Barbara Ransby

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CTM: Maybe start by telling us a little about how you got to where you are now. The kind of feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist work that you have been doing all these years and continue to be doing.

BR: All these years.

LEC: And long time activist.

CTM: Yeah.

BR: Yeah. Well, the older I get, you know that question of how did you get to where you are and where are you is more and more challenging. At eighteen, I knew exactly what had to be done and I was sure where I would be going with that, you know, but the years passed and the revolution didn't come. So, I had to recalibrate that. So, I grew up in Detroit, as, you know—and I think you know, I mean I got politicized in some ways, organically. I come from a working class family. My parents were sharecroppers in the south and migrated to Detroit and my mother worked as a maid and my father worked in the factories. And then they sent me to private school. So, you know I saw this disconnect between the lives they led, these sort of hard-working people and the privilege that I encountered in the schools that I went to. So, I think that's my early class-consciousness. I also went to an all-girl high school, which was religious, which became problematic for me. The nuns and turned me into an atheist but I think also into a feminist, in a way, because in that school the athletes were women, the student government president was a woman, the reactionaries were women and the revolutionaries were women. It gave me I think, as a young girl/woman, a sense of possibility for women and a real strong sense of sisterhood. I think we didn't do the thing of competing for boys' attention in class and all that kind of thing, as young heterosexual women are sometimes encouraged to do. So I think

that's probably my nascent feminist consciousness—and my mother and grandmother were very influential. My grandmother, in particular, who is just very strong, take no stuff kind of person and that's how I thought you should be in the world. You know, and then of course, I encountered the world, which did not think that's how I should be.

CTM: —women should be—

BR: That's right. And so, therein lies the beginning of my feminism. But, you know, I could—really, more formally I was involved in a lot of organizing in Detroit, as a teenager. First, around the racist cops that we have. Some issues just don't seem to go away. And then, around issues of prison. And then I went—I did organizing for a while in Detroit and I would say gender was not really at the forefront, only to the extent that I would fight with men in the formations that I worked in around sexism. But I think, you know, in thinking back it's really around being included and a lot of my initial response to sexism and, kind of, patriarchal leadership models was to try to be tough like the guys. You know, I can—I can be Lefter than you, I can be louder than you, I can be more militant than you. And it was a reflexive response. And then, I went…I worked for a while and then went to New York, became very involved in the Free South Africa Movement. And some of my comrades in the ANC at the time were really dealing with issues of sexism, from men in the ANC, I have to say. And so, we talked a lot about that and struggled about that and cried about that. And you know, I began to read more and more things. I remember the first…a panel I was on at Barnard, at Feminist & The Scholar, with Barbara Smith and I was—I had read Barbara Smith, I knew about her. I was a slightly older student and I was pregnant at the time actually with my first child, so I was very conspicuously pregnant and I was on this panel with Barbara Smith and I really felt—she was so warm to me. I felt like, you know, these are my people. I mean this is what makes sense, to be in this conversation and to be in this work with people like Barbara Smith even though, of course, I barely knew her, but I claimed her. Yeah, and so that was the early, I mean I think that was my early feminist consciousness. And then I went to graduate school at University of Michigan and I think some of my lifelong friends, all of whom are feminists of color—most of whom are feminists of color, some are not people of color, but they're still feminist

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But people like Cathy Cohen and Tracey Matthews and Premila Madison are people that I met in the anti-racist student organizing at Michigan, and in the anti-apartheid work that we were doing there. We first developed a group called Free South Africa Coordinating Committee, which fueled into something called United Coalition Against Racism, which then led to the Ella Baker-Nelson Mandela Center. Through

all those struggles—it was a very intense time of struggle…I mean I did go to class, occasionally—but it was a very intense time of struggle and we were accused of being a bunch of lesbians or, you know, not really loving black people because we wanted to talk about issues that weren't really black people's issues and all of that standard stuff. And it was interesting the people who gravitated to us because we were under attack from those more reactionary elements in our community, who of course, talked as if they were, in their language, the vanguard. So, again, I felt a sharpened sense of my own identity as a black feminist and as somebody who felt engaged in an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle. And South Africa was that defining—

LEC: Forefront, year.

