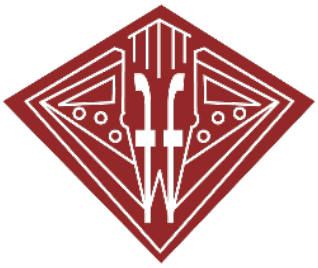

Cherríe Moraga

2/25/17

[00:00:07]

CTM: Today is the 25th of February 2017.

LEC: It's really lovely to be here and we welcome Cherríe Moraga who is here with us for this discussion that we're doing for what we call Feminist Freedom Warriors project that we told you about. Today is the 25th of February 2017 and we want to start, Cherrie, with just a general discussion that takes you through the history of your feminist activism. So tell us a bit about what brought you to feminism?

CM: What brought me to feminism was I think the first memory I have of this is of my sister who is a year and a half older than me. She was in college already and I don't know how she – it could've even been Betty Friedan or something like that and she was telling me something about what she was reading and she said to me we're not the only ones. She said that to me and she says it's not just us, our sense of – our real suppression as females growing up was we thought we were the only ones so she says - she doesn't know the word systemic and it's systemic. That's my first memory.

CTM: How old were you?

CM: I would imagine, I think I could've been in college but if I was I was a freshman but I think she was already in college and we were only a year apart so somewhere - eighteen something like that. It peaked my interest and stirred something in me but I think what happened is in the college that I went to – it's actually the same college that Elena Viramontes went to—Immaculate Heart College. It had this Catholic name because it had been a women's Catholic college and about the time I entered it—it was in Hollywood—it was a very small school and by the time I entered it was non-sectarian and had women's co-ed, right. But these were the nuns who were the first to take off their habits, right. They were these women who had an incredible history and it was happening right while I was finishing high school. This college was like

commuting college from our homes. But it was a totally different world from my home, Mexicano San Gabriel house where we lived. And in there were these women—they were feminists, these teachers, they were feminists, and they really confronted the Arch Diocese—the Cardinal of Los Angeles, who was a horrible, horrible patriarch. Really the epitome of Catholic patriarchy and he basically—he didn't excommunicate them from the church but he de-religioused them. He basically said we no longer acknowledge you as religious and they went to him and they said this is what we need to do to be effective in the world and they basically started in all that period of time where nuns began to take off their habits and be engaged. So the school that I went to – the four years that I was at Immaculate Heart it was really important because there was this kind of example of consciousness around feminism. I remember being around some year – I think it was in June but Gloria Steinem came and spoke so of course it was all very single-issue feminism. For me things were always happening where this one opened up, this one opened up, this one, and that was going on. And in neither movement did I have place except I had mental and heart place, you know what I mean, but both were very dangerous, in terms of the kind of familia that I was growing up in and…so I think to say…and also, it's always layered, and the other part of it, and I don't know if that school helped me or hurt me because there was so much radicalism on that campus and it was also the radicalism of the time, so drugs and acid and all this stuff and I was coming from a very, very traditional Mexican Catholic family and I wanted to be free.

[00:05:26]

CM: So it was very confusing. I also suspected for many, many years when I was very young that I was queer so that was the end of the world for me. So, when I went into college I basically kind of disappeared. You know how when they talk about you're not in your body that's exactly how all those four years were for me until at the very end when I went to feminism to justify my lesbianism, which didn't quite work. But it was like 'oh if women are valuable then we have a right to love each other', which is true, but that wouldn't hold long. So when I finally came out is also when I got well, and so I just became on a mission of what are the things that we need to get well. So one thing brought the next then the next, and, this is *Bridge* obviously, the consciousness around getting involved in the women's movement that the classism or racism would make it not home. So all of those things were progressive things that began to happen and so, I think, I always say about the consciousness, the consciousness is however we find it is where that source, what we identify as the deepest places of our own repression or suppression or oppression. I think for me as a light-skinned woman and as a kid growing up, and in our family where it's the lighter the better, man. They affirm, they say go ahead, use it all to go. And I had all my

relatives and so that contradiction between even my sister…sister-cousin is like a sister. She's a brown woman, and we look like this, and the contradictions are so evident. So then when a student had asked me the other day what's the hardest thing to write and I said *La Guerra* because it was having to come to terms with one consciousness and there's another, there's another, there's another – so, ultimately it's women of color feminism. That's been the road ever since and it's always about what I'm not seeing. I just told Chandra last night I learned so much just talking with you at the table. We're always in pursuit of what's missing in the picture. What have *I* missed? So to me, the feminism is *that*. That's the only feminism I...

