

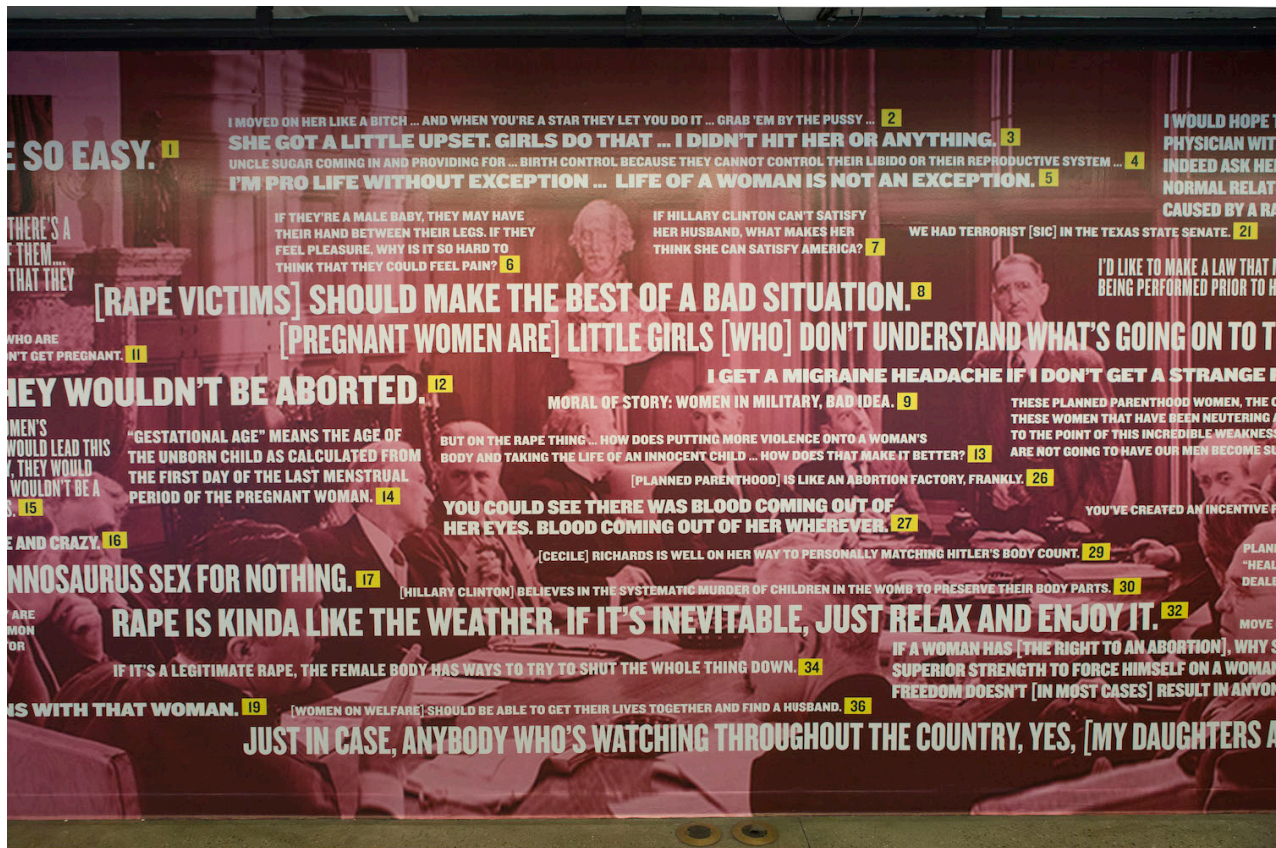
# FORT GANSEVOORT

## The Creators Project

### 37 Politicians Get a Mural Dedicated to Their Most Shameful Comments About Women

By Antwaun Sargent

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Detail: We Hold These Truths To Be Self-Evident | Photo by Fred Attenborough from Vice.com

During the 2016 presidential campaign, audio surfaced of then-presidential hopeful Donald J. Trump telling Billy Bush that his celebrity status allowed him to "grab" women "by the pussy" at will. The revelation sent shockwaves around the country, but for artists Zoë Buckman and Natalie Frank, it was yet another line in an all-too-familiar history of disgusting comments made—on the political level—against women. The shameful sound bite inspired a new, 30-foot long mural titled, *We Hold These Truths To Be Self-Evident*, now on view at New York Live Arts, that makes art out of quotes from nearly 40 politicians who have, for decades, made odious public remarks about women's bodies and rights.

"Natalie and I have been talking for months about the mass of upsetting statements made about women and women's bodies during the election process," Buckman, the tells Creators.

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"This research-based mural project is about the cumulative effects of negativity, hate, and the abandonment of science that has completely bewildered us, on women and girls.

"There's a real lack of basic understanding of the female body and the reproductive system," says Buckman, whose previous work, *Every Curve*, explored the complicated nature of female-focused messages in hip-hop lyrics. We wanted to find a way to make a statement that's not just arresting but also hopefully quite exciting and aesthetic because beauty and art is our currency."

*We Hold These Truths To Be Self-Evident* takes its title from Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," delivered in 1848 at the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The mural's background comprises an image of an old boys' club of white men sitting around a conference table. As an act of subversion, Buckman and Frank added the image of a classical odalisque over the room's mantle. The mural's foreground features numbered quotes from politicians including Bill Clinton, Mike Huckabee, Jeb Bush, and Ted Kennedy, each that corresponds with a key of faces and descriptions contextualizing their words. The mural also features four quotes from our current president, and many from of his current advisors and members of his cabinet, including Ben Carson and Steve Bannon. "Moral of the story: women in military, bad idea," said Vice President Mike Pence, for example, after watching Disney's *Mulan* with his children.

"Some girls, they rape so easy," is the first quote on the mural. It is attributed to former Wisconsin State Assembly representative, Roger Rivard, who said his father warned him that women fabricate rape allegations. The quote represents a pattern found on the mural that has been described as evidence of America's pervasive rape culture. "I think this is about saying to women, we hear you," explains Buckman. "We want to give you agency. If you been grabbed, if you been raped, if you been objectified in the workplace, or scored on a scale, we want you to know we hear you and we need to join together." Buckman says that the quotes spoken by such powerful men and women were uttered in a society that constantly trivializes women's rights to make choices about their bodies, families, futures, and rights to protect themselves from unwanted sexual advances.

"I want this project to start a conversation about responsibility," explains Buckman, the mother of a five-year-old daughter. "Particularly in the way we raise our children. I am incredibly concerned right now about the messages the next generation is going to grow up to receive ... I really want the conversation to be about accountability and [for] people who aren't having these conversations to recognize the vastness of these statements and realize how language feeds into actions and ideology."