grew up watching my grandfather sit at his chamber surrounded by lawyers and talk about it around the dining table.

My earliest memory was as a five-year-old, where we used to go to my grandparents' home every Sunday, and I used to try and skirt past my grandfather's office, because it was a bit intimidating with all these people sitting in there. He would always, invariably, grab me and bring me in and say something embarrassing to a five-year-old. One such Sunday, he introduced me as the grandson he wished he had had, and then, of course, as happens, everyone said, "Well, what do you want to be when you grow up?" I looked around and I said, "Well, maybe a lawyer," because who knew at five years old? The whole room burst out laughing. I say that because even though I was five, I did not quite understand what that meant. I knew something had happened, and my granddad patted me on the head and said, "This is not women's work. Go find your grandmom." It is ironic today that I lead an organization that actually works to promote legal equality among women. But I think life has come full circle in a funny kind of way.

I grew up in Calcutta, as I mentioned. I had the great privilege at age twelve to volunteer with Mother Teresa, and it was wonderful because I had all these other girls, many of whom were my age, that I would play with after school when I would go there as a sixth grader, until the penny dropped a few years later and I realized that there were no boys for a reason, and that they all got adopted first. So even in a country that was run by a woman prime minister, there was this undercurrent of social preference for boys, and it was obvious, all around me.

At age eighteen, I decided I had to leave home. I applied to women's colleges in the United States, but the difference was, I was already enrolled in college in Calcutta. I forgot to tell my parents that I did that. When I got accepted and I went to my parents with this telegram—in those days, we used to get telegrams to say congratulations, you have been accepted to Smith College—my dad was very puzzled, and he said, "What is this all about?" I said I really want to go and study at a women's college, and he said, "Well, I can't afford to pay for this." And I said, "All right. I didn't ask you to."

I applied for scholarships, and that is when I realized that the generosity of an anonymous person actually made this transition for me possible. Smith was instrumental in changing my life because it was here that I saw the value of women, my classmates that were ambitious, my professors who believed in me and saw things in me that I did not see myself. That was really the start of my journey. It was a bit of rebellion. It was a bit of understanding that something was not quite right in the preference for boys in the society that I grew up in.

* Equality Now.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

That actually matters, the messages that one gets early on, and as I have read in statements that you have made, the kind of life shift that happened within you upon hearing that group of men laugh and your grandfather amongst them matters. But it is also telling your story about being at Smith and it is through the work of an anonymous donor that provided this entree for you. I want to talk a bit about your work prior to now in philanthropy because it seems as if you have been on this journey of also giving back. The first part is that you were in business. You made money. And I put it that way because there is also this sense that it is not a space for women. I think that this is increasingly being dismantled, but when you came into the space of doing business and you majored in economics when you were at Smith and then did graduate studies at Columbia, tell us a bit about that. Were you motivated in terms of getting into the space of building wealth and managing wealth because of your experience?

S. Mona Sinha

I am not so sure about that, but I had loans to repay because I did have a scholarship but I also had loans. Even though Smith told me if I went back to India, those loans would be forgiven, I was determined not to do that. I had to go somewhere that paid me a good wage, and that is really how it started. I went to work at Morgan Stanley on Wall Street, and honestly, I really enjoyed it. I love the work. This was in the late eighties, and there were not a lot of women doing mergers and acquisitions work, and yes, that is where I did make some money.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

You got to make money in order to create an organization.

S. Mona Sinha

Yes, that is true.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Women moving millions, right?

S. Mona Sinha

I did that for many years and went back to graduate school for business and then ended up working at Unilever, mostly because I had not chosen that profession as a career necessarily, and even though I loved it, I did see the discrimination that women bankers faced in those days. I was not ready to be counted as one of them. So I did that for many years, and then after that, I decided I really had to use all of these skills because I became known in the marketing and corporate consumer business world as someone who could restructure businesses, because I had the marketing background, but I also had the financial background. That really stood me in good stead because I used that then to go out and restructure—and I say this lightly—social justice organizations, because what I found as I joined a few boards of human rights organizations is there were visionary founders and people who had so much heart and soul but did not actually realize that these were also businesses that had to be run. I was willing to be that foundational person that would help them build and sustain these businesses while they went ahead and blazed a trail in their vision.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