CTM: Is that what you would say is what fueled whatever kind of activist spaces you have occupied or generated?

CM: Yes. I think to go backwards I would say for example I am part of a network or organization of women La Red Xicana Indigena. So speaking currently then going backwards it's just like, as a Chicana I could not proceed in talking – and being Chicana, publicly to talk about literature that's about us, in many ways very differently than how it was in the movimiento, but to claim our space as indigenous people in America. To not recognize that border, to refuse the border, to say we have varying degrees of mestizaje but you're looking at the Mexican people, which is a nation state name, are 80% indigenous. So however we lined up on it – the evolution of that and understanding, even talking about feminism and stuff, well the link to that is it's not just the global South because technically, it's the indigenous North.

[00:10:19]

CM: Right? I mean, all of this, right? From one thing, to the next thing, to the next thing. Each one always feels a little – every engagement always feels a little dangerous because, for me in particular, the danger is also just to be true. I don't know exactly how to say it better, just to be true in what I'm doing. Not to say something I'm not– not to get ahead of myself but encouraging everybody go home in this way. That's what I know we need to do. I think also the…in terms of activism, what's next? Now I can say at sixty-four, now I'm really interested in what happens to us as we age. What can – and largely my work is…I'm a writer. So I keep asking what's missing in the picture, what's missing in the picture, what are we not saying, what's that place of inquietude, when you're not reconciled…the agitation, and how do you then…? It's always political. It's always related to the silences, invisibility. And we don't have to have that identity to represent that—not even 'represent', that's a totally wrong word—you don't have to have that identity to be engaged in a political practice that creates, that participates in the act of freedom making. It just continues like that.

CTM: So interesting because just listening to you in the last few days, there are certain kinds of ideas and ways of thinking about community that feel like they're a touchstone for you—you keep coming back to. So one of the things that you said a lot is, "Go home". So however one formulates that idea of home, which then includes where you come from, the multiple histories and the contradictions, all of that. And then the other one is familia, which is also—

LEC: Beyond the immediate family.

CTM: Yeah. It's ways of talking about community, but in very deeply feminist ways how we construct these homes and these familias—because we all do that—in order to create collectives, in order to create groups of people who are engaged in a certain kind of intellectual-political work that we feel is crucial. Right?

CM: Yeah, and one thing that I think is particular, and I think that's always been the thing that we talk—so we're sitting here and we're talking as women of color and then each of you has a specificity in how you describe that, right? I think for me what's been major has something to do with the pressure among Mexican Americans to imagine we're another immigrant proclamation. So our relationship to the nation state, I see it, I witness it, in generations, how long it takes for us to be here and many of us have been on this side of the border from the beginning of people being here, but that the idea of being a pueblo, a people, is something that keeps getting stolen from us. That what we're supposed to do is identify as Mexicans, and that doesn't mean let's identify as the hundreds of nations that are in Mexico, but like the same way that you're supposed to be an American. [*Laughs*] Sorry. However we come to this, we're supposed to identify with our nation state, and so I think for me particularly I think the model has always been my feminism—I was interested in feminism, in black feminism, it's like I always felt that those sisters, they knew they were black. Punto fina. Over and done. We got it. All the feminism is going to feed through that identity very, very clearly, and I feel like that the history of colonization and de-Indianization of Mexican people on both sides of the border is such that we cannot…that that's still up for grabs, regardless of shape. I see it also even in some of our intellectual work.

[00:15:53]

CM: That there's still this sort of thing about, well we're both…it's kind of like…I mean there's liberalism in it, not across the border, but there are elements within our intellectual thought that's liberal. So I have felt like the thing about…that we have to be particularly specific that we are a pueblo outside of the nation state. That even when you look at African Americans, there's plenty, I think of August Wilson, the

