

US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

Billie Jean King

Venus Williams

Telva McGruder

Christiane Amanpour

Dr. Brian Hainline

Press Conference



women, and who also has inspired countless young girls of color, that they have the right to fight for everything that they dream for.

We also have Telva McGruder, the first chief diversity, inclusion, and equity officer for General Motors, setting the stage for what should be taking place in the corporate world while also inspiring countless numbers of individuals that they should be aspiring for academic excellence, especially in science, engineering, and math, that they should be able to aspire for academic excellence and have equal access to do so.

Our moderator is Christiane Amanpour, who is an award-winning journalist, and she has taught us that it is not simply objectivity that we should be fighting for, because objectivity does not mean neutrality, that if we are neutral, that we may not be on the right side of the battle for what is right. She has also taught us that it is so essential to give equality of access to all voices, especially to the voice of the oppressed.

So, Christiane, thank you for being our moderator, and thank you, everyone, for being here.

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Thank you so much. Thank you all for having me here this evening. I have been in England, and I came by plane today and landed at 12:00 at JFK (smiling).

For the last week or so, I've been glued to this year's US Open on the television. I have to say that the graphic, the art that was created for this historic moment, to celebrate 50 years of equal pay, is so arresting and so beautiful, that it has really put the context perhaps for a wonderful, wonderful set of matches that we've been watching this year so far. It's really focused me, anyway, on so much that is being achieved.

It is incredibly moving and humbling for me to be asked to do this, particularly first I'm going to bring on all our fantastic leaders. The first one, of course, is Billie Jean King. So proud to welcome her, the 13-time champion of this tournament, but whose greatest achievements -- perhaps; I don't know whether you'll agree, we'll ask you -- perhaps the greatest achievements were off the court. I

CHAMPIONS OF EQUALITY

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the US Open Champions of Equality inaugural event.

The US Open and the USTA believe that sport is a public good, that sport can and should positively influence society. We are celebrating 50 years. It was 50 years ago that the US Open, following the lead and courage of Billie Jean King, became the first major sporting event in the world to offer equal prize money to men and women, thereby setting an example.

(Applause.)

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: We have continued to use our platform to fight for equality of access in sport and in society. Even recently being the first Grand Slam tennis tournament to offer wheelchair competition to adults and to our juniors, stating boldly that our disabled athletes in our wheelchairs and our able-bodied athletes should be competing on the same stage together.

(Applause.)

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: We're proud of what we have done. We are proud of where we are. But we know we need much to do. That is one of the purposes of tonight's discussion with three esteemed panelists: Billie Jean King, our indefatigable fighter for what is right; Venus Williams, who in many ways is a modern-day voice of Billie Jean King, who stared down the leadership of Roland Garros and Wimbledon, and said, You, too, should follow the lead and you should be paying equal prize money to men and



don't know. But Billie Jean King, please come to the stage.

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: And joining us next, she owns 73 singles, doubles, and mixed doubles titles, is a four-time Olympic gold medalist, was the player, leader, and the closer to secure that equal prize money that Brian talked about at both Wimbledon and Roland Garros.

In 2002 she became the first African American woman to ascend the world No. 1 in the Open Era. From Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, please welcome two-time US Open champion, Venus Williams.

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: And lastly, Telva McGruder. She also has been a game changer and a leader, of course, as General Motors' first-ever chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer. During her time in this position, she developed and executed strategies to ensure progress towards GM's aspiration to become the most inclusive company in the world while shepherding global impact in diversity. She fostered partnerships and initiatives that promoted equity inside and outside of the company.

She is an accomplished engineer. She's recently taken on a new challenge as the executive director of Global Body Manufacturing Engineering, as the company transitions to an all-electric future. She's leading strategy, planning and launch of body and paint systems for the global vehicle portfolio while transforming the manufacturing environment.

That is a lot (smiling).

But along with her professional accomplishments, Telva is dedicated to teaching and leading others inside and outside General Motors. She's the vice chair of the Oakland University School of Health Sciences advisory board and also serves on the board of directors for the Girl Scouts of the USA, and University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability.

I mean, Telva, in 2022, you can start walking out, she was recognized...

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I haven't finished.

She was recognized in 2022 as one of Create & Cultivate 100 outstanding and ambitious women. We have welcomed you, rightly so.

TELVA McGRUDER: Thank you.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Let's sit down and get this show on the road, because it is always wonderful to go back in history and get all their points of view of some of these unbelievable milestones that we've seen, but also this conversation is going to be about how do you take it forward, what happens in the next 50 years, or 5 or 10, whatever it is.