That ends up mattering for the depth of the conversation that we will have, and I wanted that kind of background, because through your work, you stitched together the importance of philanthropy in building bridges and opportunities for women and girls, and in this time, one could not see it as being more important than ever. It has always been important, but to set the stage, we are at a time in which the United States Supreme Court has significantly dismantled reproductive freedom in this country in a decision known as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*. June 24, 2022, will be a date to remember. Many already see it as one of the most harmful or egregious cases to be written by the court. In the wake of that, in one state we have in the United States the call for the death penalty for women who would seek to terminate a pregnancy. In other states, we have doctors risking 99 years of incarceration, $100,000 in fines, and losing their medical licenses if they treat individuals who are seeking to even manage a miscarriage. There are states that have enacted laws that provide no exceptions for rape or incest, and we will talk about a very prominent case that your organization has recently worked on. That is the backdrop, and yet the United States is standing as an outlier to the rest of the world. I am wondering if you could speak to that as what, on one hand, has been thought of as a beacon of democracy and yet, on the other hand, at least with regard to how we are looking at reproductive health care matters, the United States seems in decline.

S. Mona Sinha

As you know, we have worked together on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) work, and the United States is the only democracy in the world that does not guarantee non-discrimination based on sex. Our Constitution actually does not guarantee women's rights, and that this year is another unfortunate anniversary. It is one hundred years since the ERA was introduced, and even though we have met all constitutional legal requirements, there is a simple step of actually putting it into the Constitution, which under the last administration was denied by the archivist who simply had to put these twenty-three simple words into our Constitution. That has consequences, because I think, as many of you know, in the *Dobbs* decision, the right to abortion was based on the right to privacy, which is why, in my opinion—and I am not a lawyer—it was easier to overturn than had it been based on the right to equality, because I think if non-discrimination was a right, it would not have been that easy to overturn, in my opinion.

This has been a battle. I have seen this in the House. I have seen votes in the Senate, and it is unfortunate when equality becomes politicized. I think that is what has happened in this country. We have a lot of work to do, because the world is watching us. Fortunately or unfortunately, what we do is a beacon of democracy, and so it is very important for us to get it right.

Honestly, when I travel around the world, I hear people just confused. What is going on? Why is this happening? Why are people picking on gender-affirmative care? Why are people picking on abortion? These are basic human rights. Yes, it is very worrisome, and I think it is important that we acknowledge that and get to work.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

In fact, in unpacking this even further and for the benefit of our audience, when you think about these matters on an international scale, something like maternal mortality, maternal morbidity, the United States now leads all industrialized nations in maternal mortality, ranking somewhere around 55th in the world.

S. Mona Sinha

That is right.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Equally with regard to maternal morbidity as well. You see this kind of progress taking place elsewhere, while the United States slips further and further behind, and while this issue has become so deeply politicized, what is also missing is a certain engagement with health and science, including the fact that a woman is fourteen times more likely to die by carrying a pregnancy to term in the United States than by having an abortion. I am wondering how you think about that and how you engage on that topic where we see such tension in the United States, such tension that is so deeply politicized and yet trying to carry a message forward because, as you said, the United States is a beacon and the concern about there being backsliding elsewhere where there has been progress.

S. Mona Sinha

I think it is a time for everyone to assert that this is a fundamental human right, and it is really not up to political representatives to make these decisions, because if you think about abortion, lacking abortion care, to me, can be reframed as a way of violently attacking women's autonomy. If you reframe violence as a health issue, because it is, if we can eliminate polio, we can eliminate violence. If we do that—this might be a radical thought—the whole world gets to benefit. This is not a women's issue. This is a human rights issue, and I think if we can reframe that and think about that in terms of actually uplifting the world so we can create a world that maybe we have not even seen yet what the possibilities are—because laws are really made to advance progress. This is the first time you actually see it push back. It is critical, and I think every human being needs to be involved in asserting this.

The good news is that you see some beacons of hope. You see some states where these laws come up and they get pushed back down, and we need more of that, because the states where they are pervasive—and it is not everybody who can just simply go out of state to get health care benefits, right? It is an economic issue. It is a social justice issue. It is an access issue. It touches on everything.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

What has been the challenge with the failure to see this as a human rights issue? It seems that outside of the United States there has been great progress in seeing women's reproductive health care as basic fundamental health care and as a human right. What is it, do you think, that accounts for the failure to understand that here?