playwright, and I love much of his work but I thought, Oh my god, he has really identified as American…he's totally identified—and you almost *can't* and stay black. But there's something very particular because of the way racism worked among indigenous people in America outside of the reservation system, which is completely wrong and a misguided structure for indigenous peoples, right? You have all these indigenous people from the southwest down, and what…and the de-Indianaizaiton process has been going on for hundreds of years, which has nothing to do with blood quantum, right? So you're saying how do we then get free? Because you could be a very, very light skinned black person and still know you're black. You can be a dark skinned Mexican person and think you're not Indian. So to me, that has been my—when I say 'my', *our*, many of us—and I think it's coming from particularly women, Chicanas, is that kind of return, and also to try to make those relationships with northern native people. Those are not easy connections to make. There's a lot of fear and I think some of this has to do with these kind of…I feel like, their colonial positions like, 'you're gonna take what we got' and all this kind of stuff. So, when you think about how Mexicans are represented to the popular culture, we're just represented as an immigrant population. And then our goal then should be…is the American dream. Even the word dream is almost like 'oh my god, *please'*. You know, it's like; everything is a compromise, to get a little step, that is a compromise. The question of consciousness or consciencia and sort of our role as actively engaged thinkers, writers, people from the world, teachers et cetera, to me this has been the rub, literally the rub, where I always find a lot of correspondence because what happens a lot with it is it gets appropriated from a male perspective; so what they tell you then ok so anybody that believes that Chicanos are indigenous people, da da da da, ok we're going to do our ceremony, we're going to do it all these ways, and only men are road men, only men are healers, only men are—you know it's like men are the real—. The real traditional thing of women's counsel for example, indigenous women's counsel, is kind of this subjectification of the grandmothers; no power. I think Standing Rock was a really great example of female engagement and women's leadership and all that, and it's happening, but that is changing. But traditionally among Chicanos we're looking at *that*. There's some fierce young Chicanos coming up and when they're trying to walk what they say is the red road—camino rojo—finding the leadership of women to do that, particularly on a grassroots level that also does not require heterosexuality, doesn't require stand-by-your-man kind of thing, doesn't require that you have to wear a skirt all the time. These are throwback notions. I think from our vantage point it's like we keep going like this and we're hoping it's moving like and it'll move us alon that but it's some of the same issues they face.

[00:20:45]

LEC: So amazing. Because Mexico being a nation that this country stole so much from to make it the global South as global South, it's really kind of incredible violence done to the people. Which explains so much of what you're talking about, there's a multiplicity of identities in everything. This state has forced something onto that state.

CM: Exactly.

CTM: It's like the border moved, right?

LEC: Border moved, so did the people and their histories.

CTM: No the people stayed but the peoples' memories and histories were stolen as soon as the border moved. Because then you become "immigrant"—

CM: The whole de-Indianization process happened with the arrival of Spanish.

LEC: Absolutely. That's what I'm thinking through.

CM: Right. And so the thing about...so, some of the things like this play which you watched, *The Mathematics of Love*, you're looking at MalinXe, who's a 500 year old figure, right? She's a figure of colonization, because that figure is alive—talking about Chicana feminine—it is alive and well. Somehow that we are…that we carry this burden of colonization. That we are somehow…that we were the…you know, native women are raped, but *somehow*—

CTM: Somehow you actually are complicit,

CM: Complicit, exactly.

CTM: And facilitated colonization through that figure.

CM: And nobody's talking about—I mean very few people who are, of course— but general knowledge, and then looking at the fact that Mexico, at the time when Cortez arrived, Espanolas arrived, Mexico was a completely—they were native nation against native nation, and the Aztecs and Mexica were completely colonists, I mean, imperialist, right. So you're going, what are these—I think the writing that Paula Gunn Allen did about even Pocahontas and stuff, and she made some connections with MalinXe and stuff. There's—very little attention ever came to that book. I felt like what?! Sometimes I feel like what we know, and I think with native women and Chicanas, there's so much to share with each other and we don't know each other. We really, really don't know each other. I think in terms of feminism of color, that's astounding. That is like—I was just listening to a sister yesterday talking about Korea and I'm like, I want to take notes. It's like, how much we need to know in order to have this international, this—in order to respond to globalization, we have to know the details.

CTM: It just feels more than ever urgent that we find the spaces and ways to share knowledges because of what's going on around us in the world, in all different places in the world.

LEC: The real striking thing about this is the uniformity in the exploitation that we're all experiencing, there is uniformity because capital is mobile and goes. It does whatever, and it does the same thing to the same people. Whatever nation, it's the same. So it has a uniformity to its exploitation. And we have all this multiplicity and identities and histories and that's what we have to bring together to gel as a feminism of colour.

CTM: And not just about history, it's all the misunderstandings and the forgetting of memory and history, which is from colonization.

LEC: Which come from colonization, and that thing that "I am whatever I am and you are something else," but they're just moving through very swiftly.

CTM: Right.