BILLIE JEAN KING: No pressure.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Pressure is a privilege.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Oh, boy (smiling). Why did I ever say it? No, I'm kidding. I love it.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Right. Mrs. Billie Jean King, when you see the posters, when you see all the incredible graphics and the neon and the president and the first lady and everybody, you've done it. Every time I look at the television, it says 50 years, 50 years, 50 years. It's all you.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Actually, it's not really all me at all.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Actually, it is. How did you do it? How did you, in fact, how did you 50 years ago, when this was not a walk in the park, you didn't get it given to you, there was no diversity, equity, inclusion, all the rest of it, how did you negotiate and leverage your status to inform the US Open that they needed to do this?

BILLIE JEAN KING: So you want the real story?

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Yes. You wrote it in your book and it's so cool.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Okay. '72, 1972, we're in our second year of women's professional tennis. We'd started the tour in '71, even though the Original 9 had signed a \$1 contract with Gladys Heldman in 1970. But fast forward. 1971 we had our first tour.

In 1972 I won the US Open and I won \$10,000. Nastase won \$25,000. I'm not happy. We have so much to do, though. You've got to understand. We're trying to just have our tour to survive and all this.

Anyway, 1972 at the press conference, at the media conference, I'm sitting there internally thinking, I'm having a hard time with this. I finally said to them, You know, we're not coming back next year unless we get equal prize money.

Internally I'm saying, What have I done? I have not talked to the women yet. I haven't talked to anybody yet.

Then I realized my job is to go get a sponsor. I figured if I could get a sponsor and show that we could make up the difference, that the tournament would be hard put.

Most of the players don't know anything about business. They always want more money, they want more this, but my former husband and I owned tournaments. I understood the other side of the coin: sponsorships, media, everything that goes with it.

I asked different sponsors that I had relationships with -- relationships are everything, they really are -- I went to them pleading, Would all of you together make up the difference? Would one of you, two of you?

Bristol Myers came up to me and said, We want to do the whole thing. You could have pushed me over with a feather.

I went to Billy Talbert, the tournament director -- Stacey Allaster is now our tournament director. It's the same position. Excellent, excellent, boss. She's my boss for two weeks (smiling).

Anyway, Billy didn't know what to do. He looked at me and said, What?

I said, We have the money for next year. You don't have to go out and get any sponsorship.

He got quiet. He says, I'll get back to you.

Fast-forward to July of '73, announced that we're going to have equal prize money. That's the reason we have it.

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: It's really remarkable. The courage to leverage your position back then...

BILLIE JEAN KING: We were all pretty good. The top players, we didn't care. We didn't care. Suspend us, do whatever you need to do. We are going to do this.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Which actually comes to another point, which we'll discuss in a minute. How much you did on court, but how much you did off court, how you were willing to potentially sacrifice titles, et cetera, in order to get the civil rights and the human rights and the women's rights piece over the edge.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Well, I made up my mind as a

youngster that that's probably going to be the case if I wanted things off the court to happen. I thought that was much more important than titles on the court.

I could have won a lot more titles probably. I missed 11 years of the Australian, didn't play the French a lot of years. They should have asterisks in tennis. We don't have them, like baseball has them every other sentence.

But they really should have them, because they don't explain it, and nobody knows what the Open Era is. I asked ITF kids, I had about 250 kids in England, I go, Do you know what Open tennis means? Do you know what it means? What does it mean? It means pro tennis. We got paid. That's what it means. But nobody knows what it means, "in the Open Era" when they're giving facts on TV.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Venus, you followed what Billie did in the US Open. First of all, you're an African American woman. There weren't that many playing clearly. You and Serena absolutely tipped the balance there.

You then took, leveraged your status, to insist with Wimbledon and Roland Garros that they do the same. How many years later was that? Did you talk about it? Was it your initiative? How did it come about?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think my circumstances were a lot different from Billie. What they faced was so much different. I had a chance to play because of Billie and everyone who worked with her.

So for me, I didn't have to think about as a kid, like, Oh, I will rather choose to have equality over titles. I think the situation was definitely less extreme, but in a lot of ways it was also a lot more silent in that sense, too. There were still mountains to climb and places to go, but in some ways I think there was some just acceptance, like a couple of majors that it wasn't really there.

Yeah, it was a different road, but also something that needed to be overcome.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Exactly. But what then led to you confronting, or however you did it, to insist that Wimbledon, because they were very late, Wimbledon and Roland Garros?

BILLIE JEAN KING: Was it 2005 or something?

VENUS WILLIAMS: 2005, around that time, yeah. So fast-forward from 1973 to 2005, we're still fighting. Thankfully not here. Thank you, US Open and USTA.

That fight was still happening in other places. I think



there's a part of you that it's sad to say that gets so used to not having it that I just assumed we're going to be fighting for another 20 years. You know what I mean? Ultimately it took two years. When it happened, it was almost surreal. It was almost, like, But I'm not ready to stop fighting. Like, let's fight a little more. I'm not ready.

When that did happen, it was such a great moment. But for me it was just if there's an elephant in the room, you say something. I am a fairly quiet person, but when I talk, I do, so...