S. Mona Sinha

Fundamentally we go back to politics. We go back to the fact that this country does not have the ERA. We rank in with very sketchy countries as being one country that has not signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

I love how you said the "sketchy countries."

S. Mona Sinha

CEDAW is a United Nations treaty that only five countries in this world have not signed, and the United States happens to be one of them. We are the only democracy that does not have the Equal Rights Amendment in our Constitution, so go figure.

I think, fundamentally, if we realize as a democracy and, frankly, a successful capitalist nation that these are fundamental to the success of our country, whether we frame it in terms of access to education, which I came here to get education and got a fantastic education, I think the United States offers that as one of its primary gifts to the world. But having access or health care, as you mentioned, or legal rights, the safety of women is really, really important, and ultimately, it is the economic ability for women to thrive.

I think holding back on many of these laws just really does not do us much good, and frankly, there are many changes that have been made on the international stage that we can bring here. For example, I will give you one statistic, that there are only seven states in this country that have eighteen as the legal age for marriage. Now, that was a shocking statistic to me, and child marriage has been eliminated in many other parts of the world.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

And there has been pushback.

S. Mona Sinha

Two weeks ago, yes.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

There have been those that have pushed back against that, and for those of you who may not be aware of this, just within the last decade, there have been over 100,000 girls married under eighteen in this country, and that is not age sixteen or seventeen. You are talking about girls as young as twelve and thirteen years old, even eleven, married in the United States, married off so long as their parents sign off. What is thought of as a problem of the people over there who do not look like us, that is actually a problem that is at home.

S. Mona Sinha

That is right. There are many, many laws around the world that have been changed that are still iffy in this country. I think we do have work to do here.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Before we move on to Equality Now and the work that you are doing there, there has been pushback on this question with regard to the Equal Rights Amendment and its ratification and the archivists doing the work. There are some that have said, well, is there really a need for an ERA when equality is already baked into the United States Constitution? What is your response or what has been the response to that?

S. Mona Sinha

A lot of people have told me, oh, it is just symbolic, and my response to that is if it is symbolic, why do you not just give it to me? Because I would not mind having that symbol, frankly, in the

Constitution. I do not believe it is symbolic at all because I do believe that words matter, and by simple framing of saying no one can discriminate based on sex, it is a very powerful statement that needs to be in a constitution that calls itself a democracy. If other democracies can have that, it is a fundamental, foundational basis for adjudicating laws, and in reality, I am sure you all as lawyers are aware of this, gender is the only area where we do not get absolute and full strict scrutiny, right?

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Yes, that is right. There is not strict scrutiny.

S. Mona Sinha

There is not strict scrutiny, and that matters, because the success rate in those legal decisions that are made is somewhere in the 70 percent area. It is real. It is real in how laws are determined and how laws are actually put into practice, and it impacts women's lives.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

What does it look like when we are actually achieving that space of equality? What does that look like? What is the framework that people should be paying attention to?

S. Mona Sinha

I think it is a framework where, honestly, we should change the narrative around saying, well, if girls have equality, if women have equality, then this, this, this, and this. No, it does not matter. The fact that we are just born as citizens of a country should guarantee us equality. It does not matter that we are men or women or non-binary or whatever we choose to be. It is a simple truth that any of us that are citizens of this country should have equal access and equal opportunity and equal representation under the law. To me, it is as simple as that, and the fact that it does not happen or the fact that decisions are made just holds back 51 percent of the population.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

I want to take a moment to talk about the *Bolivia* case, because we have talked about the United States, and I think that there is a real risk of the navel-gazing that takes place in the United States. There is U.S. exceptionalism where everything ends up being centered there rather than seeing what is happening around the world. Although in this moment in time in the United States, as you were saying, around the world, people are wondering and asking questions because of the horror that seems to have been unleashed within the last year. But, certainly, we could go beyond that.

Recently, there has been a case that Equality Now has been working on for some time but has recently had significant movement, and this case relates to what we have been talking about, which is a case that has involved a young woman who was sexually assaulted for some time. In the wake of the Me Too movement, there has been greater attention to matters of sexual assault and matters of rape, but the reality is that across the world—and we certainly experienced it here in the United States—these were issues that were brushed past, not just socially but also in law.