CM: I think the amnesia stuff is very, I think in particular I think it's stronger in some cultures than others because of our histories. So for me as a writer that is my single issue. What's been, as a teacher, kind of amazing is how we can help our students remember. I mean really remember. And I mean generationally, I mean ancestor memory. The other thing is what you were saying about family and community and stuff. I was thinking this morning, knowing that we were going to have this conversation, I was thinking about how for many years we've had these kind of gatherings, like I remember after 9/11 we were like, "This is crazy," by America, you know, this crazy response, and we brought a bunch of sisters together, just women in our community. And I'm looking around and there's Puerto Rican and all these African American sisters together, who are practitioners. Serious sisters, activist, hard working, they already got jobs they already got lives, you know, like that, and the Northern native sisters and Chicanas—all these people were there and some men and kids and stuff. And I remember we were all just sitting around trying to figure out what we were gonna do with all these lives. What just really touched me—I think Jacqui Alexander was there at that time and she was with Sandra, her partner, and the two of them, so you have this American indigenous woman Chicana and African sister, diasporic sister, Korean sister. The two of them were there just working the group and what they were doing is that they were having everybody remember that this was not their natural born condition. Everybody was just remembering this was not their natural born condition and the thing about—I learned this, a lot just from many teachers, just sister-teachers—that there are certain ways of talking about the academy and all that, there are certain ways of accessing knowledges that we can't get right here. So we have to then make these structures to help us remember. So you

know as Jacqui says there's this structure to ceremony and if you know all the steps you're gonna go through—I have spent evenings with various ceremonies learning about the orishas and stuff, not just so we can have common conversations—we're there in ceremony together and I watch what happens over night and the whole time I'm going, "This is the most incredible privilege in the whole world." What happens then is you can go do your work because you're not wrong, you are not crazy! You remembered! *That's* what I want for young people. That's what I want for the people in the room the other day. I wanted to say, "Do not be fooled." That this, that we have the capacity to do…to not be afraid. Not only not be afraid, we have the capacity to enter danger zones when we can remember, and what is of course so wrong with the West is that it's always the future. It's always about the future and one of the best things that Toni Morrison ever said is, it's the past that's limitless, not the future. I go, yes! So those kind of moments, I mean I think not only about family and community but this is something as a young person that was a totally repressed child going to college is like, I could never imagine that in my whole life, and you think about—I like the title of your series because you think about—how we create freedom and all you need to create freedom is the space to see it differently, to not believe the stories told about us. In terms of activism that's what gets a person to get up and move, that you see there's a space to enter but without knowing there's a space, you know…

[00:30:05]

CM: So I think about the communities that we do make with each other, but what what we bring to those communities is hope. That's the difference. We're not, like, pretending. I'm going to bring hope. That's what I have to offer.

CTM: Of a lot of the people that we've spoken to, you have really constructed and claimed a feminist life that is about generating these dialogues and spaces across, while holding onto this specific Chicana, lesbian, et cetera, indigenous identity—what have been some of the most difficult moments or challenges? 'Cause I think what's incredible is we have a sense of what has worked and what you've been able to do to make things work, right? So what is hard—what is hard in creating connections across various kinds of borders and communities and histories et cetera? It's what we talk about, like, Women of Color, was possible, Third World Women of Color, as a political, emotional identity category in the '80 was really flourishing, big. It's harder now.

LEC: I think in relation to that your work, your writings, and what you feel in relation to this, how it sustains women's lives—because you've been hearing that since you've been here, about what the work has meant to even very young generations—so in relation to this, the question about the hope, what do you feel?

CM: About the what?

LEC: Hope.

CM: About Hope. Well I think that, you had asked—

CTM: What makes it difficult.

CM: The difficulties…

LEC: What are the challenges?

CM: Maybe I'll come to that first and then, yeah. I think partly one of the things that has – I have to say kind of with the rise of the whole undocumented movement, which I feel has really been this great resurgence of activism that's coming from the actual people that it's impacting, it's not like someone else is running it. That's really risk taking, people risk being deported to do this activism. And I think I have felt over the years, more and more, I think maybe you brought it up the other day, that we are increasingly separated from progressive black activist communities. That there is little interest in us. My feeling is that since we have always looked at African Americans as a—because of the way race is constructed in this country, we have looked at African Americans as our models and I feel like they don't even see us. I mean that's how I feel generally. On a women of color basis? No, because just to say women of color, we're all sitting at this table, we all have different histories and that's what *Bridge* was about. And *Bridge* was—the cover holds that concept together and we probably experience it more than most because there is this feminist of color vision.

CTM: Commitment.

CM: Commitment, yeah. You're going to do that work across the borders but I think that—and I actually just finished an essay about this, it was talking about reading—of seeing *Fences*—did I tell you about this?—seeing *Fences* the film and I watched August Wilson's work for years and I was so excited to see Viola Davis. I wanted to hear her do this one line, where she tells—I forget his name.

