

# Media Skewers 'Sexist' Sanders for Refusing to Bend the Knee

The media cannot forgive Bernie Sanders for refusing to “bend the knee” to Elizabeth Warren regarding her recounting of a now infamous December 2018 meeting between the two, in which the Vermont senator allegedly said a woman could not be elected president.

Furthermore, if *you* don't agree with Sen. Warren's version of events, or if you mention her history of “embellishing,” you are a sexist and a misogynist just like Sanders. So fall in line with the establishment narrative, quick.

That is the clear takeaway after the media took off its fig leaf of journalistic impartiality at the seventh Democrat presidential debate in Iowa Tuesday.

Never mind that women make up about [70 percent of Sanders' campaign leadership team](#), or that [young women actually make up a bigger share of Sanders' base than young men do](#).

During the debate, CNN moderator Abby Phillips had this exchange:

*Phillips: You're saying that you never told Senator Warren that a woman couldn't win the election?*

*Bernie: Correct.*

*Phillips: Senator Warren, what did you think when Sanders said a woman couldn't win the election?*

*Warren: I disagreed. Bernie is my friend, and I am not here to try to fight with Bernie.*

This is “when did you stop beating your wife” level debate questioning from CNN. The question is premised around [an anonymously-sourced story](#) CNN reported Monday describing a meeting between Sanders and Warren in December 2018, where the two agreed to a non-aggression pact of sorts. For the sake of the progressive movement, they reportedly agreed they would not attack each other during the campaign:

*They also discussed how to best take on President Donald Trump, and Warren laid out two main reasons she believed she would be a strong candidate: She could make a robust argument about the economy and earn broad support from female voters. Sanders responded that he did not believe a woman could win.*

In a statement to CNN, Sanders said before the debate that’s not what happened at all.

“It is ludicrous to believe that at the same meeting where Elizabeth Warren told me she was going to run for president, I would tell her that a woman couldn’t win,” said Sanders, chalking up the story to “staff who weren’t in the room ... lying about what happened.”

“I thought a woman could win; he disagreed,” said Warren in a statement.

Cue CNN’s gladiatorial presidential debates.

Eager to strike all the right girl-power notes for the night, Phillips followed up by asking Sen. Amy Klobuchar the substantive policy question, “what do you say to people who say that a woman can’t win this election?” and Warren earned cheers for a line about women successfully winning elections.

“Look at the men on this stage,” Warren said. “Collectively, they have lost 10 elections. The only people on this stage who have won every single election that they’ve been in are the women: Amy (Klobuchar) and me.”

After the debate, media commentators roundly declared Warren the winner, and pundits attacked the very idea of questioning the veracity of Warren's account.

Here's CNN, just after the debate:

*Chris Cillizza, CNN politics reporter: Sanders, look, a lot of it is personal preference. I didn't think his answer vis-a-vis Elizabeth Warren and what was said in that conversation was particularly good. He was largely dismissive. 'Well, I didn't say it. Everyone knows I didn't say it, we don't need to talk about it.'*

*Jess McIntosh, CNN political commentator: And I think what Bernie forgot was that this isn't a he-said-she-said story. This is a reported-out story that CNN was part of breaking. So to have him just flat out say 'no,' I think, wasn't nearly enough to address that for the women watching.*

*Joe Lockhart, CNN political commentator: And I can't imagine any woman watching last night and saying, I believe Bernie. I think people believe Elizabeth.*

*Van Jones, CNN political commentator: This was Elizabeth Warren's night. She needed to do something and there was a banana peel sitting out there for Bernie to step on when it came to his comments about women. I think Bernie stepped on it and slid around. She knocked that moment out of the park.*

But isn't this story the literal definition of a he-said, she-said story?

The accusation may have appeared in a "reported-out story," but these are its sources:

*The description of that meeting [between Sanders and Warren in December 2018] is based on the accounts of four people: two people Warren spoke with directly soon after the encounter, and two people familiar with the meeting.*

Is it sexist to question why this story would come out on the eve of the debate – after months of the two candidates getting along as they had promised to do, when [Sanders pulls ahead of Warren in polling](#)?

If CNN were impartial, they would have mentioned the sourcing and timing of the story, and Warren's fraught history with the truth. Warren has shown she is willing to tell lies in order to get a job she wants, like [when she claimed to have Native American blood](#). She has also claimed she got [fired from her teaching job for being pregnant, even when records contradict that](#). She's said her children [went to public schools, not private ones, even though that's not true either](#).

In addition to Warren's tenuous relationship with the truth, there also happens to be video from the 1980s where Sanders says a woman could be president:

*1988, @BernieSanders, backing Jackson: "The real issue is not whether you're black or white, whether you're a woman or a man \*in my view, a woman could be elected POTUS\* The real issue is are you on the side of workers & poor ppl, or are you on the side of big money & corporations?"*  
[pic.twitter.com/VHmfzvyJdy](https://pic.twitter.com/VHmfzvyJdy)

*– Every nimble plane is a policy failure. (@KindAndUnblind)*  
[January 13, 2020](#)

Yet, you wouldn't know any of that, listening to the coverage of the debate, where commentators waxed poetic about Warren's "win" and how any attacks on her predilection for lying were misogyny itself.

Over on Sirius XM POTUS channel Tuesday, an executive producer on Chris Cuomo's show (Chris Cillizza filling in) said that the suggestion from Sanders surrogates that Warren's staff knows she is [prone to "embellish" things](#) is "a misogynistic

thing to put out there ... like, 'oh well, look at the quaint housewife, she is prone to embellishment.'"

*The New York Times* also embraced the questionable sexism premise, writing that in "a conflict heavily focused on which candidate is telling the truth, Ms. Warren faces a real risk: [Several studies have shown](#) that voters punish women more harshly than men for real or perceived dishonesty... If voters conclude that Ms. Warren is lying, it is most likely to hurt her more than it will hurt Mr. Sanders if voters conclude that he is lying."

Over at *Vox*:

*The over-the-top language – likening criticism of an opponent to a [knife in the back](#)– was familiar. When powerful men have been accused of sexual misconduct in recent years, they and others [have often complained](#) that they've been 'killed' or that their 'lives are over' ... The situation between Warren and Sanders is very different from those that have arisen as part of the Me Too movement. But the exaggerated language around a woman's decision to speak out is strikingly similar.*

This sort of language is an insult to all women who have had to deal with sexism and misogyny, both in the workplace and in society, and this need to glom on to any aggrieved group, no matter how ill-fitting, is getting really stale.

Meanwhile, former Hillary Clinton and Obama Communications Director Jennifer Palmieri tweeted, "I just rewatched the footage from last night and found it odd that Sanders never says 'a woman could beat Trump.' His formulation is he believes a 'woman could be president.' It's only when he speaks about his own abilities that he talks about what it takes to 'beat Trump.'"

This is the old sexist standby: "I'd vote for a woman, just not *that* woman."

What is it that these people want, for Sanders to endorse his opponent, simply because she is female? Isn't that the very definition of sexism? By virtue of the fact that Sanders is still in this race, he obviously thinks he can do a better job as president than Warren. There isn't going to be another presidential race against Trump, but Palmieri still essentially wants Sanders to say, in a five-way race three weeks before the Iowa caucus, "Warren can beat Trump in November."

The question here should be whether this is a person that we can trust, not whether the candidate is male or female. Does this person have a history of being honest, or do they have a history of lying?

No wonder Sanders was complaining [about liberals' obsession with identity politics](#). As an elderly, Jewish socialist, he might be an endangered species, but he's one minority group that intersectional politics has no use for.

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