



Feminist Freedom Warriors

Preview

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Chandra Talpade Mohanty: What we have in common is being women of color from the Global South who were immigrants in this country and who grew up within an academy, right, and within feminist narratives that were not necessarily our own. So, we had to find them. We had to find the genealogies that then we needed to claim. So, we had to both find them and claim them. And so this project—the video archive project—is a way to make those multiple genealogies available.

Linda Carty: And to concretize them on something tangible, so they become like a teaching tool, a usable tool...

CTM: Right, an organizing space. You know, where people learn about the lives of some of these incredible women that we are talking with.

LC: And you know what I find interesting Chandra is that we have known this for a long time, right? We have known so many of them personally as friends, but you never recognize until, not just this moment and this kind of coming together, like hearing them in these interviews—wow this is what has sustained us. Knowing each other and going through these struggles simultaneously even when we didn't know other were engaging in the same thing. Then you realize, wow this has to be done. This kind of work must be done because it is so important.

Gloria Joseph: People still think capitalism is democracy. You know, when you've got those kinds of thoughts and people don't even realize you know, someone has to be exploited for other people to make something. And you know, there can't be single issue politics. Single issue politics haven't gotten anywhere. So you've gotta approach from a multiplicity of angles.

Angela Y Davis: Today when people refer to intersectionality as if that category had already been around...it's been so completely naturalized...they don't take into consideration that much of the impetus for developing a framework that was capable

of addressing these issues together came directly from people, women especially, working on the ground, doing activism against war, activism within the labour movement, activism against, for example, sterilization abuse.

Linda Martin Alcoff: I think there's a lot of feminism in unions. And one of the things I've been saying as often as I can is that we have to rethink our understanding of where feminism is. 'Cause we think of feminism as a female only or female majority organization that's agitating around reproductive rights or specific gender related issues. The labor movement is full of feminists and it's full of feminist leadership.... unions have figured out, rather than going shop by shop they're trying to figure out other ways of organizing to challenge the ideology, to change the terms of debate and how optimistic people feel about the possibilities.

Donna Nevel: But that's all very critical in our work. Or like who will support which organizations? But that's part of the broader picture that again, we don't in isolation decide this is what we should do. We do it as part of interacting with a movement. Like how do we make sure all voices are valued and respected? And again, who's deciding that? That shouldn't be taking place separately in a room. It should be part of—and that's one of the questions I always ask about, from square one, how does something get started?

Amina Mama: I mean why do we make organizations? We make them to do more than what we ourselves can do as individuals. So I think it's only collective action that really can make change, one. And in terms of what we've been able to do, I think we have always confronted one particular major challenge that comes from living in an unjust and unequal system. Our movements have those challenges within them because we people are formed in those environments. So within movements is where we have to change ourselves as well as achieve things for women.

Minnie Bruce Pratt: The real struggle is for consciousness, but as that is given to us in the material moment. How to claim it and hold onto it with each other.

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Now I think that, that a new kind of family is only going to come about as part of an anti-capitalist struggle, and only then will it really truly be you know... love makes a family, family's a choice, because everything that is weighted down on the family now, that is forced upon the family's survival, the buffer against utter destitution, that would be lifted from the family. And it would be a whole different life for women.

Zillah Eisenstein: And then also, what is the responsibility of white women within the different women's movements—because we don't have a unified one—what really is our role in trying to negotiate an honest coalition, that for me, asks more than

for me to be an ally, you know, for me to be an active participant in the struggle, you know?

Aida Castillo Hernandez: And I feel the other challenge now is that I feel that with many of these de-colonial critiques to ourselves as intellectuals, one issue is that my truth as a feminist of what is emancipation and what is justice is not necessarily what they imagine or what they want. So, to arrive to the space of encounter, open to a dialogue in which I am willing to de-stabilize my certainties is not as powerful as arriving with the truth. It's a lot easier to get there with the truth than to get there and say well, I just want to see what can we build.

Angela Robertson: I think there is a need for more work in that place called the academy and the community. And maybe even challenging that divide, in saying that we shouldn't have that divide, where you have feminist scholarship and poor women and they're just separate entities.

Beverly Guy-Sheftall: I would say that it is possible to even be a radical feminist of color and have very little contact with the grassroots women. And I think that that's really bothersome... the lack of access to resources, inability to just make certain kinds of choices and I'm not now talking about necessarily even women in let's say even public housing. I mean I even think about women who have huge amount of debt from college and graduate school in a adjunct professor position.

Himani Bannerji: And I think now if we could bring them back together...open up the boundaries of class, you know my own childhood's dilemma, that when you are doing class can you do experience of being a woman, can you do experience and also do class...obviously we had to socialize the concept of class but we all also have to materialize it, historicize the concept of culture. And this is easier said than done. Anyone can say it right now, here I am. But how do you do it? How do you create social movements that have a double edge like that?

Barbara Ransby: ...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'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. So, fighting that but also understanding that's not the sole locus of either my learning and my scholarship and certainly not my activism.

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Margo Okazawa-Rey: It seems to me that we really need to figure out the

relationship between the two, right. The separation and the togetherness...and you know something I really have come to recognize from all my travels and being in very different places is that there's no connection without freedom and there's no freedom without connection, right.

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Azza Basarudin: Going into the communities when we present our work on the CVE, for example, we meet so many young women who are starving for some sort of mentorship, not even just leadership, mentorship in terms of having a model of how do we go about this issue. We are feminists but how do we talk about feminism with people in our community?

Mara Viveros Vigoya: One of my hopes is to shift between the individualized center to another sort of relationship. It's very important. But at the same time when we are talking about this shift we need to conserve individuality and the freedom, the expansion of your individuality. There is a tension. Then my hope, my real hope is all the time to arrive to work in both directions. To allow...and it's not easy...it's very, very difficult.

Beverly Bain: Let's start looking at the things that haven't been done. Let's look at where we are right now. How far have we come? What have we lost? Let's look at the trajectory in terms of when we have lost things and when we haven't gotten them back.

CTM: And then this project for us is about in fact realizing that we have had within our networks of anti-racist, third world, feminist sisters, that there are a number of people who have in fact been doing knowledge production...radical knowledge production and organizing, within the academy and outside.

LC: Focusing on questions of justice, whether injustice is outside in the justice system or justice inside the academy. Like you said, all levels of equality, class in equality, the hierarchical structuring that put certain populations in a marginalized position...so that when we look at what's happening inside the academy we see parallel to what's happening in the larger society.

CTM: So, for young radical people, part of this project is about sort of creating an imaginative communal space, where people can actually be inspired by the lives of these women and the projects that many of us are involved in, which are not so easy to construct at this time and place.

LC: Or to access, because they can read about these women because they have read these women, they've read their work. But they have not had the opportunity to hear, see and understand their trajectory, you know that trajectory of struggle. So that they can come to appreciate that what they're engaged in...because young people, young

Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with
sisters-in-struggle

feminists now doing their own battles so it never goes away or...it's almost like
mutation so it's a different form.

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.