

Transcript of speech by Donna Gunnison

2018 Women's March on Colorado

January 20, 2018

I do Zumba, so I recognize that (referring to previous performers). *[Cheers]*

Hi everyone, I'm short in stature, but I make up for it with my personality. *[Cheers]* My name is Donna Gunnison and I am so honored to speak to you today. I'm here to share my truth, which is about my voice. People ask me why I speak the way I do. It's because I have a rare genetic condition called Prader Willi Syndrome.

My whole life, I have struggled to be heard. For 63 years, I have felt dismissed, misunderstood, and everyone would try to silence me. So often, people put words into my mouth that I don't even know what my own truth is. Many, many times, it seemed like I didn't have a voice.

My disability brings challenges with my vision, executive functioning, and knowing when I'm full after eating. It requires a lot of discipline for me to stop eating. It's hard for me to overcome all these every day.

Despite my differences, I'm really just like you. I put my pants on every day, I love music, and I do Zumba on Saturdays. *[Cheers]* I missed Zumba because I'm here with you today *[Laughter]*. I'm guessing that YOU ALSO have challenges that you work to overcome every single day. These challenges unite us. Our challenges may be somewhat different, but our differences make a difference. As fellow women, we are not alone, and we can be there for each other no matter WHAT our differences are. *[Cheers]*

So yes, I have constant frustration from my disability, and from people not understanding me or trying silence me. But I'm not one to just stay at home. I go to work—two jobs, in fact. I volunteer. *[Cheers]* I like to be heard and seen. No matter what some people say or do, I just keep going. And if I fail, I get up, dust myself off, and go again. *[Cheers]*

A month ago, if you had told me that I would be speaking on this stage, in front of 200,000 people, I wouldn't have believed you. But here I am, sharing my voice and my truth with you. What I know now is that my voice does matter. And yours does, too. *[Cheers]* Let's bring our voices together and achieve great things! *[Cheers and applause]*