BR: —struggle for me.

CTM: So was that late 70s, early 80s?

BR: Well, I arrived—

LEC: 80s.

BR: It was the 80s. I arrived at University of Michigan in 1984. I was at Columbia from '80-'84 and then I was at University of Michigan from '84 to '91. Yeah, long, long stint. And I—you know I think also—I was raising a child and, of course, I did have a partner who was and is wonderful but feeling—you know, being a mother and becoming a feminist and being a student and being an activist and all that, you know, I really wrestled personally with identity questions and internal contradictions that I had, that I maybe didn't want to own. But you know, I felt like being a good mom was like being around and I had to do lots of other things so I wasn't around as much as much as the stay-at-home moms. So, that was a little internal dilemma. I also remember, you know, speaking of academic stuff, I remember when I applied for a Mellon Fellowship to go to graduate school. And you had to go for a personal interview and I was very pregnant at the time and—this is all around the same time—and I was nervous that they were going to ask me, do you want to be an academic, you're going to a PhD program, look at you, you're, you know. And I said, maybe they won't notice. [Laughter] Sitting there in all my glory. And I just had to say to them, I just want to share this with you at the end of the interview. As you can see, I'm about to have a child but my husband and I have decided that we want—you know, that we're going to be a two-career family. I just felt that was some concession that I had to make to that scenario, to apologize in some way. So, I think back on those moments and then I was very upset after that that I had to—that was the case. Anyway, those are my little vignettes.

LEC: But you got it. Got the fellowship.

BR: I did. I did! And the kid turned out okay, too.

[Laughter]

CTM: Yeah. So, in terms of your—think about the work you're doing now and the various forms of writing, of organizing, of struggles that you are involved in now. Can you trace a little bit the genealogy in terms of getting here?

BR: Yes, I think so. I think so. And you didn't ask me to go back to the dinosaur age…and when I was in the womb—

CTM: No.

BR: No. Well, I think the moments that I think of—well, that time of organizing in Michigan was very formative and again, people like Cathy and Tracey and Premila were very influential. We were influential on each other, I think. But then there was African American Women in Defense of Ourselves, which was a mobilization in 1991 that Elsa Barkley Brown, Deborah King and myself sort of initiated. And it was a real sense of collective outrage at the discourse surrounding Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, the invisibility of black women's stories and history; the fact that she wasn't believed; the fact that Clarence Thomas would assert that he was being a victim of high tech lynching, as if the experience and pain of black women was not a legitimate experience to put on the table.

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So, mobilizing around that moment was very important and very formative. We managed to…we reached out to around 1600 black women around the country who signed an ad in the New York Times.

CTM: I remember the ad.

LEC: Yeah. And then when African American newspapers raised a lot of money in a short amount of time, it was before the Internet. So, I have shoeboxes of letters that women wrote. You know, sending little checks. So, that was an important mobilization and with that as well as the Black Radical Congress, you know, we tried to keep it going more than a moment. Because one of the things I feel as, you know—I try to think of myself as an organizer—although I had discussion with a friend of mine recently who said I wasn't an organizer so I had a little identity crisis—but I do think I try to bring people together and I do that better than I work alone. But it

