



**Gloria Wekker**

4/12/17

[00:00:00]

**CTM:** Welcome Gloria. Today is April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and we are in Syracuse University talking to our—

**LEC:** Sister-friend.

**CTM:** Sister-friend-comrade Gloria Wekker. So Gloria, maybe you could begin by telling us a little bit about what brought you to feminist work and actually feminist activism in particular?

**GW:** I think for me Black consciousness came before feminist consciousness, which is, in a Dutch context, very rare. Because I had been in the States for one year, I was a senior in high school in Normal, Illinois in 1968-69 and there I attended a lecture by Jesse Jackson and he was talking so vividly about Black America, that was doctor for white America, to cure white America. That blew me away, the lecture so I really got into what it meant to be Black, because I didn't have a clue before that. And then gradually during the years then the feminist movement started in the Netherlands in the course of the '70s, and I became a part of the feminist movement. I was a student at the time and at that time it was a time of great unemployment so everybody was studying ten or fourteen years which I also did which gave me a lot of time to think about things, to become active and the first thing that really gave me a boost was when a teacher in a social studies class asked four students in the class to write a book about for women returning to secondary education, to write a series of books on how society worked, and I was one of those four students that he asked and that was the first time I ever wrote something. I was twenty-seven at that time. That got me further into feminist—

**CTM:** What did you write about?

**GW:** We wrote a series of books each on, for instance labor, education, third world development and every time in every book we took a situation in the Netherlands and we analyzed that and compared it to a situation in the third world and we tried to draw general conclusions from that so it was very basic but very important because it also taught me that I could write, which was really nice. So...

**LEC:** And then that led you to? That's the Black consciousness part.

**GW:** Well, that led me to meeting other Black women in the feminist movement and then at a certain point we decided to do our own thing or to withdraw from the wide feminist movement.

**CTM:** Was this early '80s?

**GW:** This is late '70s, early '80s that we started to have enough of this racism that was sometimes explicit, very often implicit in the feminist movement, and very hard to discuss, very hard to come to terms with and the interesting thing that I find about the sequence of developments in the Netherlands is that intersectionality kind of offered a way out of for white feminists because they could think, "Well you know, yeah sure we have to engage with gender and with race and with class but these are kind of electives." You can choose what to engage with. So it felt to them as if it wasn't necessary to do that, and so to this day even though people in gender studies pay a lot of rhetorical attention to race they don't do it.

[00:05:17]

**CTM:** So that's interesting. So then intersectionality becomes the sort of method that you choose to use or don't choose to use. In other words it's not grounded in any kind of understanding of epistemology or theory of experience.

**LEC:** So if you do that, right, if they do intersectionality in that way, it takes care of race. "We've done it." But it doesn't have any foundation, it doesn't have any nothing—

**GW:** So that is why you also have to look very carefully even though people use that label, because it's such a buzzword, you want to be listed as intersectional. It doesn't mean anything!

**LEC:** You have to look and see what they have done.

**GW:** Yeah, you really have to look carefully.

**LEC:** So true. It's still happening and oftentimes, race is the missing piece.

**GW:** Miraculously.

*[Laughter]*

**CTM:** But it's interesting that you're talking also about the same moment that these questions come to the forefront as in the US as well probably in Britain too right? Late '70s, early '80s, which is really the serious critique of racism within women's movements. So it's happening in all these different spaces.

**LEC:** It happened in Canada too. Same thing.

**GW:** The parallels are really striking, and also for us in the Netherlands, like what was happening in the US and in the UK especially, that was a lifeline for us Black women in the Netherlands because you had all these little booklets about Black lesbians and what have you, and we were collecting those things and studying them and discussing amongst ourselves, and I think one of the things that's really striking about women of color feminism in the Netherlands is that *we*, as opposed to men of color, we developed a joint analysis that was fledging-ly intersectional but we got together with women from all over the world, like from Morocco, Turkey, Indonesia, Antilles, Suriname, and we were talking about, so what do we have in common with each other? Where are our positions different? So that was really—also by taking the example of what happened in the US and in the UK. So we felt really we were doing something real.

**CTM:** Was it, the organizing that you're talking about, was it under—what were the terms, what was the term used? Is it Black women organizing? Was it women of color?