CTM: Denzel.

CM: Yeah, but the character's name, that this baby has a mother but you don't have a woman. That's a great moment, and I loved it and I actually didn't know that Denzel had directed it. So I'm in this theatre, movie-house, and it's Oakland so the vast majority are African American and they're all shouting, it's great. And I'm watching this whole thing and all of a sudden at the end, I don't know if I missed it or blinked or something but at the very end it says directed by Denzel Washington.

[00:35:13]

CM: This thing came up in me. I was with Celia and my son, he's twenty-three, Rafael. So we're sitting there and Rafael looks at me, he goes, "What's wrong with you?" And I go…I'm thinking to myself August got what he wanted, he's dead but he got what he wanted. Which is an all black…right? Everything about that film, I knew that was right even where Denzel throws a little of libation like that—oh jeez—I know that about that culture and I am so happy, right? So I'm like, oh yeah! And all of a sudden this great sadness comes over me that nobody knows us. That we're millions and millions of people and nobody knows anything about us. Because those people in that audience they see themselves reflected and they are different people and unfortunately in order for that to happen it has to be popularized. You have to reach popular culture. You have to—I mean they never read the play, you know what I'm saying. They never went to Broadway. They saw the film. So I think to myself—it was like a cry came up from me and I thought how are we going to get well if we never see wellness? If we can never see our wound reflected and then how we might respond to that. I think that's one of the best feminist lines that August has and he doesn't have that many but that moment. And those sisters are seeing that, and of course they were like right, right, right, and I thought we need that.

LEC: I hear you and feel that because what that does and how you put it just now is so beautiful, that August got what he wanted because that thing connects for them that pouring of the libation to Africa, where they came from. That's the message he's trying to communicate so that explains African-American. It's a coming—I hear you. You put that really well.

CM: That's the repressed memory. See that's the memory. Tell people your condition is not a natural born condition. Remember. Then you have a right to be. And that's what I want for us. The same way you want it, right? The same way we all want it. I think it's the particular relationship with the United States is so problematic because it's a country that wasn't just built on slavery but it was built on genocide and until the country unravel, I mean not the country, the people unravel that mess

CTM: In the popular imagination.

CM: In the popular imagination, not in the new and…you know.

LEC: That moment did that.

CTM: It's the profound moment where you know that decolonization has worked, right?

CM: It works, yes. [*Laughs*]

CTM: It is a decolonial moment, right?

LEC: Yes.

CTM: And we rarely have this. And in some ways, you're right, I mean it is African-American popular culture that is present at the moment and…

LEC: But it signals all the others.

CTM: Yeah.

LEC: It's a signal for all the others and others feel that and that's why that happened to you.

CM: Exactly.

CTM: So it's not about the narrow siloed understanding of what it means to be racialized in this way or that way because all of us saw this movie and we connected exactly those moments.

LEC: And the play was here, directed by a Black director. What was so powerful for me now is how you put it because it made sense to what we feel that we can't label. That we feel that moment but we can't exactly put a figure on what it is; when you said that it brought me back to seeing it here. They brought him here, and after he died the play was here with a Black director. Really incredible. Yeah, so…

CTM: We're shifting a little bit.

[00:39: 34]

CM: So that's the hope.

CTM: That is the hope.

LEC: That is the hope. That entirely. I really love how you just said it. So what do you see as the best way for feminists across borders—especially having been here now at Syracuse University, this is at the forefront of our mind. So I didn't say at the beginning that Cherrie is here for two weeks as the humanities scholar-in-residence so a lot of discussions have been going on that's bringing this to the forefront for us now so we want to connect that with this, and say what do you see with the feminists across borders and across divides, across all these nation states and different nationalities to build solidarity? How do we build solidarity? What are the points of connection we need to make and we can see are sometimes missing? This need to build solidarity, because this understanding we have as a generation who knows, sees, understands, feel that, can connect immediately. What do we need to do to make that

same kind of understanding, or in whatever way it happens, that all of us understand there's a history that we come from, there's a particular kind of knowledge that we have, knowledges—

CTM: Which you have been calling remembering, actually, I think.

LEC: Which you have been calling remembering, and that is what then creates the gel among us. What we call solidarity.