BILLIE JEAN KING: Didn't you talk to the committee at Wimbledon and try to get them to figure it out?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Yeah. Billie is urging me along (smiling).

BILLIE JEAN KING: I think it will be really interesting.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Billie is such a great storyteller. Like if Billie said something that happened in a movie, you would walk away feeling like you watched it. I'm the person that said, Well, there was this guy and this girl, a lot of stuff happened, and they got together (laughter). Just like in and out.

So I was playing this tournament, Wimbledon (laughter). Here I go again. I was arriving to the finals. Every year they have this meeting with the Grand Slam Committee. It's not just Wimbledon, but it's every single Grand Slam. It's very proper. You go into this room, it's a boardroom. It's a little bit boring, to be honest, but I didn't say that. It's not on record. It's off the record, everybody (smiling).

But you go in, they serve tea, it's very English. You know how the English are more buttoned up than us loud Americans. There's a lot of formalities. We ask for equal prize money. Then a few weeks later or months, whatever the time frame was, thank God I don't remember anymore because it's not happening, but they would just say no. It was year after year after year since the Open Era that this was going on.

At that point I went into this room and I asked everyone to close their eyes. I said, Now that your eyes are closed, you don't know if that person next to you is a man or a woman, but everyone's heart beats the same way. Would you want your daughter or your sister or your mother or your wife or a loved one that was a woman to be paid less? Then I left. I bounced (smiling). I had to go. I didn't stay for the whole meeting.

Lots of people think that was impactful. It was just the truth. A lot of the times you can't beat the truth. When you

stand up for what's right, that's what my mom was all about, she is about that, and I learned that from her, she's really just an amazing woman. Because of her I think that's why I spoke out, because my mom said, There's something wrong, you stand up for it. That's really where it came from.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: That's amazing.

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I mean, the theme obviously also is do the right thing, right? What you've done is do the right thing and urged others to do the right thing.

Telva, GM did the right thing back 50 years ago. This is slightly different, but they took the bet on the "Battle of the Sexes"; is that right?

BILLIE JEAN KING: They did, absolutely. In 1973 when I played Bobby Riggs, there was a Cadillac right there.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I mean, 50 years later, I guess it's obvious that Billie was going to win (smiling). Just joking.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Why didn't you just tell me that (smiling)?

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: But what made you take a bet? What made the company take a bet? I assume you thought, I don't know, did the company think Billie would win, that Bobby would win? What made you take a bet on this thing?

TELVA McGRUDER: Yeah, from a corporate perspective, if you think the history of General Motors, General Motors has been committed to equality and diversity for over 50 years. So our journey started in earnest I'll say in the late '60s, where amongst protests and amongst leaders inside and outside of the company taking strong stances, we realized that as a company that we could do more. We could do more.

In 1972, we started the first minority dealer development program, right? It was over 50 years ago. That program still exists today as we continue to grow the number of minority dealers.

Many years later, akin to Venus' story, we started the first women's retail network, right, in 2001. In the late '60s, early '70s, we were at the point, as a company, we were trying to figure out what can we do? What is under our control?

Companies aren't meant to do everything, but there are a lot of things we can do. So I imagine, I wasn't there, but I imagine that because of that environment, with the board of directors we had at the time and the expectations they had set at that time, that when this opportunity came, GM said, This is something we absolutely want to stand behind. The brand, Cadillac, which is a brand that has always been very powerful and very bold and continues to be today, wanted to be the brand that stood with the "Battle of the Sexes."

We can talk a lot about how that's continued, but that boldness and that audacity to say, Yes, we want to be there, we carry that really proudly. It's one of the reasons we resonate in so many different communities.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I'm interested in what you say, private-sector companies, corporations like yours, have to be in the forefront. It's not just individuals lobbying and doing everything they can. You also play a huge role in society in trying to move this diversity, inclusion, and equity, DEI ball along.

When you think about it now, what do you think for the next few years, the next half a century? Do you think it's still that commitment amongst companies today? Not just GM, but other companies?

TELVA McGRUDER: That's right.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: To do the right thing. Do you think they still have that commitment?

TELVA McGRUDER: I think the companies are always going to be committed to a few things. First of all, the stronger companies, the companies that are really committed, are going to be committed to their team members, right, all the time. How are we going to provide the environment for those team members so that they can thrive, so that they can contribute with equity inside of the company.

What's really great about that is when companies really empower their team members, their team members will make it clear, right, what is it that we expect of a place that we work for? That's really important. So when team members are truly empowered, they can help the leaders in the company understand expectations and help the leaders with some difficult decisions.

Companies are navigating a lot of things. They're navigating politics, they're navigating their business, they're trying to do return on investment for public companies and for private companies. They're obviously wanting to be successful.