doesn't always work out the way you hope. So, you know, for African American Women in Defense of Ourselves I think we were united by our outrage at the spectacle of what Anita Hill was put through…and weren't even necessarily rallying around Anita Hill, whose own politics were very complicated and not my own. So, we had a limited basis for unity and we tried to massage that into something and it sustained itself for a few years but not for very long. The next major, kind of, convening that I was involved in was in 1998, which was the Black Radical Congress, which we had in Chicago. And it was Leith Mullings, myself, Manning Marable, Abdul Alkalimat and Bill Fletcher. So, Leith and I represented, kind of, feminist voices there and really insisted on a framing of a black radical tradition that included feminism. And I remember, Barbara Smith was one of the plenary speakers we invited saying that was the first time that she had felt included in a kind of roster of black radical forces that were not all feminists. And some—you know, everyone eventually got to the point where they eventually accepted the importance of that inclusion. But in terms of the history of many people involved, that wasn't the—Amiri Baraka was involved, a number of cultural—not really cultural nationalist, but revolutionary nationalist types from the East Coast and the West Coast, people coming out of Marxist organizations who had given a nod to feminism but not really grounded in that. So, I thought that was a really important mobilization. A lot of young people came to the table. And we were able to sustain that for a while. People like Jamala Rogers—who is now one the leaders of—was then and is now—of the Organization of Black Struggle in St. Louis and has been very involved in Ferguson…was involved, Angela was involved, and others. So, that was an important turning point. And I should say, which often gets left out of the history of the BRC, what it was—it culminated—we met for a year and a half and it culminated in this huge gathering of two thousand-some people. And then it sustained in chapters after that, although it re-divided along ideological lines, I have to say, in some places. But for me and for many of the women involved, it was a response to the Million Man March. It was a counter to the Million Man March. It was a way to say this is not about patriarchy and capitalism, that a black left response to the condition of black people has to be very different, and has to have a feminist and intersectional analysis. So, that's–you know, I mean, I lived and breathed that work for several years. And it's hard work 'cause it wasn't just people I was in full agreement with. There were a lot of other people, too. So, yeah—those were two really important mobilizations. And, you know, when I think about organization—and I think a little bit about Ella Baker—which was another big influence on my thinking, doing that research on her—there are so many informal networks that don't have names. Like, I think ok something happens, we need to do a petition, we need to have a contingent and a march, we need to write something in response to something, we need to raise money to get somebody out of jail. There's maybe a hundred people who I think of around the country, that if they call me and say we need to do this, I pretty much don't even have to read the fine print and vice-versa.

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And it's—but it doesn't have a name, but it's people who I've worked with in different capacities over the years, where there's a level of trust.

LEC: So, in listening to you talk about this, especially the BRC and black nationalism and some of the contradictions and so on—what have been the challenges that you saw as creating possibly an impediment to some of the work and how you saw that work moving forward, and where you would say it has gotten to at this point?

BR: Well, the things that I was just describing I think, really trying to work in collaboration with forces, hoping that there's movement, and not seeing that kind of movement or being, sometimes, personally attacked, too around feminism as some sort of betrayal.

LEC: An import.

CTM: Or an outsider something. It's an alien—

BR: It's an alien—and sometimes this comes from women.

CTM: Mm-hmm, sure.

BR: That it doesn't fit—and then of course, issues of homophobia that come into…and homophobia directed at anyone who takes a position against heteropatriarchy. So, it doesn't matter if you have a male partner or female partner or trans* partner. If you take that political position, you make yourself vulnerable for a certain attack around racial authenticity. And so sometimes it's hard to—it's hard to take the high road in fighting back against those kinds of attacks sometimes. But I do think—and I'll try to save till last what I'm optimistic about—I do think that landscape is changing. It felt like for so long that wasn't—that I'd talk to young activists and they'd say, oh you know we said there should be women in leadership and we said this and we got so much pushback—and the same kinds of rhetoric. It was like the playbook was the same. But I think it's changing.

LEC: That's good, that—

BR: I hope.

LEC: That's a lot of hope for us.

CTM: Yeah.

BR: And I'm usually the glass half empty type person, so I wouldn't be the one to exaggerate.

