

# **"Testament" ON WZRD**



**Janet  
Kuypers'  
poetry book  
"Testament"  
WZRD 88.3fm  
Chicago radio  
8/12/23 interview**

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## About Janet Kuypers



<http://www.janetkuypers.com>

Professional performance artist and publisher, Janet Kuypers is a writer and photographer, editing 2 literary magazines through Scars Publications (<http://scars.tv>). She has 100+ books published of her work (poetry, prose, novels, art), most available globally through Amazon. She hosted the Cafe Gallery (<http://scars.tv/thecafe>)

Chicago poetry open mic, and hosts the monthly Poetic License open mic which is now global ([http://scars.tv/Poetic License](http://scars.tv/Poetic_License)) with Zoom meetings. Performing spoken word and music nationally (with band shows in Chicago, Round Rock TX, and Alaska) she sung in 3 bands, and her 40+ CD releases appear at iTunes, Amazon, and others. Profiled in such magazines as Nation, Kuypers won the Poetry Ambassador award and Poet of the Year and has been nominated for multiple Pushcart prizes. Once running Internet radio stations and a poetry podcast, she frequents radio, national and local television.

# **Journalism is the Story of Equal Rights**

\* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal\\_Rights\\_Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal_Rights_Amendment)

\*\* <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-joint-resolution/28>

Copy editing and proof reading  
Seem to take half of my workday —  
Reviewing other people's essays,  
Correcting spelling, punctuation,  
Removing spaces at the ends of  
Paragraphs... mostly technical stuff.  
But after reading an essay talking  
About how the 29<sup>th</sup> Amendment  
Should be created (after a number of  
States have passed anti-abortion laws  
After the overturning of Roe v. Wade)  
to help women who need assistance,  
Whom are impoverished and in more  
Restrictive states, to help them to  
Get to "free" states so they can  
Exercise rights, that the government  
Does not have the right to take away.  
This essay ended, stating that the  
28<sup>th</sup> Amendment, of course, is  
The Equal Rights Amendment\*.

The journalist in me went into  
Overdrive, because I had to look,  
Confirm with the U.S. Government,  
Even Wikipedia... Although having  
Equal rights seems like a splendid  
Idea, the total number of U.S.  
Amendments to the Constitution  
Is only 27. I had to tell them to  
Correct their copy, and they only  
Changed the ending to say that  
The 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment *should* be  
The Equal Rights Amendment.

I question if that is all that needs to  
Change, though, because the  
Equal Rights Amendment,  
Introduced to the U.S. government  
Nearly a century ago, 1923, failed  
To pass. The ERA was re-introduced  
In 1971, passing the House & Senate,  
But then went to state legislatures  
for ratification, where it was rejected  
by a few states and was never passed.  
In the new millennium, even this  
Very decade (the one that saw the  
Overturning of Roe v. Wade and  
States taking women's right away,  
*That* decade), the House Judiciary  
Resolution 28 does propose "an  
Amendment to the Constitution  
Of the United States relative to  
Equal rights for men and women"\*\*,  
But again, equality for women is  
Something *still* yet to pass. So, reading  
This "letter to the editor" for future  
Publication, I question the essay,  
Wondering if it misses the point.  
If there *was* any chance for  
Equal rights for women in the  
United States, then their rights  
Wouldn't be removed by select  
Conservative men in government  
In the first place. If anyone ever  
Truly wanted to codify equality  
For women, it would have been done  
Long ago, and we wouldn't be in  
This pit "man"kind has thrown  
Us into now, as we furiously  
claw our way back to the light.

# **Kerning, Ballots, and Women's Rights**

Graphic artists, with typesetting as  
One of our begrudgingly used tools,  
Don't expect to hear their jargon  
During women's rights court battles.

But it's beginning to look a lot like  
Republicans will use any measure  
To stop women, *and all the people*,  
From fighting for their stolen rights.

Here's the scoop: approaching three-  
Quarters of a million people signed  
An abortion rights petition\* for a vote,  
But word spacing, a term that we

Graphic artists & typographers call  
"Kerning," is now the sticking point  
Republicans claim is the reason this  
Crucial issue can't be on the ballot.