It is interesting that in thinking about the *Dobbs* case, for example, two of the legal scholars that were referenced quite a bit by the court, Blackstone and Hale, and those were both authors of treatises that bought into the notion of coverture, this idea that women who are married become the property of their husbands, and that even extends to daughters becoming the property of their fathers. The result of that are areas that are difficult for people to talk about and acknowledge,

and that includes marital rape being something that was non-existent in American law. The last state to abolish a marital rape exemption was North Carolina in the 1990s, not the 1920s or '30s, but this was legal in the United States up until the 1990s. And the same was true even in cases that involved fathers in assaults against their daughters.

The question with regard to sexual assault matters domestically and abroad, and this case was brought from Bolivia. Can you tell us a bit about it?

S. Mona Sinha

Yes, absolutely. This was a case of incest in Bolivia, a young woman who experienced multiple assaults on her body by a family member in 2002. It has taken a very long time for her to get justice, and it was thrown out of Bolivian courts three times, including the highest court. And she came to Equality Now.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Why was it thrown out?

S. Mona Sinha

It was considered a family affair.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

This is the same thing that the U.S. courts used to do here.

S. Mona Sinha

Correct, exactly.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

And they would say that to allow these cases to go forward would be disruptive to family harmony.

S. Mona Sinha

Yes, exactly.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

It is hard to think that family harmony is not already disrupted.

S. Mona Sinha

Exactly. Also, remember because it was a family thing, she faced a lot of pushback from her own family, because they did not want this kind of thing to be exposed. This happens around the world.

But in 2014, she came to Equality Now, and we took on the case on her behalf. Finally, this year in January of 2023, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights Law ruled in her favor, and we provided eleven recommendations. We thought maybe we would be lucky if we got five, and they took all eleven. The most important one was recognizing that lack of consent was a central basis of violent assault. Previously, it had been determined, especially in the Latin American

region, around force, the use of force, the demonstration of force, the proof around force, which often does not exist in these situations. That was huge.

The second one was abolishing the idea of *estrupo* law, which is unique to that region, which says adolescent girls who are raped or subject to sexual violence are provocative. Therefore, you get a lesser sentence if you get convicted in something like that, which is completely ridiculous. That was lifted as well.

The third one was actually asking for a public apology for the country that had failed this young girl and her organization that she has since set up for survivors.

It has had huge repercussions because, as you know, the Inter-American Court of Law has widespread influence in the region, and we are now expecting to see many more of these cases come up and many more of these laws come under scrutiny because they fall in the same distinctive area.

For Brisa herself, she is a very brave young woman. There are not so many people who would wait for so many decades to get justice, and she has. We certainly celebrate her and support her in every way we can but also acknowledge the trauma that young people go through when they have to fight for these rights over many, many decades.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

I really appreciate your bringing that up because the length of time that it took to get justice, and was Equality Now involved for over that entire period of time?

S. Mona Sinha

Since 2014. Yes.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Since 2014. And so that is nearly a decade that it has taken in order to receive justice in this case. What else would you say are the key issues that Equality Now is working on that are important to a discourse about women and democracy or girls in democracy? What else should people be thinking about and paying attention to?

S. Mona Sinha

As all of you have seen, the world is moving more toward autocratic states in many countries, and autocrats are very worried about women's movements because women's movements often raise the voices and raise the action and galvanize societies to rebel against the policies and control that autocrats love. At Equality Now, we work with grassroots women who raise their voices because they are most proximate to these issues, and they often actually have the best solutions because they are living it every single day. We work with them. We help build their leadership. We listen to their voices, and then we take the policies up to be changed, either changed or put into place or then implemented, because the implementation is also a very important part of it, and to have them be a part of understanding how best does it get implemented. I always like to say our work is about policy to practice and practice to policy, so filling that gap and taking it full circle.

There are four areas that we focus in. Of course, legal equality is one of the most important areas, and this is in really assessing laws, making sure they understand and value the worth of women, making sure that women have equal access and participation in their daily lives in contributing to the economy of their country but also to their own safety, to their own reproductive health, to their own health care in general, education, safety, and so on.

What we also focus on is what we call "ending harmful practices," such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Ending sexual violence is a very big part of our work, and I would say the bulk of our work, and that is mostly around rape.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Why is that? I want to touch on that before we go, because I think for so many people, it is such a taboo issue, such that it does not actually get the attention—or the mainstream attention that it should. It is still closeted in many different ways. Why is ending and addressing sexual violence so important to matters of equality?