CM: I mean I can say I don't know. That's part of the truth answer. But one thing that I feel like, how we gather really matters. How people come together and the structure that we use to gather I think really matters and I think that's something that those sisters were saying earlier the other day. And so I think partly the problem is we're always such an underfunded people, so we rely on universities and such to allow these conversations to happen, etc. but it also then inbreds a problem. So I know that La Red and when it was formed, we came out of these two gatherings, right, and it was basically some California and some people came from all these other places, and it was really a gathering of…at that time we were the older ones and we were like forty-five, right, so it was mostly women in their 20s and 30s, indigenous-identifying Chicanas, right, and we – you know, no one had to have any affiliation to come. You just came, and they happened in these little encampments in the forest and something like that, and they brought in a couple of people to speak, from the other generation and stuff. People that were practitioners, either spiritual practitioners or knew histories and that sort of thing, but it really wasn't related to academia in any way. There was a lot of great things that happened, a lot of mess that happened, like anything, right? But I think that there's something about—and those gatherings they only do so much, too, anyway. So sometimes what I have felt that's what really made a mark on a lot of those young women, and they went on to continue to do that kind of work. This was a regional kind of thing and maybe that's the best we can ask for, is to work in that way because yes there is—and we have these international forums, right, but the degree to which those things come back and impact our communities is another question, so it depends on what your vision and kind of also what you're good at. You know what I mean? You have to recognize what your skills are, who you talk to and how you talk best, how you communicate best but my feeling is—it's really with me—sometimes I feel like in all my years of teaching—and I feel really lucky because I get to teach the arts and there's no more direct line to get the people to remember than through art practice—so I have this exercise we'll do, often times the first exercise and it's like I was not supposed to remember. And I just have them write and write and write. I say, if it doesn't come to you, write and write again. So you can write, "I wasn't supposed to remember that. I wasn't supposed to remember that." And I said when the story kicks in go with the story, when the story runs out go

back to that line again. That's a really, really small example. When you're doing it in a room full of women of color—

CTM: Wow, I can just imagine. I'm writing this down.

[00:44:54]

CM: It's just like, oh my god. I always say it's like you tricked your own conscience and when you trick your own conscience, you're tricking the inner memory. I really believe that. I really believe that we are more than our biographies. That's who we come from, is the people, the capacity, to know that, however our traditions are. And so it's like my biography is kind of pitiful. You know what I'm saying? You're just one life and you know, it's kind of pitiful. But my god what could pass through me! You look at these young people and you think what could pass through you sisters, you're twenty-five, and what could pass by the time you're eighty-five. How you could walk in this world and you could make a difference. So I don't really know about those big things, all I know is watching those changes in people, and seeing over the years how it did matter. We're all about to say we've been teaching all those years.

LEC: But that triggered something with me, because when that is happening, you do that exercise and they are remembering. They may be twenty-five, they may be twenty, they may be forty-five. But there's something going on that's really connecting them to each other, unknowingly. Now I think it's that thing that brings the similarities, even if it's colonization of their parents and grandparents, yeah, that can help us as a people of color understand and create that thing we're calling solidarity. So you see it as small and you say, I don't know about these things but that leads to that other thing that solidarity—

CTM: It's a practice that can engender solidarity.

LEC: Definitely.

CM: But also I think the point you're making, too, is it can't happen when you do it alone.

CTM: No, it can't.

LEC: Absolutely.

CM: As a writer you can cultivate that eventually, but initially it has to have…those things happen because everybody's in the same room.

LEC: And so I'm saying on the larger level it's community.

CM: Exactly.

CTM: Yeah.

LEC: That's what it triggered for me. That's what happened. So the part about looking back, we have some questions and we kind of look and see what we have dealt with and so kind of a quick look back, as you've been doing, and looking forward at the same time…and especially now, Cherrie, especially with this nation-state and what's going on, what do you see as…what do you envision for women in this society—women of color, women in general, what is feminism, where is it going, what's the hope? This is the hope part that I had started to…much earlier. What's the vision?

CTM: What do we need to do to take back freedom? To bring it about.

LEC: This is not the question for you as an individual but for us. What's the imaginary? The way forward…

CM: You know one of the things that I…I guess what I realize about this, the way things kind of broke down, kinds of voting patterns, how those things broke down, some things I was reminded of, about how white women, it's still single-issue feminism. That's why they couldn't look at Hillary as a model. They wouldn't vote for Bernie because she's a woman. Some feminists I very much respect, they still say I'll take her over Bernie.

CTM: Which is weird.

CM: And I would say that's a limitation of your feminism. So that was important to see again. I'm always going for what's wrong in order to get the—but the other thing—this is really weird, because we're talking about popular culture—not too long ago I saw the whole documentary of the OJ trials. There's the film but I never saw the documentary and it was amazing to me because it—did you guys see it?