Really. Word spacing. *That's* the  
Reason that you anti-abortion, anti-  
Women's rights republicans use.  
There isn't enough liquor to drink

That would make be believe *this* is  
Your true excuse. It's beginning to  
Sound a lot like... desperation on  
Your part to stop your unfair edicts

From being questioned by rationality.  
For it's beginning to feel a lot like  
Tyranny, where a select few make  
What they call "laws" to restrict the

World, and we're supposed to just  
Take it with no questions asked —  
Are we a dictatorship? Are we a  
Self-perpetuating autocracy in which

The working classes<sup>\*\*</sup> have no say?  
Well, the state of Michigan may try  
Shrugging off the will of the people,  
But battles pushed this to court.<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

Emergency complaints were filed  
With the State Supreme Court:<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>  
If type was unreadable, then why did  
so many read and sign the petition?

Courts believed, on the exact day I  
Scribe these words, that yes, the *words*  
*Were* there, and they should be read  
By all who have the right to vote.

It's beginning to sound a lot like  
More of the same from people who  
Don't have the evidence to support  
Their argument, so they sing a song

Of a side-story so that they can avoid  
Talking about the real issue. Listen,  
We've been talking about it all along.  
You just haven't listened.

\* <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/735k-signed-abortion-rights-petition-how-word-spaces-may-keep-it-ballot>

\*\* *Monty Python and Holy Grail*. <http://www.mit.edu/afs.new/sipb/user/ayshames/Python/PEASANT.PYTHON>

\*\*\* <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2022/08/31/voting-rights-ballot-proposal-headed-court-after-canvassers-deadlock-michigan-abortion-rights/7948041001/>

\*\*\*\* <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/09/01/michigan-abortion-rights-ballot-0005457>

## **Quickly Washes Away Women's Rights**

(only portions of this long poem were performed on the radio.)

After years of watching this international sport  
(and being on the tennis team in school), I saw  
Players from Russia, whom have  
Either moved to Monaco to live,  
Or were raised in the United States  
Since childhood to be a better athlete.  
And Then I remember at least  
One Russian athlete then  
Proudly walked with their Russian flag  
During commencement parades for the  
Olympics, and this sickened me.  
For although I may not have been  
Old enough to remember the Cold War,  
Although I never had school drills  
Ducking and covering under my desk  
In case of a nuclear attack, I  
*Do* remember hearing accounts  
Of a Soviet-born *comrade* searching  
For an escape route to the United States,  
Finding a U.S. citizen to marry,  
*Even changing her name*, to then  
Denounce her citizenship to that  
Communist Soviet Socialist Republic —  
Because those who have beliefs  
Will do something when their  
Government's gone wrong, and  
Will no longer merely stand idly by.



So, yes, I *do* stand up in protest  
Against your government, and when I see  
International athletes who proudly stand  
For their old mother Russia,  
*Especially when they haven't lived there  
And don't know of Russian life themselves,*  
I become infuriated.  
You may say, *hey, the U.S.S.R.*  
*No longer exists, stop living in the past...*  
And I think, people who don't know  
Their own history are bound to repeat it.  
It doesn't matter if Nikita Khrushchev  
Took over Stalin's dirty work, and  
People may say no, Vladimir Putin is no  
Mikhail Gorbachev, he replaced Boris Yeltsin  
To herald a new day for the Soviet people.  
But just because they let some western companies  
Inside their borders to sell their wares,  
Putin is slowly turning his voting country  
Into a good old dictatorship again...  
I watch history repeat itself  
As Russia invades The Ukraine, takes over the  
Once decimated Chernobyl nuclear plant  
*(leaving many scientists to wonder if the  
Once-regulated remains, now ignored,  
May cause another global disaster).*  
Then, Ukrainian people fight like mad  
To keep their independence, leaders  
From countries around the world  
Provide arms to help them win  
This David versus Goliath battle.

In all of this I see famous Russian  
Tennis players after winning a tournament  
Write "Peace" in temporary neon marker  
On the lens of a video camera  
Post-recording their victory.  
Even countries hosting these  
International tournaments will not allow  
Russians to play under their country name —  
So, when after what Russia is doing in a  
Military conquest over another country,  
These athletes go so far as to write  
"Peace" on a screen that will  
Only be quickly washed away, erased,  
Because that is probably the most  
They can do to show their protest  
To the actions of their mother Russia.  
They give well over half of their earnings  
To their Soviet Socialist state, while  
Now living in Monaco, they protest  
By writing "peace", and they think that's  
Enough.

And I think, you've chosen to  
Align yourself with a government  
That does this to its people.  
How dare you.

#

It's easy to doctorate your way into philosophy  
And talk at great length at the injustices  
You see in the world. How high and mighty.