S. Mona Sinha

As I mentioned earlier, to me, sexual violence and violence against women is a health imperative, is an economic imperative, is a safety imperative. You can frame it in so many different ways, because, effectively, it takes away the ability of women to fully participate in anything they do. It diminishes women in a way that is just not healthy for the rest of the world. It has repercussions on family. It has repercussions on society. It has repercussions in just your participation in daily life and, therefore, in the life of people around you and communities. It is critical. It is actually critical for violence to be eliminated.

We see women and rape of women as a byproduct of war. We see it every single day. We are seeing it in Ukraine. We are seeing it in the Congo. We are seeing it everywhere. And yet there are not definitive laws that prevent that from happening. I am a great believer in systems change, and I also believe that systems cannot change unless legal systems change, because legal systems actually hold people accountable.

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Here are the people in this room who are so adjacent to legal systems and being able to make those changes.

Before I let you go, I want to touch on something that I always ask my guests when I am on my podcast, and I will take that opportunity here. Where is there a silver lining? How does one see a silver lining in working on areas where it takes so long in order to see victory and it is not even clear where victory will be. As you spoke about, the case in Bolivia involving this young girl, three times justice denied. It can seem so daunting, so difficult to reach that moment of equality. Let me frame it this way a little bit for our audience, and then I would love to hear your response. *Roe v. Wade* itself, this 1973 decision that was 7–2, so not even close at all, is a case that is one hundred years after another case, and they are not talked about in tandem, though they really could be and should be. And that case is *Bradwell v. Illinois*. *Bradwell v. Illinois* is the case where the Supreme Court was petitioned to strike down an Illinois law that barred women from becoming attorneys. It is exactly a hundred years before *Roe*, and in that case, Mrs. Bradwell petitions, because her husband is a lawyer—and I always think she probably thought because he could do it, she could do it too. She petitions the court because the state of Illinois has this law that says that women may not become attorneys, and she does not ask the court about her marriage, and she does not ask the court about being a mother. But what the court gives her back is that she cannot become a lawyer because women are limited to the care of their husbands and the care of their children, even though that is not what she asked the court about, but that is what the court gave her back. And it was one hundred years after that in *Roe v. Wade*, where Justice Blackmun said that women are entitled have a right to be able to pursue their education. They have a right to be able to pursue their careers, and then when

there are blockages along that way, it can cause emotional and psychological harms. It is interesting to see those two cases a century apart.

In framing that, I would like to know what you think about in these times, which can seem so daunting, as silver linings.

S. Mona Sinha

It is interesting because for those of us who have come out of this horrible pandemic—and that is the whole world—there has been this increased focus on mental health, and I always laugh because I think this is not something that is new, right? Women have known about mental health for a very long time, and I think in these case, where women are denied the embracing of their whole selves and to be defined by what other people think who they should be, right? As women, as people, we do not have a single story. I do not have a single story. You do not have a single story. We have many elements and many aspects of our lives that need to be fulfilled.

I think that what you are saying is by denying us these aspects, the world actually loses out, because I remember we were in this conference on climate change, which, by the way, if climate change is such a huge economic imperative, I fail to understand why making sure every human being is treated equally is not such a big economic imperative. I would love there to be a connection then, people to recognize, that this is equally, if not more, important.

But I digress. To say that understanding how violence can rob a human of any kind of confidence, mental ability to function, it is debilitating, right? That is why we have to recognize these brave people who stand up against it and the movements and the marches and the constant pushback to say we will not sit back and take this, because ultimately, it is about control. It is about who writes the laws, who makes the rules, who controls people and why, and what are they gaining from it? I have been talking a lot about reframing, but I really do think we need to reframe in this moment in time, because for us to realize that we have not really seen what is possible, because we have held half the population back.

To go back to my climate change story, we were sitting in a room and discussing how this is so important and we need to find women as solution makers to the climate crisis, and there was this young Indigenous woman in the room. And she said, "We are only 8 percent of the population, but we steward over 85 percent of biodiversity. And why isn't anybody asking us what we are thinking?" That is the crux of it, right? If women are in the majority, are actually stewarding the mental health and the societal well-being of families and communities, why are people not asking women to make the rules?

Michele Bratcher Goodwin

Why are people not asking women to make the rules? Mona Sinha, I want to thank you so much for being in conversation with me.

S. Mona Sinha

Thank you, Michele.