LEC: So, what do you see as the best way forward for feminism across race, gender, class, ethnicity, those things that can be divides? How we make them come together and coalesce for a movement forward…

BR: I have to say—and we can talk, you know, it'd be interesting to talk about this—I'm not sure that I see a movement as defined solely as a feminist movement. Even if we talk about intersectionality, I mean that—I think it has to be an anti-capitalist movement, I think we have to address the question of prisons and the changing nature of the state, and of course for all of us, you know, as we break down our feminist politics, this is a critical part of it. But I think when you project feminism as the largest rubric around what you're organizing, I'm not sure to everyone that it fully conveys all of that in the way that we need it to, and I'm not sure that it has to. So, I would say, building a movement where feminism is at the center, but I don't see necessarily, the umbrella being a feminist movement. A movement for radical social transformation at which a radical feminist of color vision is at the center. That's sort of how I would say it. And you all can help me massage that into form.

CTM: Yeah. That makes a lot of…

LEC: Complete sense.

CTM: Yeah, because it also describes, I think, what the sorts of feminist movements we see around us, lack, in certain ways, right?

LEC: Absolutely.

CTM: Because they become focused on issues that then get bounded by certain kinds of questions.

LEC: While at the same time creating all kinds of exclusions because of that, because of those boundaries.

CTM: So, what does it mean to say this kind of a radical movement for social transformation has to have a feminist of color, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist perspective at its center? How do you define that?

BR: Okay. So, that segues into why I'm optimistic at the moment. Because, you know as I started off saying, the more you think you know as you get older, the more you get humbled, right.

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So, I've spent some time recently really trying to sit with, listen to, learn from young people who are doing organizing now. Younger people, than us—we're young, too.

CTM: We're young, too.

BR: We're young, too. So, I mean, it's all relative. But, BYP 100—Black Youth Project 100 which my daughter Asha is involved in, Charlene Carruthers is the amazing organizer for—it was really something that Cathy Cohen willed into existence and really created space for. They've been doing amazing work around police violence. They're not really linking up with the Fight for $15. So, state violence, economic justice and they say, we do our work always through a black feminist queer lens. Now, just to speak that…just to say, to work with us you've got to deal with this, I think is part of putting that analysis in the center because it has spawned numerous discussions among that group and the people affiliated with…what does that mean? What does it mean to de-center a masculinist style of leadership? What does it mean to look to and learn from traditions where women were in the forefront or at the center? What does it mean to have zero tolerance for misogyny, patriarchy, sexism, heterosexism in the organization? You know…and so I think it creates an ethos in the way that they do their work that's very different and very important. A lot of the work around the police violence has focused on the very prominent cases of young men. Treyvon, Mike Brown, and in the case of older persons, Eric Garner and then very young, you know little Tamir Rice. And it's been BYP 100, the We Charge Genocide which is also queer, young women of color, also the Black Lives Matter…the three women who started Black Lives Matter, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi and Alicia Garza are organizers around labor, immigrant and other issues but they also identify as feminist and queer. So, to have all those folks at the forefront means that discussion is different. Means that it has gotten linked to Marissa Alexander's case, it has gotten linked to Rekia Boyd's case in Chicago, young woman who was killed. So, it's, you know, it's very supportive of what Kim Crenshaw has been trying to do with the DC policy level around the My Brother's Keeper initiative. So it's including…it's not allowing for a male only agenda for liberation for struggle. It has also been very internationalist. I think it was very important…almost right on the heels of Ferguson there was a delegation led by the Dream Defenders out of Florida, which formed after Treyvon, but including Sharell Brown from New York's Justice League including Charlene Carruthers from Black Youth Project, who went to Palestine. Now, they could have said our communities are under siege and occupied right here, we need to stay we need to fight. No. They said we need to go and be in solidarity and we need to learn from the occupation in Palestine, we need to build solidarity. So, I think that outward looking politic, that zero tolerance for heteropatriarchy and misogyny internally, I think those are really key to building a radical transformative movement that has, you know, that has a

queer lens, as they say, and that has feminist of color politics at the center.

CTM: And so, do you see this as, sort of, this is so interesting to hear because what it tells me is that there have been some generational effects of certain kinds of questions that have been brought to the table by previous generations, which this generation, or the young people now seem to have picked up and pushed in a different and more radical space. Because it can't…it doesn't come out of nowhere anyway. So some of it is, what are the histories that these young people inherit? Right? And what are the histories that they choose to mobilize in order to create that?