I sit here and rail on about the evils of a  
Government while today, right now,  
I sit here in my little room with four walls  
Not unlike a jail cell, look out my small window  
Pre-dawn before it becomes another 100+° day  
In a state which is taking away women's rights.  
I sit here and write, feel as if there is nothing  
I can do, as here in Texas, Texans who perform  
Abortions (*not the women, the victims*  
*Of this injustice, but the healthcare providers*)  
Now face up to life in prison and a \$100,000 fine  
for helping a woman in need.

Texas is the largest state to restrict  
Women's rights this way, now with  
Three bans on the books.  
*(Wow, on the books, doing things*  
*By the book, that usually implies*  
*What's best for a person in accordance*  
*With the law, not that their laws are so*  
*Subjective they only hurt people instead.)*  
These laws went into effect  
Before I went to sleep last night...

I was wondering why my sleep seems so senseless.

But this conglomeration of penalties  
Not only combines a civil six figure fee,  
But also jail time — which is a violation,  
To prosecute someone after they have  
Already faced civil (i.e., money) penalties.  
And no, I'm no lawyer, but my philosophy  
Has remained on stable grounds for too long  
To not see the legal problem with these laws,  
*If you don't see the moral problems.*

For Texans, check your premises  
And note that even in the cases  
Of prosecuting abortions,  
The woman becomes the victim  
*(because it's never about a clump of cells)*  
But the woman is the victim  
When you choose to press charges.  
*She* isn't given jail time.  
*She* isn't meant to pay  
Money she doesn't have.  
But *she* is the one who suffers,  
Because of your laws  
That you claim are meant  
To protect.  
And it might not matter  
If five counties in Texas  
*(including the one where I live)*  
Would not press criminal charges  
For these "offenses"  
*(I guess they prefer just fining people  
Six figures, if they can afford it),*  
The point is that more and more  
Southern bible-belt states  
(that I still have to drive through  
To get to my true home, up north)  
Are imposing these bans in the first place.

#

You may question  
Why I seem to be making  
Such a big deal out of this,  
It's not like this directly affects me.  
But unreligious me  
Can only think of the quote  
From a one-time antisemitic Nazi supporter,  
Pastor Martin Niemöller, who was later

Imprisoned in a concentration camp  
For speaking out against Nazi control of churches.

*"First they came for the communists,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a communist.  
Then they came for the socialists,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a socialist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I did not speak out—  
because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me—  
and there was no one left to speak for me."*

I think of the uproar I heard  
After Roe v. Wade was overturned,  
That 1 in 3 American women  
Have already lost abortion access, and  
More restrictive laws are coming  
From Texas up through Tennessee,  
All the way to Idaho and North and South Dakota.  
Even though the President's executive order  
To help women travel to less restrictive states  
For abortions was signed in early August,  
Confusion *still* exists on both sides  
After this overturning and combatting began.  
Left-leaning judges block part of Idaho's abortion laws;  
Right-leaning judges block emergency abortion guidance.

So, I sit here in my metaphoric cell,  
Spouting out about the injustices of the world.  
But then I think of the Russians I have lambasted  
And wonder if I hold these same  
Moral arguments up to myself.

The worst things are happening to women  
In a state I was forced to move to,  
So, why don't I just leave.  
Well, maybe it's not as simple  
As I wish to claim it for me,  
Maybe things aren't as cut and dry  
As I always assume them to be,  
Writing passionately from my corner  
And never otherwise getting involved.  
But in these situations, if I'm stuck here,  
*And there's nothing I can do,*  
It may be precisely because  
We're *all* stuck here,  
As I see one protest after another  
Of women holding signs saying  
"Abort the Patriarchy",  
"ProTexas, ProChoice",  
"Keep Abortion Legal",  
"Stop the War on Women",  
"We are not Ovary Acting!",  
"I am a Woman, Not a Womb",  
"Keep Your Hands off my Body",  
"There is no "You" in (my) Uterus"  
"Keep your Rosaries off my ovaries",  
"Our Bodies, Our Choice, Our Rights",  
"A Women's place is IN YOUR FACE",  
"I Will Not Quietly go back to the 1950s",  
"Nothing About My Body is your Choice",  
"Girls Just Wanna Have Fundamental Rights",  
"pro-Life is a LIE, they don't care if we DIE",  
"Pregnancy begins with a Penis, regulate *that*",  
"Why do Guns have more Rights than a Womb?",  
"We Need to Talk About the Elephant in the Womb",  
"Not Your Body, Not Your Uterus, Not Your Choice",  
"Abortion is a Personal Decision, not a Legal Debate",  
"My arms are tired of holding this sign since the 1960s".  
"You Wanna Cut Off My Rights, Can I Cut off Yours? ",