It's great to have that resonance of team members, but then also companies have the ability as leaders of those companies to look at the landscape and say, How do we want to impact the world, right? How do we want to impact the communities that we're in? What footprint do we want to leave behind?

That's the most important thing that companies have to do all the time. They have to be conscious of that. If it only stands in the place of profit, if it only stands in the place of revenue, it's never going to be enough.

I think the most important thing that companies really must do is continue to reach for what is that next thing that we can do that's going to be a positive impact on society. The more companies can think about that, the more they're going to be paying attention to equity, the more they're going to be paying attention to inclusion, creating products and environments where people are going to be able to thrive, right?

It's hard work, frankly.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I'll come back to some of the fantastic stories of the past, but I just want to, in the news right now, you're all obviously watching a lot of what's going on about what is the best way for sports, individuals, or even sports associations and tours, to be able to play and to get the most money for their players and all the rest of it. So there's a big controversy with people on one side and on the other side of the issue about Saudi Arabia.

So it's now come to tennis, this issue of Saudi Arabia. So it's complicated. What I want to know is, after all the battles you have fought, how much today, because still, I don't know in general whether women get exactly the same as men all over.

BILLIE JEAN KING: No, they don't.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Exactly. So what you're looking for are places that will make up prize money I guess for women.

How much do you think about that as opposed to where you might get that from? Now, we know that the decision apparently has been made, I think.

BILLIE JEAN KING: We're going to Cancun.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: And not Saudi Arabia.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Which is good. They're going to continue discussions, I think. Don't quote me because I

don't know, but I'm glad they're going to Cancun. I'm glad we're not going to Saudi Arabia right now, because Saudi Arabia, for women, is really difficult. For some reason the men, they want the money, they think like that. I'm like, Whoa.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: The soccer players, golf players, et cetera?

BILLIE JEAN KING: We want the money, too but we really want some change.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: And for LGBTQ.

BILLIE JEAN KING: And for women, for everybody. I believe 70% of Saudi Arabia is under 30 years old. My understanding is they want change, the young people. Somehow I think for us to go, we probably need some guarantees of change or we shouldn't go, because there's money all over the world, but there's a lot of money there.

I would personally, I mean, like to help the people there, particularly women. I mean, they talk about they can drive now, but how many is that? I mean, seriously, how many people are probably going to have cars? I don't know. I know at least women can drive now. They weren't able to.

I think there's a yearning in the hearts and minds of the people for change. If we could be an influencer in that to be more positive, then I think we should go for it. But if we cannot, then I think we have to sit down and seriously talk about it.

The WTA has a lot of business partners, they have fans, they've got a lot of considerations. It's not just that easy.

A lot of players just speak up and throw things out there, but most of 'em do not understand the business side at all. It's easier to get real feisty in how you think.

I back up to try to figure out how can we engage and how can we create positive change before we go? That's my question. Is it possible? I don't know. But unless you talk to people, unless you engage, you don't know.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I think what you're saying is, given what you did before, you have to figure out what you can leverage.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Correct.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: If they want you, what do you get back in certain countries? Even in China. I think you're going back to China. I think it is very, very complicated. I think China is a slightly different situation in this regard.

Venus, when you think of what you did off the court, I mean, and you think about trying to move it forward, do you have thoughts about how you could sort of expand the kind of change you were able to get at Wimbledon and Roland Garros?

VENUS WILLIAMS: That's a big conversation in tennis. It's a little complicated. Tennis is a little bit fractioned. I would have a ton of ideas, but I think it would take a few years to get it through.

I'm no longer on the player council. I think my vision has kind of shifted more towards not even just tennis but towards women in general.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Sport or in general?

VENUS WILLIAMS: In general, because women are facing challenges all over the world. Women in the United States are being paid 82 to 83 cents on the dollar on average as men. Any men in this audience right now, you guys don't wake up and think about that. You're not brushing your teeth, Wow, women are paid 82 cents to the dollar. This is really heating me up here.

BILLIE JEAN KING: There's an ad. It's a great ad.

VENUS WILLIAMS: It might be an ad.

We're not thinking about this enough. We're not talking about it enough. We have these conversations, then we start to be able to make change, just as Billie was saying, you have to engage first.

While tennis has been a great place to start, it's not the finish for me. So having initiatives, working at grass-roots levels, raising awareness, it's interesting how just talking about something and starting the dialogue, it makes people think. Most of us are just trying to live our best life right now. We're not necessarily thinking about some of the issues that have been here for so long that in some ways you unconsciously accept.

The blanket is so much wider for me.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: At the corporation, is it equal pay for equal play?

TELVA McGRUDER: So at General Motors, let me start there (smiling). I'm not going to speak for all companies. Certainly at General Motors, we are focused on pay equality. We've been recognized by Equileap. We were No. 1 globally in pay equality a few years ago, and we continue that path. We're recognized again this year for

No. 1 in pay equality in the automotive sector, right?