**GW:** First it was Black women and then refugee women/migrant women didn't fully identify with the term Black, so then it became Black Migrant Refugee Women and that is the term still used. Black Migrant Refugee Women.

**LEC:** Because at the time in Britain it was Black women; that included so many others. So it was kind of an European thing, but then the breakaway became automatic. Like, inevitable.

**GW:** But you see less of that nowadays.

**LEC:** Oh, so much.

**GW:** It's something of my generation and a little later, a little after me, but I don't have the feeling that the youngest generation really—well, they haven't come forward with another term yet but that may happen. I'm looking forward to—we'll see what kind of analyses they develop. But the thing that really is a bit disconcerting is that the youngest generation are claiming intersectionality as if it is theirs, that they invented it, you know, kind of erasing all the work that we did.

**LEC:** History; that history.

**GW:** That's a bit worrisome, I find.

**CTM:** Yeah, but it's also interesting because it's very—it points to some sort of tensions, generationally, and, you know, so at what points do we have generational conversations around these things and at what point does it become...there's more distance among and between us? Because this came up with Cherríe, too, remember? Some of these same questions.

**GW:** Well in the Netherlands there are some people who are really active in organizing these intergenerational conversations, so they do take place regularly, and I find them very important to share knowledge back and forth.

[00:10:33]

**LEC:** What I find though is that race is becoming a stark demarcation point, almost. You know, differentiating between people and the kind of politics in the younger generations especially; in this country it's happening, and we had two students who had just come back from Europe and they were talking about what it's like in Britain that, you know, there's all these kinds of conversations about biracial and what biracial means and it's quite a nightmare that they will not accept African Americans because they are seen as Black, and knowing what Black means for them is about struggle whereas in Europe it's taking on a different kind of meaning, at least in Britain, they feel that that is not happening and so the racism is so overt that they want to really figure out a way...one of them was saying to us the Blacks in London were trying to really figure out a way of how to make others hear and see what they're saying; and pointing to what's happening in the US as good models. So I said, "The difference in this country is that they had a Civil Rights Movement. That's the *primary* difference. They had a civil rights movement so they know what they are fighting against but the state in these other places has it's own kind of disguise that you don't know. So what's happening is it's pitting one group against the other, so solidarity is something that people have to work at.

**CTM:** And then also if you think about Britain and all of the different conservative right wing interventions in breaking up people of color communities, right, and that's part of, I think, the narrative that we also have to understand is how the active splintering of solidarity around multiculturalism and resources.

**LEC:** It has certainly happened with South Asians and Black people in Britain.

**CTM:** Exactly. Completely.

**LEC:** Very stark.

**CTM:** Very stark. So tell us a little bit about your work in the last few decades and how you see it both in the context of Dutch as well as in a more transnational context of feminism.

**GW:** Yes. I have worked on sexuality. That has been the project that took me to the United States to do my PhD at UCLA. I spent about nineteen months during that period in Suriname. And I was born Suriname but I left there when I was one so this was really an incredibly beautiful time of my life when I could just live there and figure out what it was I wanted to know about this phenomenon called the Mati work, and I had come to that topic because at the time, let's say the late '70s, a lot of Surinamese people had migrated to the Netherlands. Suriname had become independent in 1975, and a lot of people didn't have any trust in the future and migrated to the Netherlands. There was a certain window of time when they could migrate and get Dutch nationality pretty easily.

**LEC:** A number of people from Curaçao and stuff, also Dutch colonies.

**GW:** In that group of people that arrived there were a lot of what later turned out to be Mati and I was really struck by the differences in how white lesbian circles organized themselves and how Mati did it. And I saw huge age differences between partners in Surinamese circles, like younger partner would be in her early 20s, the other partner in her 50s; the woman had children who were older than this partner. I—

**CTM:** Was intrigued.

**GW:** I was like, "Oh this is really interesting." Whereas in white lesbian circles equality along different lines was really deemed very important, so I really wanted to find out about this phenomenon that I saw in front of my eyes. Also at parties, at white lesbian parties there were only white women of the same age bracket. No men, no children, whereas at the Surinamese parties, everybody and their mother came. It was so strikingly different so, that's when I decided I wanted to study this phenomenon. Then I went to UCLA and from there to Suriname.