LEC: And how they see some of those histories as playing out right now still. So, like when you said before, you know, some of that has happened in the past but the past is still present. So they're seeing it in their own generation.

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BR: And I'd give them a lot of credit on their own, too. I mean I'm a historian and I make my living arguing that the past is connected to the present. But I also think their choices, their agency, the contradictions that they live in urban settings, in the personal and political choices that they've made, that all of that creates some new dialectics that our generation didn't confront. And so yes, lessons learnt, but not a straight line, you know what I mean? And they are very focused on youth organizing, most of them, but also very respectful and grateful and seeking of information and wisdom, if you will, from people who have done work before them. But it is its own moment. And the kind of social media organizing is different. And I've kind of moved on that question myself.

LEC: The social media question?

BR: Yeah.

LEC: It's a great mobilization tool in so many ways.

BR: It is. Well, my first, my initial impulse was it's reductionist, how can you say—I'm talking about twitter now—how can you say anything in a 140 characters? It's making us oversimplify everything. We need to resist it and then I got a little twitter account that they set up for me. And I began to tweet and it is an easy way to let people know about things, it's an easy way to spark discussions that can lead to other things and you do develop relationships. I mean it's a kind of knocking on doors of the twenty-first century, because you realize that I tweeted something and this particular person has re-tweeted twenty things that I tweeted. So, we've got some simpatico there. We're on the same page around different issues, we've got the same

vibe, so it's a—you don't really know what they look like or where they live in the world or even if they are who they say they are, but that can be true even when you meet people in person, too. So, I think that the communities that they've built through social media are very interesting and powerful.

CTM: And they don't seem to substitute, necessarily—

BR: No, they meet in person.

CTM: —for face-to-face meetings and communities and actions, basically.

LEC: The parts of social media that I like are, you know, the tools for organizing. It's the quickest, it's really fast and you can get tons of people together really quickly. Nothing beats that.

BR: And also, you know, getting around the bias of the mainstream media. I mean, when I was following the enormous breadth of protests in the wake of the killings that started with Ferguson, Eric Garner and so, I was getting aerial views from twitter that I did not see on…certainly on CNN or MNSBC or you know, even other press that we might trust a little bit more. I was seeing twitter feeds, constant twitter feeds that were saying, okay there are two thousand people taking over Lake Shore Drive, there are a thousand people coming out in Oakland, here's medical students in Upstate New York who are doing a die-in.

LEC: You never get to see that in the news, that's true.

BR: To see the breadth of that really made me feel a movement was afoot and the media was not covering it.

LEC: Yeah, because mainstream media always minimizes the numbers, if nothing else. The agenda and the numbers, so you can't trust that.

CTM: So, any reflections on the current climate of neoliberalism and what are the particular kinds of challenges that we have to pay attention to?

LEC: And strategies that we need to deploy to move forward.

BR: Well, I mean some strategies we might want to discuss quietly. I mean in the sense that I do think in an age of enormous surveillance that we are seeing an increasing encroachment on our ability to organize in various kinds ways. I mean, that's the—the blessing and the curse of twitter is of course I know what's happening, but also the people who want to shut it down know that's happening, too. I guess for the last number of years I've thought of insider-outsider strategies vis-à-vis

institutions, of trying to do work in the academy that changes it, that opens up space, that creates oases, that disrupts the dominant neoliberal discourse and policies, which is pushing us towards a market-driven educational system and so-forth and which some people just get written up and pushed out and some ideas get pushed out and punished.

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So, fighting that but also understanding that's not the sole locus of either my learning and my scholarship and certainly not my activism. And I think, you know, at University of Illinois, certainly what happened recently to our would-be colleague, our brother, Steven Salaita, was a good example, which really upped the ante, that an academic, in their own time, as a citizen, using social media, could be denied employment. Not based on qualifications, not based on credentials, not really even based on a process of vetting that they had already gone through. Not based on student evaluations, but essentially based on politics, you know, and there's a handful of issues around which—which become a litmus test for that, of course. Solidarity with Palestine is one of them.