It's a constant effort to make sure that you're paying people equally for the work that they're doing, particularly in a corporation, because there is so much variety of work that's going on. You have people with different levels of experience, and there's a lot of nuance there.

However, there are ways to do it. We measure on a yearly basis and we make corrections every year. When we find that things are going in a way that we say, Oh, wait a minute, this is trending out of line, then we make corrections. Then we're constantly improving our processes so that we can do that better on a year-over-year basis, even on a quarter-by-quarter basis.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: What Venus said about the well-known disparity in pay in general in this country and elsewhere, the complications of trying to go to rich countries that could give huge prize money...seriously. It is a complication.

BILLIE JEAN KING: It is. It is complicated.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: China had a lot of money. It's not doing so well right now, its economy. Saudi Arabia wants to buy everything it can in sportswash and greenwash and filmwash and do everything else, while it's got women activists and LGBTQ and the others in jail.

My question to you, though, is actually, I mean, is it up to the American corporations or whatever to step in and fill these great tours from having to go trawling in some of these waters?

TELVA McGRUDER: Yeah, you know, it's a great question. I'm going to start by saying it depends, right? It's not a blanket, yes, corporations must fix this. Corporations have the ability to make decisions, just like USTA and other organizations, of where they are and are not going to invest. They have the opportunity to make decisions on what they're going to leverage, right?

We do this on a global basis. All companies do. Whether they're local or global companies, they decide where am I going to invest and where am I not going to invest? Ideally what corporations are going to do is align those decisions to their values. So it's extremely important a corporation has defined their values. What do they value? And that they speak that out loud.

It's similar to what Venus was saying, when people are more aware of things and they're having active conversations about it, and more people become aware of their position, then it's difficult to not have that position. So

corporations need to stay strong to their values and align when they're making decisions with those values, and, frankly, have the difficult decisions that need to be made to do that.

That is the role of corporations. Corporations aren't going to be everywhere. Every corporation isn't operating in Saudi Arabia, for example, right? But where they are, where they are, they have to make sure. As they consider expansion, what are the key things that we need to keep in mind from a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective? How can we make sure we're going to be able to say we're supporting human rights?

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: You gave me the wonderful segue right there. Human rights are also manifest in other areas. For instance, the right to be personally safe.

I want to ask you as the youngest woman on this panel whether you have thoughts about how to improve girls' security and safety, whether it's on the tennis tour or in general? We've seen what Pam Shriver has written over the last couple of years. We've seen what some of the other female tennis stars have talked about in terms of how they were groomed and et cetera. It's manifest in all parts of society, so it's not surprising that it happens here.

Do you think there's enough awareness to stop that? You bring that up.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Stop what?

BILLIE JEAN KING: Abuse.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Abuse, basically.

VENUS WILLIAMS: In what? In general?

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: In women's tennis. I think everybody was shocked when they saw this whole crisis, the Spanish World Cup team, with Rubiales grabbing all the girls, kissing them, squeezing them. Point-blank refusing to apologize or do anything about it.

I wonder whether that brings up any issues of equality. I call it the right to be equally safe.

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think the WTA definitely takes measures, and they're taking even more measures every year, because the young women, they're so good so young. Very impressionable. They don't know anything about the world. Most of them have just played tennis.

I know what that feels like, but I had protections and I was taught to stick to your values. Not everyone has that

opportunity to know who they might be at that young age.

The WTA is definitely taking steps. I see it all over. I'm excited for that.

Unfortunately abuse is something that happens silently sometimes. You don't always know who might be going through something. That is a sad part, but the WTA is taking, posting signs all over the place, getting other people involved. If you sign up for a credential, you have to fill out a form and say, Hey, if you see something, report it.

I've seen that very diligently. Thankfully most people are not going through that. But for the ones who are, we have to give them those chances to have help. There's a lot of support, too, on tour. There's a lot of support. People will reach out to you if they don't think something is going right.

I love seeing that that's happened. We're on the right road.

BILLIE JEAN KING: The WTA works with the USTA and others when there is a challenge. A lot of the players, quite frankly, have a hard time changing. They get it all teed up for them, and they can't do it. They stay in the same situation. It's really mind-boggling.

It's understandable, though, if you grow up sometimes in a household that's abusive, coaches can be abusive. I think the WTA -- that's going to get off-subject. I just wish the WTA would demand at least one woman coach.

Women can be just as...I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about we don't have any women coaches. Do they ever see women coaches when they show the teams? My team, I love you. But there's never any women there. We can't get women to do coaching.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Why is that, do you think?

BILLIE JEAN KING: It's the way the culture started, the way it's continuing. The women think the girl can't hit with them. The guys don't hit with them either half the time. They get hitting coaches now because they have enough money.