[00:15:52]

**GW:** And that took me a number of years to—I did my dissertation on it but I wasn't finished. I went deeper into it; I went back for different research periods. I went deeper historically and I also looked more at, so do we see the same phenomenon of women having erotic relationships with other women but also sometimes with men

simultaneously or consecutively, do we see it in other places in the Black diaspora and so on? So I started gathering material.

**CTM:** And do you?

**GW:** But certainly! Yeah, yeah, like Zami that Audre talks about, that is women who like to lie down with women on the islands of Grenada and Carriacou. So there are different words for it in different parts of the Caribbean. In Curaçao they are called Cambrada, Jamaica - Manroyale. So they're all over the place. It's not that they are invisible but Suriname for a variety of reasons shows the phenomena, like, unapologetically. It's there, it's in your face and it has to do with the particular situation demographically, like one white to every fifteen to twenty-five Blacks. These whites were really scared of the multitude of Black people and wanted to keep them far away from themselves. They should not speak Dutch, so they developed their own languages, their own cultural complexes and one of those complexes is the Mati work. So I'm saying that our ancestors took that with them from Africa and were able to elaborate on it, and so this was a kind of a—so this is in the '90s right? That is when I start writing this dissertation and my advisors at UCLA are saying [*whispers*] “What? Do you really want to write about this? You're not ever going to get a job. You better write about something else, there's so much material that you have, write about the economic side of things.” Because at the time sexuality is hardly talked about, not with regard to Black women, this is what Hortense Spillers remarks are: “Black women are the beached whales of the sexual universe; we don't know nothing about them.” So anyway, finally, finally, finally, I published *Politics of Passion* in 2006, which really took a long time but that was...yeah, it made—

**CTM:** A real impact.

**GW:** A real impact, yeah. And also because I got the Ruth Benedict prize in 2007 because it's a totally different look at the organization of sexuality, looking at it from a diasporic perspective. So it's the first book that talks about sexuality.

**LEC:** It's the only one that does Mati or Manroyale or whatever in the Caribbean. Like other people have written articles but it's the first that really brings this out about what the practice is because you're right, there are other phenomenon around those migration patterns and stuff that people talk about, like linguists for example have written on Papiamentu, like these retentions of African culture, so language is one, but nobody touches sexuality.

**GW:** Scary thing. Yeah.

**LEC:** Nobody touches sexuality. So that was like a pathbreaking kind of thing. Because two things. One: people can't deny its existence. They know it's there, they know it happens. And two: it's like a deconstruction of it. So that just blew people

away. There, Europe, everywhere, it's like 'Huh? What is this?'. Especially because of what you said yesterday right? How sexuality has been organized in capitalism and how LGBT has been organized, right? It's really an organized thing, so it's women of same age, men of same age, whatever.

**CTM:** Class. All these things.

[00:20:40]

**LEC:** Yeah. So in certain ways, in some ways it's a hard thing to say but it's kind of a replication of the patterns of heterosexuality except it's same sex. But Mati defies all that.

**GW:** Right. It goes through all these other constructions. Yeah so, I mean I had such fun writing it. It was such a pleasure. So here again you see how when you have a theoretical problem you want to grapple with it also always has a lot to do with yourself—what you want to know about yourself. I need to find out. I had a blast doing that work. That was really fun. Then, by that time, I was working at Utrecht and I was all the time thinking about what is this country I'm living in, the Netherlands. Because it had been a real struggle for me to decide after I did my PhD and I taught at Oberlin as the two of you also did—that's so funny, I find.

**LEC:** And we had talked about that—whether you wanted to stay in the US or go back. I remember that was the time you were torn. Big discussion, big thinking through.

**GW:** Yeah. Really, really big decision. What really was important, my family was in the Netherlands, who are very important to me. Maggie, my lover, who I had met in Suriname was in the Netherlands, and I also thought if I am needed anywhere it is in the Netherlands. I mean I will probably have an easier time being in the US because I will have more people to talk to and more community, but I really feel I need to go back to the Netherlands. That has been difficult. Really, really lonely existence. But anyway then my next big project became *White Innocence*; whiteness in the Netherlands. For the longest time I called it *Innocence Unlimited* but Duke University said that title isn't too clear, that doesn't bring out so much. For me it did but they suggested I call it *White Innocence* so I didn't have the time to write a whole book but I would lecture on it and give presentations, and so finally in the beginning of 2013 I had the time to gather all the different parts that I had already written or lectured on and then I could really take the time to think it through and to put an umbrella over all these different phenomenon that I'm looking at. So those two are major works that I have done. And they're also connected in different ways.