"We Are **Ruth** (Bader Ginsberg) **less** — act accordingly",  
"He Who Hath not a Uterus Should Shut the Fucketh Up",  
"Public Cervix Announcement: No Uterus = No Opinion",  
"If Men could become Pregnant, Abortions would be Sacrament",  
"Texas: where a Virus has Reproductive Rights and a Woman Doesn't",  
"Hey, I just met you, and this is crazy, but a clump of cells is *not* a baby",  
"FIGHT LIKE A (woman who has the right to choose to not become a)  
MOTHER",  
"Making Abortions Illegal Didn't Stop Abortions Any More than  
Prohibition Stopped Drinking"

*(These messages are getting louder and louder,  
longer and longer, but I think you get the idea.)*

But if there are *this* many people who feel *this* strongly,  
This reassures me, and makes me wonder if protests at  
Times like this really *do* lead to change. Maybe just the  
Right words from *every* person in *any* way they can *this*  
Time, can come from all — no matter how big or small,  
To get this repressive mentality out of the dark ages.  
None of us are sure just how we took so many giant  
Steps backward, but I think we all agree:  
It's time to move forward again.



## Evil of What They've Done

When women are not treated as equals,  
When women still make less pay  
per dollar  
Than any man, and are stunted from  
Advancement in the workplace,  
I suppose it's not hard to believe  
That supporting women's healthcare  
Is *also* such an insurmountable task.

After the religious right, usually male, in the  
Often more rural half of this "united" nation  
Used their interpretations of their religious dogma  
To push women back to the dark ages  
(By overturning legislation that has  
Existed for all of my sentient life) —  
They removed woman's choice,  
and in turn  
Placed so many people, health-wise,  
In such grave danger.

We women felt a cushy kind of comfort  
Knowing that Roe v Wade was on our side.  
Not even Democrats pushed to make  
Our rights *more* legal, *more* permanent  
Than a single Supreme Court decision.  
And now that the religious right, usually male,  
In the often more rural half of this "united" nation  
Pushed women back to the dark ages,  
Politicians and policy makers  
Now work furiously,  
*Even across party lines,*  
To codify Roe.



Now, a bipartisan bill has been made,  
Sponsored by Republican and Democrat Senators  
That, in order to be agreeable,  
Is so vague that it doesn't uphold anything.  
Abortion rights groups hate it,  
And the nit-picking battle  
Over every technical phrase in this bill  
Makes any message in the bill  
Lost to the average American.

I think of my husband now, who once said,  
"There is no task so simple  
that it cannot be made impossible  
through the actions of a bureaucracy."  
Because this is exactly what this is,  
The inability of the U.S. Government  
To accomplish *anything* for women.

Even if the Kaine-Collins bill never passes,  
Senator Kaine still holds great fear.  
"I think life post-*Dobbs* is a series of tragedies" —  
For he may fear, *like me*,  
That it may take too many medical tragedies  
Against full-grown women  
Before our lawmakers realize  
the  
Evil of what they've done  
and  
correct the mistakes they've made to women.

"A series of tragedies" makes me think  
Of how back in the day (*and still, I'm sure*)  
There would be what now seems to be  
One mass shooting from one crazed male  
Almost every week.

People protested, wanted something  
Radical passed into law,  
But there were never 60 votes,  
So nothing changed.  
Apparently after one tragedy too many,  
The Senate decided to move —  
Passing a gun bill  
*One day after* the  
Overturning of Roe v Wade.

But don't worry, tragedy is never far away  
When it comes to guns and  
More restrictive laws.  
Violent killings are still up, and  
Daily shootings still reign supreme  
Around my hometown too.

So, whether change is  
Eventually made  
In the laws for women or not,  
All prospects scream  
That no matter what happens,  
It looks like we're in this fight  
For the long haul.  
It may take more than a miracle  
For women to be treated equally by "man"kind.  
Since I don't believe in miracles,  
We'll all just keep fighting  
Until something like women's healthcare  
Isn't so insurmountable after all.

## "Vestimenti" on WZRD

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ccandd96@scars.tv

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**Janet Kuypers**

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