When a player said, I want to thank my team. Do you know what my generation thinks? Overhead (smiling). We couldn't afford a coach. We all helped each other. We made \$14 a day. Leap forward.

I just want to say one thing, this is off-subject again, but in 2007 when we finally had all the four majors have equal prize money, Venus won Wimbledon that year. It was written in heaven.

(Applause.)

BILLIE JEAN KING: It was so right on. It was, like, it was amazing. That was the first year that we had equal prize money, and Venus won who had fought for equality. I was so happy for her and happy for us.

We're just a little speck compared, if you take everybody else. But we're still very visible. It's our job because of our visibility to set the standards.

But the WTA is worried about mental health and all this since the '80s, everyone. It's private. You cannot hear about it. We're not going to tell you who's having challenge, who we've gotten lawyers for to help break this pattern of abuse. We're not going to do it, but we're doing it constantly.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: You say that. You mention mental health. Obviously Naomi Osaka was one of the first if not the first to make that an issue. Now she's also sharing how she's come through it, how she's had a baby, how she's going to come back to tennis. That seems like a really great story.

BILLIE JEAN KING: It is a great story. It's wonderful. She misses tennis, too, by watching it. That's what happens. If you start watching enough, you go, God, I miss being out there. Osaka was so great.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: It's amazing she had the courage to take a step back when she needed to.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I think if you don't love it, you shouldn't play it. I talked to her at the Super Bowl two years ago. I said, If you don't love tennis, don't play. Get help. Take care of yourself. Always take care of yourself first as a human being. The tennis is secondary to that.

In the old days, you could not talk about these things. Mental health? Are you kidding me, in the '70s or '60s or '80s? We're toast if we talk about it. We're going to lose all of our endorsements, we lose everything. I mean, it's different.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: I want to come to you about losing endorsements.

BILLIE JEAN KING: When they outed me, I lost all my endorsements. Now the president would probably call me and say, Well done, I'd probably get more endorsements because I'm gay. But I came out because I was so confused, I didn't have a clue, I didn't know what I was doing with my sexuality.

When I was outed, I told the truth and I lost everything overnight. But that wouldn't happen today. Do you know how happy that makes me? They don't know it. They don't even know they're talking to me, that I've been through this. When they tell me about their life, I got a new job, it's unbelievable since I've been free. I'm, like, Yes, that's great.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Venus, I'm just stating the obvious, you and Serena created a tsunami of interest and opportunities for African Americans as well as everybody else. The job is never done, but are you pleased with how many African Americans are in tennis? Could there be more? Should there be more? What do you see as that path right now in terms of race equality?

VENUS WILLIAMS: I think you don't know that you have a chance to do something until you know. There weren't as many African Americans playing. Quite frankly, we were choosing different sports.

By the choice of my dad and my mom to get us to play tennis, then we have had this opportunity to show other people like, Yeah, you can play, too. This opportunity is available to you. That's what it was all about, once you kind of show the way.

There are a lot of African Americans, both boys and girls, playing at the grassroots level, at the college level. Obviously there's only so many people that are going to make it to the pros. There's a hundred places here at the Open, not many, out of all the billions of people that would love to play pro.

It's wonderful to see that women are making their lives better through sport. That transcends color. I was never taught to see color. That was not what I was taught in my home. But I realize that the world does. You don't have to be defined by anything, especially these days, you could be a cardboard box apparently. You can be whatever you want. That's the message of this, is that you don't have to have any boundaries. That's what I love seeing, is that young women now are just taking the sport by storm.

There's only even further up.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: In our last couple of minutes, Telva, you're all game changers, you've created milestones in all your individual ways, huge ones. Do you think that -- what is the youngest one now? Gen Z?

TELVA McGRUDER: We have Alpha now.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Let's stick about Z a little bit.

Do you think the younger women, let's say in your corporation, people who you mentor, have that sense of still needing to fight the good fight, or are they resting on the laurels of these wonderful people and you all who preceded them and fought the fight?

TELVA McGRUDER: Yeah, no, so young people, particularly young women, they understand I think more than they ever have that they need to do work to position themselves.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Yeah, they do.

TELVA McGRUDER: To position themselves to succeed.

They have a higher expectation of those that they're working with, right, regardless of gender. They have a higher expectation. They are absolutely working to be seen, known, and understood to make an impact, right?

I'm really proud when I think about our Cadillac brand, the Escalade IQ that we just launched, the chief engineer for that vehicle is a woman. It is absolutely iconic. She is a woman. The Escalades that we've launched in the past, we've had whole design teams, not whole design teams, but many key members of the design team that were women. Interior design, exterior, right?

They are absolutely pushing, but they're not sitting on their laurels. There's not a give-it-to-me, no. They want to work hard for everything that we're earning. That applies to the youngest women in the workforce. It also applies to women that are not even in the workforce yet.