**CTM:** So...so...go ahead.

**LEC:** So tell us a little bit about some of the challenges you've encountered because yesterday, when we were talking, you said, this has not been easy. So some of the challenges you have encountered doing this work and how you have met those challenges, what you did?

**GW:** Yeah. You mean with regard both to the sexuality and to race? Oh where to start? [*Laughs*] So sexuality was a topic that was welcomed, to write about sexuality because there has been this wave within feminist studies to look at pleasure and danger from that time on that we see from the late '70s.

[00:25:00]

**GW:** I think that sexuality studies start to happen but not with regard to Black women. I think the only text that I can vividly recall is Angela's *Black*—you know the blues women who have sexuality—that text. That's a very welcome book. I liked that a lot. So I was grappling with how can I write about this woman who is my main informant. This older lady, who is eighty-four years old. I call her Ms. Juliette in the book. How can I write about her without kind of representing her as a present day Saartjie Baartman or some kind of erotic spectacle that people will look down upon? I do not want to repeat these patterns of representing sexual Black women as excessive and always already out there. So that was a real challenge, how to do that. I felt very strongly that one way of not doing that, of not objectifying her, was also to talk about my own sexuality so that I wouldn't be looking down on all these people that I talk with and representing them as, you know, so many spectacles to look at. So I also did intersectional analyses of how we were the same and how we were different. What has been really noticeable I find in the reception of that work in the Netherlands is people don't really think it through what it means to have a different organization of sexuality, to have a different cultural edifice. It is totally cultural what we think up of what sexuality is and should be, that it might have repercussions of how people in the West might think about their own sexuality. It is on the contrary something that is located there and far away and long ago, it's tradition. That has been really disappointing. I find the way of distancing themselves and the dominant organization of sexuality, homo- and bi-sexuality, could remain in place and be universal so that has been kind of disappointing. I have found that when I have been invited to the States I've come across scholars who engaged with the work much more and I was at Yale—I think it was in 2015 in February—there was a conference about queer anthropology, and there were younger Black anthropologists who spoke about my work and who said that their work wouldn't have been possible without mine. What's this guys name? He is now no longer at Yale, he has moved I think to Florida...



**LEC:** Jaffari?

**GW:** Jaffari. Oh my god he moved me to tears, it was so beautiful. Anyway, so I have found a difference, yes, in that respect, between the receptions in the Netherlands and in the US, and now I'm waiting to see what is happening with *White Innocence*, so I think that the topics that I pick out to engage with are so...other than what my colleagues engage with, that that has a certain...well it speaks to the importance of diversity, diversity of voices, that different people engage with different problematics and different epistemologies and methodologies.

[00:30:07]

**GW:** To the extent that you want to ask about so how has that been to work in Utrecht for 20 years, I find that I'm happy on the one hand to have worked in a gender and women studies department. If I think about working in an anthropology department I think it would've been infinitely more difficult. Mostly men would have been teaching, white men. So in a sense I'm very grateful that I found that job but still it was a very difficult and uphill battle.

**CTM:** Has the—what about the reception of *Politics of Passion* in Suriname, and in the Caribbean?

**GW:** Yes, well, it is very striking that we were just in Suriname from November to February, and I was invited to give a talk on *Politics of Passion*. So here is *White Innocence* sitting on a shelf; nobody's asking me about that. [Laughs] But they're asking me to talk about *Politics of Passion*, and it was a lecture at a museum and all these women came dressed up in their beautiful dresses, so I was so relieved to see those women because sometimes I think, "oh my god I think this thing is vanishing," yeah—the Mati work, because younger women call themselves tomboy and lesbian, even queer, and nobody says I do the Mati work anymore so then I'm afraid that it's going to vanish, but here are all these women who are still into the Mati work so that was really wonderful. So it's difficult to talk about sexuality there openly.