CTM: It's that the one on Netflix?

CM: I don't—maybe. It's like many, many, many—

CTM: Yeah, it's like eight episodes. But it's not OJ, it's actors.

CM: No, no, no. There's a drama, which was a serial. That was Cuba Gooding and all that. But this one is actually a documentary that goes along with it. The thing that was really interesting to me about it and things I hadn't thought about, about how OJ was basically used. He's this young football player. I lived right where his projects were, where he grew up; I lived right next door to that.

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So they talk about his history and they mention his father being homosexual and all these things I didn't know, right, but basically we're seeing this construction of the great Black cult really, kind of thing, during the time where there's the Black Panther Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, everywhere you see that. And I found it fascinating to put all of this in historical context. But what really upset me was by the end of it, they're having the trial of course then the gets off, right, it's that you have these images of Black women, not only Black women in the jury but also Black women rallying in the streets protesting, hoping for him to get free and they're just like—this incredible sense of, finally! And of course what the video shows, too, what the documentary shows is these images of this white woman who's just been completely torn up like that. I thought, my god our feminism has failed! That Women of Colour feminism has failed. That somehow we still just look at things you know like that—for those white women, women eclipse everything and for the Black women race eclipses everything, and we had gotten nowhere. And I know that was in the past but it crystallized something to me so, so well because the vehemence with which they wanted him to get free was *so*, it was like…

CTM: It was visceral.

CM: It was visceral. Well, so is slavery! So is—but your head says all that but you're going and you get in and you say, so that feminism has never gotten to those women. We failed. You know what I'm saying? We failed. There's something wrong in that picture if that can still happen. So the Black Lives Matter Movement is a moat in that regard, right, because these sisters who started it, it keeps getting kind of inserted—the woman thing. It keeps getting inserted, and inserted, and inserted, sometimes in quite subtle ways, right? And I think, interesting, so…I think about what some of the young women were saying the other day, so in fact, I think Women of Color feminism has impacted, because this movement acts a little bit different. So, I think that's kind of all I'm seeing

CTM: And the Black Youth Project. BYP100 There's a whole bunch of these organizations, which are actually feminist and queer.

CM: Yes, yes, but the thing about the Black Lives Matter Movement, which is interesting to me, is also because of the demonstrations, right, they aren't all middle class people, they are working people. They're just plebe, just the people. That's why the Undocumented movement gives me hope because it is just the college students but they are also—those sanctions, I learned years ago when Flor Crisóstomo was in the church in Chicago doing a sanctuary in Chicago is, like, you know this sister is like Zapotec-Indigena, working woman. I remember what she was saying during an interview, she goes I'm not a feminist *but* and what comes out of the sister's mouth is

stone feminism and women of color feminism, indigenous women feminism, right, and *that's*, when I see those kids that's what I'm hopeful. Because as long as we keep being separated—if our movements can't reach across, then—so the hope, I think anytime…for this period of time right now, which is horrific, but I think that people have to re-remember that they are workers.

LEC: Oh yea.

CM: And if they don't remember they're workers and that have common cause with other workers, which is what this country has succeeded in—talking about forgetting.

LEC: Prevented them from remembering.

CM: Prevented them with remembering, right. Then it's hopeless because that's where the vast majority of people are. How do we have change unless you recognize that you and I have common cause because we've got the same job.

LEC: Yeah, absolutely. And that's what where the state, too, is very successful because it never deals with class. All the political discourse and you know, campaigns and "The middle class, the middle class!". So everybody is middle class in their head.

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CM: It's like the more debt you have the more middle class you are.

LEC: There is no knowledge of class.

CM: Yeah, and you also have watched over the years like, when we graduated from college it was like, oh I could go and…I didn't have to work 9 to 5. I could try to figure out what I needed to do now, and these kids don't have that because they've already graduated with so much debt. What a perfect way—

CTM: Way to keep people domesticated.

CM: Ahan.

LEC: And from remembering anything that could connect them to each other.

CM: So they're worrying about—we never worried about health insurance and we were healthy. Now it's like I have to have health insurance. I have to pay my debt. All this kind of stuff and that's so conventional. So you count on young people. In that time, in our coming of age everybody was like, no, what do we need to *do* for our people?

LEC: Now they're preoccupied. Their survival depends on those things.

CM: Successfully.