So Gen Z is just hitting the workforce. Gen Alpha is high school age right now. They're starting to get it. But the key is exposure. The key is that those women are exposed to different ideas and different experiences, as Venus was talking about.

A lot of times the reason that you don't see women in places, you usually don't see minorities in places, because they're not in an environment where they can be exposed to those things. Once they are exposed, certainly right now they understand that they'll work hard, but they have high expectations.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: We are out of time. I want to give Billie the last word.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I don't want the last word.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: 50 years.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Well, I just want to thank you.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Last word (smiling).

BILLIE JEAN KING: I would like to thank Stacey Allaster and her team, Brian, and everyone, for what they've done this year to bring this to the forefront about 50 years of equal prize money is absolutely huge, but it sends a much stronger message that we must all continue to fight for equality.

I ask companies, Do you spend this much on women's sports as you do men's sports? People get very quiet, by the way. We only get 5% of the media. I know we're just talking sports, but we're really talking about all women in every area of life.

But I want to talk about the artist of the poster.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Yes, it's beautiful.

BILLIE JEAN KING: When I saw that, she's from Brazil, I thought it was so stunning, the design, whoever thought this up.

I called her to thank her. Camila Pinera is her name. She's been here. I met her and her husband. I just think it's stunning.

Do you notice I don't have a nose (laughter)? I was signing posters for Stacey's team, a whole team of women, most of them are women, I said, What are you guys doing? What are you noticing in life?

I go, Did you notice I don't have a nose?

Not one of them knew. They went, Oh. We didn't know.

I just think it's more important to talk about the artist who had the brains to think this up and the creativity in her mind. I thought it was stunning when I first saw it, but more importantly, I did want to thank her. She is here so everybody knows.

(Applause.)

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR: Billie, Venus, Telva, thank you so much. We're going to walk off the stage. I'll hand it back to the president, Brian.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Things are happening so fast. I have all these cards. Look at all my cheat sheets. I don't think I need the first one.

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: Thanks so much. It's now our pleasure to acknowledge the US Open Billie Jean King

Champions of Equality awardees. We have 16 section leaders.

The USTA is our sections. It's at the sectional level where we promote and develop tennis. But why? To inspire healthy people and communities everywhere. If we're going to inspire healthy people and communities, we also have to inspire and fight for equality of access.

It's also my privilege to present the Lifetime Achievement Award, so the US Open Billie Jean King Champions of Equality Lifetime Achievement Award, to Billie Jean King.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Thank you.

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: Billie Jean, it's my privilege to call you a mentor, a colleague, a friend. You inspire me. You inspire everyone to continue fighting the fight for what is right.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Oh, wow. Thank you.

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: I know you don't have many trophies or anything (laughter). It's one more. Thank you for all you do, Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Thank you. Can I see it for a minute? I just want to show it to everybody.

(Applause.)

BILLIE JEAN KING: It's beautiful. It's more important what it represents. Thank you to Cadillac, they're on here. Iconic. I love that. I love the music in their ads. It always says "iconic" last. I just love it. I watch a lot of TV and commercials. No, I do.

The thing I want to thank, Lou, I forgot to thank you, he's the boss boss. Anyway, thank you, Brian, Stacey, Lou, everyone.

When I get an award like this, it's very much, any award I get really, I think about why am I standing here. I'm standing here because of others. Everyone matters. Every one of is an influencer.

In Long Beach, California, I happened to be born in Long Beach, California, where the park and recs are amazing. A fifth grader, Susan Williams, asked me, Do you want to play tennis?

I said, What's tennis?

Had not a clue about anything. Our softball coach told me there was free instruction and coaching at Houghton Park



where I played softball. Susan and I played on the softball team, as well.

Oh, it's free? Oh, now we're talking.

So the first time I go out to get instruction, at the end of that day, I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to be the No. 1 tennis player in the world. I got in the car to tell my mom. Mommy, mommy, I want to be the No. 1.

She goes, That's fine. You have homework. Don't worry.

My younger brother, a few years later, told my parents he wanted to be a Major League Baseball player. They just went, Not you too.

They never asked us if we won. All you parents here, you might want to think about that. Randy and I grew up loving pressure. We like it. We welcome it. So I don't know if that will help.

Without the Long Beach tennis patrons, without the Long Beach Century Club who helped me with entry fees, helped me go to my first trip to Middletown, Ohio, for the 15-and-under nationals, my mom and I had to take a train, we couldn't afford a plane. My dad was a firefighter, I was very proud of him. The first time I went to Wimbledon, it took a lot of money.

Those are the people who helped, the people of Long Beach. So every time I get anything, Presidential Medal of Freedom, that's all I think about, is to tell them thank you. I had great parents, which is really helpful.