**LEC:** Any kind.

**GW:** Yeah. Any kind.

**CTM:** In the Caribbean in general.

**GW:** Do you remember—no, what's this—? I'm thinking once I think we were with CSA on Barbados. Do you remember? Then I gave a lecture and there were all these women and—

**LEC:** Oh yes. Wasn't it in Puerto Rico?

**GW:** Was it Puerto Rico? I don't know. Oh my god nobody saying anything, nobody is asking anything. They were saying to each other, "Well I think she must be married because she's wearing a ring." She's probably married, you know, to a guy.

**CTM:** Oh.

**GW:** Oh lord!

**LEC:** The querying about her sexuality. Not—

**CTM:** Not the material.

**LEC:** Don't want to deal with it—"let's try to figure her out." I remember that conference. The silence, I mean it was so striking.

**GW:** Really. I remember that Jacqui took on this whole room full of Caribbean men.  
[Laughs]

**LEC:** I thought they were going to lynch her.

[Laughter]

**CTM:** Yeah, I can see that.

**GW:** So it's not an easy thing to talk about in the Caribbean, but it needs to happen.

**CTM:** Yeah, and I think the whiteness material will be harder in Europe, than even here. It'll be much harder because Europeans will see themselves in it in a way that people here have done a lot of analysis around these questions.

**LEC:** Yeah, and have done a lot of work on some of these questions, behind the scenes work. That's what I was saying before. This country had a Civil Rights Movement. Race is on the table. But there, it still doesn't make sense.

**CTM:** Right. So it'll be interesting. So what do you—so, if you were to think about—because part of our interest is really thinking about sort of transnational feminist collaborations and solidarities and alliances around all kinds of different questions, right? So how would you kind of talk about what the opportunities are for those kinds of alliances, whether in activist or social movement spaces or in intellectual spaces or even the barriers or challenges or stereotypes or whatever exist. You know? In terms of building those bridges.

**LEC:** Even looking at the transnational in the Netherlands. What does that look like and considering white innocence?

[00:35:13]

**GW:** Right. Right. Well, when I look at the Netherlands, really what comes to mind immediately is this new political party that I have been supporting; it's called Article One after the first article of the Dutch constitution that everybody who is in the Netherlands should be treated equally. And in this party there are people from all walks of life from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, different religions, different sexualities, different genders and many of them have ties to elsewhere so the leader of the party is the first Black woman who started a political party in Europe. She has ties with Suriname as I do, others have ties with the Dutch Antilles, others with Turkey, with Morocco. I mean, with many different places so they are connected. It's like a network that connects people who are mainly living in the Netherlands but who are connected to organizations in other parts of the world, also in the Middle East very prominently. So this is such an important movement to be a part of because it is so different from all the other political parties who have a very, very narrow view of what reality looks like and what we should be addressing. So in everything that we do we also think about, so what does this mean for women in Egypt or women elsewhere? So that's very good. I personally also have ties with women in Suriname, with women's movements. Sometimes I find it difficult to be there, because for instance after Trump was installed—that was January, right—so there were women's marches everywhere in the whole world. So I'm trying to find out so where is the march going to take place—

**LEC:** Not exactly. There weren't in the Caribbean.

**CTM:** They weren't in the Caribbean?

**LEC:** There were not.

**GW:** There were not. I don't know why not.

**LEC:** They clearly don't care. When the US considers the Caribbean its backyard. Them don't care. I know exactly what you feel.

**GW:** I felt so out of it because I want to organize this march on my own, but you know. So the end of the matter was there was one white man from Canada who was marching on his own. If I had known that I would've joined him, against Trump.

**CTM:** Interesting. Really interesting

**LEC:** Wasn't happening. And there were marches in Canada, with very few Black people.

**CTM:** I wonder what that it.

**GW:** So that mindset is kind of mind boggling. Why do you think it doesn't have anything to do with you?

**LEC:** I think part of it is fear. Fear of these little countries' relationship with this US and somehow thinking that they don't want to be impacted negatively. How much more negatively can you be impacted? And don't want to make statements that you know, kind of statements about the US, blatant coercive things about the US. It's historical racism and treatment of the region. You know, like IMF, those countries, the relationship with the IMF. The fact that the United States across administrations, including Obama, has looked at them as little drug holes and accused them of all kind of—that's *why* you should be out there. We also thought it would happen in Jamaica, if any place.