CTM: Yeah, right now.

BR: Right now.

CTM: Even though it's also the climate to, in fact, talk about Palestine and BDS as well, which is why they become the litmus test, I guess.

BR: Exactly! Yeah, right. That there's a growing response to that and it's making its presence felt. If only one or two people were doing it and were ineffective then it wouldn't matter, right?

LEC: Right.

CTM: Exactly, exactly. Right.

BR: I should maybe say—I just—you know, my scholarship has also influenced my sense of feminist consciousness—Ella Baker and Eslanda Robeson…that someone described as a recuperative process of telling the stories of radical women, neither of whom embraced the term feminist, but both of whom I see as part of a, you know what you might describe as a feminist genealogy, right? Of women who were very public, who were very much organizing around issues related to oppressed people and did not either accept the sexism that came their way but also really fought to have women and women's concerns at the center of anti-colonial work and of work in the

black freedom struggle. That was important and formative I think, for me, to work, because it takes me a long, long time, so I spent a lot of years working on them. So, thought a lot as I looked at the ins and outs of their lives, you know, kind of, my own choices, my own time and what the challenges are, so—

CTM: So, do a little bit of visioning for us now. Or dreaming. What is it that you see, both in terms of, or hope for, I mean, you've said a little bit when you talked about what you see in the movement—

LEC: This generation.

CTM: Movements now. But just in terms of thinking about what it would mean to talk about a radical feminist of color vision in the future. What are the things that you think about?

LEC: I am envisioning this and I am thinking how do we get all the others to gel with it? Because you know Barbara, the whole thing about the Left and black nationalism, you know, these are divisions, right? Always kept us from solid work that we could move forward with. All the marginalization that has resulted even though we're all trying to work together. You have the brothers over there who are supposed to be so left and together, saying you know, you're a lesbian and you've got a problem—that has always been the thing that has made me think how can you transcend this and see that we have these common interests against this larger thing that is state suffering and stamping down on all of us. So that's the vision I think we are trying to get to. What does that look like with feminism?

BR: I'm going to try to answer. I don't know. I mean, it's a big question and I think the answer is probably a cop-out answer in terms of—you know, I really see what at one point I saw as a finite arrival at a place of liberation as more of a process than a journey that each generation has to make.

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And I think the more we push for and hope for that kind of utopic end point—I mean that's an important exercise in and of itself, too, to imagine. But I think once we think we've arrived we probably have lost something, if that makes sense. So I guess, the question I ask myself is are we going in the right direction. And I've said some of the examples of young people who are doing better than our generation did at including issues of gender, including issues of sexuality in the politics, and also young men embracing that, too. Young, cis-men who are embracing these politics, not afraid of them, not buying that line that you're not a real brother if you're a feminist or if you're not strong or if you're not performing a certain kind of masculinity. Now that

