



## **Testimony: Women's Chronic Illness During a Pandemic**

**Joanna Kempner**, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

### **Oral Statement: "Gender Bias in Medicine"**

I always begin my classes at Rutgers by explaining that disease is never just a biological phenomenon. It is always also social, economic, and deeply political. This year, the pandemic might teach my class for me.

The pandemic has revealed deep structural problems and profound inequities in American healthcare. But, in doing so, it has produced an opportunity for us to build a more just healthcare system.

Over the next ten minutes, I'd like to provide a framework for understanding how gender bias operates structurally, ensuring that women—especially Black women and women of color—are systematically underserved by our current healthcare system. Gender bias is endemic and pervasive in contemporary medicine and this gender bias is made all the more complex and dangerous when mixed with additional structural disadvantages, like racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia.

I will be highlighting the following points:

1. Women's diseases are stigmatized
2. We don't know enough about diseases that disproportionately affect women.
3. And we don't have sufficient policies in place to support women who are disabled by these diseases.