CTM: And then you still have the incredible insurgent movements all over the world of young people, in universities and—some of it, to me, is also that old question: what is it that one doesn't see? And you don't see certain things because the world around you, the access you have is not to those movements happening in all these places, so unless you look at the Indian alternative websites you don't know that Indian students are revolting in huge ways against a whole bunch of fascist policing, violence, et cetera. But if you saw that and you were able to connect it to BLM stuff happening here, to anti-Trump stuff happening here, your imagination becomes broader, wider. It becomes possible to see connections, to remember.

LEC: But I think that I agree on a certain level with that, but what I think is missing and it's not missing in the global South—south as in Mexico—it's really missing in the North per se—here, these people—is the sense of class. People don't have an awareness of class, and because of northern hegemony that becomes widespread. So when they try to interact with people in the south like with feminists here and Indian feminists there's something that's blocking them and it's a knowledge that they here may have been conditioned not to think. And the failure to remember. This is what is. It is an understanding of class that is missing because we would *know* what connects us, we would know who the abuser is, we would know who the exploiter is. So you're coming out of college and all you have to look forward to is debt. Paying your debt. Something is wrong with that. You're coming from the wealthiest country in the world and you couldn't get free education. Think about it.

CM: Yeah, that's all strategic.

LEC: It's organized, it's structured. That's what—you know, I find hope and I find not despair but a kind of, ah the struggle is so long, so much more to be done. That's what you find yourself in. So you feel like you've got to get moving, got to get—

CTM: Long haul.

LEC: Long haul. And so you want your students to get it because then they can see how they connect.

CM: Sometimes I see them look at me so…

LEC: Overwhelmed.

CM: They just look at me like, can you stop now? Really I mean because they have no energy. Some of the things you mention – I think it's also that ironically, students are – do not have public education but we think we're exceptional, the United States is exceptional, so there's not an interest in looking out. Everybody's looking at us, at

the United States but – they're protesting Trump. Do we protest anybody from another nation state, we're protesting their people over there?

CTM: Right.

LEC: How we connect Trump to Modi.

CM: Exactly.

CTM: So unless you pay attention, you don't, right? And who can pay attention? Only people have access to certain kinds of knowledges and who read certain newspapers, who know people. If our communities, actually, were more multilayered, we would find ourselves knowing more, learning more.

[01:00:01]

CM: But the thing is – in my head sometimes I think I'm thinking two thoughts at the same time. I don't know if it's paradox or whatever, is that most people, we wake up in the morning, we live our lives with a set of needs. Your family, the economic struggles you have, your sense of your purpose in your life, if you believe in god or how you believe in god. All these things structure the vast majority of peoples lives. We're not special. We've constructed this life and this is the life we've constructed. There's a certain way in which I feel like, so those needs—and so we're talking about the worker—when those needs are provided for when you have an identity as a worker, and you feel like you have some voice in that, and suddenly there's a culture in which it says there's a specific sense as a woman worker, and these kinds of things, right? And so it actually begins to impact your daily life. *That's* how it matters, and that to me is the most frustrating thing in my mind, because I think about, if we're looking at what happened to Trump, because the daily needs of people are not being recognized and this is what happens, you get that, right? The democrats are just as to blame as anybody else, there's some of that. But I think that there's something that we need to do as – I have some trouble with words sometimes with this, but as thinkers, as public thinkers, that wee have to keep remembering that, that we cannot prescribe for anybody about what is liberation. That we need for them—*we* need for them, and that means I need them—by saying that I mean I need them to be able to feel like they have power in their lives. So how is that going to happen? And so I feel like anyway whenever we are dealing across class that we need to really, really—I think sometimes it's just so much when we have our education that we imagine that we know more. And yes we know more things, we know things and we have analysis and we have all that but—

CTM: But we may not know what we need to know.

CM: Exactly, exactly! That's what I'm saying and it's like, they know. So there is a curious—I love what Margo said about really deep listening. I have to just say for myself I feel all the time I'm so stupid sometimes because I imagine I know things. That's not to, in any way go, oh I don't know anything, it's just saying I know these things because of the virtue of the road I walked and everybody's got their road. So how then, if we're trying to walk together, then how do we have to be different? Because we need them. This is a beautiful moment. I'm going to go home high as anything, right. And I need that and I can continue to work because I spent time here with the two of you in this moment, sisters doing this work, right, behind the cameras, you know. So that's good, I'm glad and I come back ok, with all that richness then how on a daily basis, what are missing? What are we missing? What do I need to learn that I don't know—to be *useful*.

CTM: See that's a fabulous place to stop, because that is a really profound question for everybody. Sometimes it's the question that gets people on a journey—

LEC: Of coming to know what we don't know about ourselves and each other.

CTM: So thank you, very much. This was amazing.

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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.