is still seriously out there and I see it particularly in pop culture, in the hyper-commercialized music industry and so forth. But I see in other subversive, particularly artistic communities, spoken word communities, I see a different set of politics. So, that makes me think we're going in the right direction. But something I think about a lot in terms of this insider-outsider model, you know, to do work in…either in the academy or for people who are doing work inside electoral politics—we have a big mayoral race in Chicago right now that'll be resolved on Tuesday—big, big fight inside and outside. And, you know and then, working in non-profits. Those are three major institutional houses. I think we have to find ways to also have formations outside of those. I just absolutely—we've gotten a little too comfortable thinking we can, you know, professor our way, or grant write our way or vote our way to freedom. We have to have some—we have to do some really hard, deep collective thinking about the mess that we're in and we can't do it on a tenure track. We can't do it in the context of mapping careers in the academy or figuring out how to write grants, or figuring out what politician—you know, who we want to believe—whose Kool-Aid we want to drink. So, I do—and I don't know what kind of formation that is, but I think in an organized way, to have the different sectors together—to have people working in different sectors, together, systematically to come up with consensus around certain kinds of things. I mean, that was—to its credit, that was an attempt that we made in the BRC, because initially—you know, we didn't have staff, we—people had to—that also has its own problems because people with resources can come to meetings, people with flexibility, people with three jobs and six kids can't do that as easily. So, we have to then pool resources. But figuring out a way outside of the institutional strictures that exist to have genuine collective thinking about social transformation and to understand the changing nature and the power of the state, I think, is really important. The struggle around the police is really interesting. Because you think—the struggle in the '60s and early '70s, there was always a radical element but there was always an include-us element, an integrative element. But the focus on the police is really around the issue of state control and you have people who haven't read tomes about how the state works, who on a visceral level know this is part of what's keeping me down. And that's a really interesting, kind of, reform struggle to be focused on, is the police is the state. Or people doing work around prisons. And some of them, coming out of a place where they have loved ones in prison. And so they come out of a very working class perspective, not from the academy or legal circles or anything like that. So, the kinds of struggles that being waged I think, on the street, allow basis for many different kinds of people to begin conversation about the big picture.

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But again, I think the nature of the state is changing so we have to understand—I just—one more thing—and I don't have any answer to this but, particularly how

things have played out under De Blasio in New York, to me, have been interesting—and they're still playing out, with the black feminist Combahee-affiliated partner—is that for the first time since I can remember, the possibility of a real split between the civilian elected government and the armed wing of the state in the city. Like the police saying, we may not actually do what you say. I mean, in other parts of the world, that signals a real breakdown. So, this mayor has come in with many problems, I will say, but who really came in saying, I'm not going to come in having the police ride rough shod over black communities the way they have, I get it, I'm going to equalize things. So, coming in with such a dramatically more progressive agenda than had been seen or heard in a while and then for the police to register that kind of a break and that kind of insurgency in the ranks. Now, I think the police…Pat Lynch has been checked and it doesn't seem to be going in that direction. But that split I thought was very interesting and could repeat itself depending on how—so asking those kinds of questions about how we understand in the landscape at this moment is something I think we need space to do outside of the institutions that pay our salaries.

LEC: And there's such a right wing push in this country that makes those kinds of moments seem possible, and really as if there's some kind of underground support, if not above ground. Real support for that and it's happening more and more in different places, so it makes you realize that any kind of anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-state progressive movement is in a way, under threat. So whatever this future is that we're envisioning, we have to be vigilant that that's always there. That they have an agenda and their surveillance is constant, whether we see it or not, that's happening.

BR: And that's a big question. I'm probably over my hour but—about how we do mass work under the circumstances. Because there is a way, especially for those of us with a little bit of privilege, that you can retreat to your peeps, right? You can have dinner and conferences with people who you safely disagree with but basically they're on the same page. But what does it mean to go out into—on a street corner some place, or in a small, predominantly white town someplace? That is actually one of the things that people in electoral politics end up doing, which is interesting. And having conversations with people who have a vastly different worldview, but share the same passport, pay taxes to the same government that you do. How do we do that mass work without being emotionally, psychologically, physically depleted? Because when you hear the GOP presidential hopefuls now, wow!

LEC: You know, you think, who are they appealing to?

BR: Who are they appealing to?

LEC: I don't get the sense that this is the majority thinking in America but they are appealing to a constituency that's powerful and they know it.

BR: Yes. Serious questions.

LEC: Ok. Thank you so much. We really, really appreciate this. It was very good.

CTM: Yeah!

00:43:50

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Feminist Freedom Warriors (FFW) is a first of its kind digital video archive and documentary project. Born out of an engagement in anti-capitalist, anti-racist struggles as women of color from the Global South, this project is about cross-generational histories of feminist activism addressing economic, anti-racist, social justice and anti-capitalist issues across national borders.