Now I get to do some really fun things. Venus, I wore green because that's one of your favorite colors. What did she show up with? No green (laughter). She shows up today... Last year I wore pink for Serena. That was why. It's Serena's favorite color. I asked Venus, What's your favorite color? I wrote her. She said, Oh, I like green, gray, yellow.

Do I have it right?

VENUS WILLIAMS: Perfect.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I wore green today. I did this for you, anyway (laughter).

She's our next recipient of this new award. What is it? I've got to get US Open in it. US Open Billie Jean King Champions of Equality Award. Did I get it right (laughter)?

(Applause.)

BILLIE JEAN KING: I just think you're fantastic. I love you. I met you when you were seven years old in Long Beach. I mean, you even lived there when you were young. We're really connected with Long Beach and Compton are next door to each other. Means a lot to us.

I want to thank you for your voice of equality. I want to thank you for everything you do now in helping others. You've always had a keen sense of that. When you were on Fed Cup teams, I think you came up with Althea Gibson, the first Black to ever play. I always ask the players everything.

You've done so much for us. And you continue to play, which I love. I don't care what everybody else says. I know you love it. You're out there giving it everything you've got. I just love that about her.

But it spills over into everything. How about the time I had to come and get you at the Olympics? Because she was designing something, drawing, and sewing also for the next match.

You're so versatile in all you do and you care so much. I love you for that. Welcome. I'm so happy you're the first recipient of the US Open Billie Jean King Champions of Equality Award. I got it right (smiling).

VENUS WILLIAMS: Thanks, Billie.

(Video Shown.)

VENUS WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Well done. That last picture is the first day we met. She was seven years old.

VENUS WILLIAMS: That's so cool.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Go for it.

VENUS WILLIAMS: Thank you so much. I first have to thank the USTA and Stacey who've just supported me so much over these last few years, especially when I've had some injuries that I've really kind of been unlucky, but you supported me every step of the way. That really means a lot to me because it hasn't been easy.

Also I have to thank Billie, too, for giving me this opportunity to have this good, good job. I love my job. I love what I do. I'll always love it. I'll always be a tennis player even when I'm not.

It's just fantastic what you did. I think when you were in the middle of it, I don't even think you realized how tough it

was because you're just in the middle and you just do what you have to do. Thank you for having that courage to get everyone in the right direction. Now the rest of us ladies, all we have to do is play. That's a beautiful thing when you just get to play. Sometimes you mess that up (smiling).

You had to play, get a sponsor, do everything in between right before your match. I can't imagine what that was like, but you did it. You did it well. You remained a champion throughout it, and a role model to this day.

My first time I met Billie, I was like seven or eight. It was at World Team Tennis. It was a clinic. My dad was shipping us around everywhere. If you were in L.A., you saw us. We were everywhere in that red bus. I just remember I wanted to impress Billie. I thought I did. I don't know.

BILLIE JEAN KING: You did.

VENUS WILLIAMS: I wasn't afraid of the stage. I wanted to play and I wanted to show her how good I was.

BILLIE JEAN KING: You did.

VENUS WILLIAMS: It's so crazy that we met at that age.

Like a few years later, we played at Family Circle Cup. I was a little bit older.

BILLIE JEAN KING: I played with your sister. You played with Rosie Casals. Rosie is 5'2" and a quarter. You can imagine what that team looked like.

VENUS WILLIAMS: I was already tall, I was taller than her already. I just never stopped growing.

It was such great exposure to have the opportunity to be around a champion as yourself. I'm always quoting you. Then I actually have to give credit. I said something the other day. Someone said, It's hot in Florida. They're from New York. I said, I bet you're wearing pants. They were like, Yeah.

I said, You don't wear that much clothes in Florida. They were, like, Yeah, but I can't.

I said, Champions adjust. (Laughter.)

In the world's silliest conversation, Billie comes up. They're, like, I love it. I said, I can't take credit for it. It's Billie Jean King.

I'm quoting you all the time. You've gotta pay the price, champions adjust, pressure is a privilege. I played Fed Cup with her, you'd just be practicing, she'd be in the

background. Billie would be like, I love this game.

What is wrong with this woman? She has such enthusiasm for life. Billie is a firecracker. She has a lust for life, a love of life, and for equality, for what's right that you rarely see. I'm just so honored to be a part of this. This is so fantastic.

BILLIE JEAN KING: No. 1, Babe. That's the first one.

VENUS WILLIAMS: The first one.

Before I wrap, also I want to thank the USTA for being first, 50 years. 50 years, Baby. 50 wonderful years. Thank you.

(Applause.)

BILLIE JEAN KING: That's great.

DR. BRIAN HAINLINE: Thank you, Venus. Thank you, Billie Jean. Thank you, everyone, for being here. Christiane, Telva. We're just going to continue the journey forward. We're truly inspired and will continue to be inspired.

Thank you, everyone.

BILLIE JEAN KING: Thank you, Brian.

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