**GW:** So this is also why to me *White Innocence* really has a lot to say for the Caribbean, too, because the deep colonial work that we need to do there is massive.

**LEC:** Srious.

**GW:** Serious work.

**LEC:** Because there's a serious internalization of colonialism that—feminism has failed. It hasn't looked at those questions. Just been a kind of replica of white feminism here. Well, kind of client-ist feminism, too. So they're on these gravy trains of accepting the money from the NGOs and the agencies and that's what they do. If you go in the streets and you talk to women, which I do, they don't know about these women doing that work. Academic feminists, they know of people they work with in their communities and some of those women like us going and visiting maybe from overseas way off the Caribbean but they don't have that in their movements there.

[00:40:44]

**GW:** And then, I also find—this is not exactly answering the question about transnationalism—but I do find that this needs to be considered. I do not always feel welcomed by Surinamese feminists, or academics in general. Like, I've been there three months, I would—

**LEC:** I'm so glad to hear you say that.

**CTM:** Because you've had the same experience.

**LEC:** And you feel like you're alone.

**GW:** Like, my god, I'm here for three months, *please* let me come and talk to you! Nobody invites me.

**CTM:** And why is that?

**GW:** Because I'm too radical. Because I'm not only going to talk about the West what's wrong over there but also about what's wrong here.

**LEC:** Not welcome.

**GW:** So that is what makes it kind of difficult to envision transnational ties.

**CTM:** But that's interesting. That suggests to me that then, in some ways, many of us have to think about transnational ties and solidarities that don't necessarily have to do with our home spaces.

**LEC:** "With home." Across—we have to think across nation states.

**CTM:** Because sometimes those don't work and sometimes, in fact, those home spaces that are unavailable to many of us. So.

**LEC:** But I feel this. I feel this so clearly and closely with what you're saying. It's just not welcome. And the kind of feminism that's happening, it excludes you, because you're critiquing *it*.

**CTM:** So that's on the one hand, and then on the other hand you are always positioned as an outsider, no matter what.

**LEC:** You never become the outsider-within, no matter what. I remember in the '80s raising this issue in Jamaica, and it was a struggle about what to call the women and gender studies program they were developing; and the fight was gender studies or women studies. And they invited me because I was there doing my research, my PhD research and I go and I said, "Well you know, it's women, the issue is really about women because at that time we were talking about it's really about women. Who is marginalized in society? Who is patriarchy affecting more? *All* the reasons. And then a sister told me, "Yes, you're from Canada so you come with your feminist baseball bat. We have to talk to our men here; so, we have to work with them. That's why I'm putting forward gender studies." That time. And that's what they called it. They were not going to do women's studies because it's too alienating, and people even said things like, "We don't want to not be able to get support and funding," so the clientism was there.

**GW:** Too radical.

**CTM:** This is so interesting, so gender studies because—

**LEC:** At that time

**CTM:** At that time, yeah.

**LEC:** Gender studies meant including men.

**CTM:** Because it includes men.

**LEC:** What gender studies means now is completely different.

**CTM:** Now it's completely different, because now it's gone in a direction where sometimes you want to hold onto women's studies, right, because it becomes too much about—

**GW:** Men.

**CTM:** Not about women!

**LEC:** Not about women.

**CTM:** So even acknowledging fluidity of gender and the kind of interventions around sexuality and identity and trans\* etc.—

**LEC:** Can be exclusionary. It can be exclusionary to women. But *then* it was women's studies, so using gender studies was about including men. Me, I shut up and listened to the rest of the discussion. You don't fight those battles.

**GW:** So interesting.

**CTM:** So where are we Linda? I think we're on our last question.

[00:45:03]

**LEC:** Yeah because you covered most of the stuff.

**GW:** But can I add one thing because what I see also, myself as a red thread through my adult life is that I have been an activist as a civil servant; after I did my MA in anthropology I started to work as a public servant for the ministry of welfare, health and culture later for the city of Amsterdam. I was active in feminism with Sister Outsider but also active outside of my work with organizing civil servants of color, that we would have time in our working hours to gather and to talk about our situation as civil servants of color and what we could do to improve our situation. So I've done that, which has been really important to me, and one aspect of that that also pains me a lot, and I don't know whether that's the case here, but I realized so vividly that a lot of the women that I was companions with in the early '80s, from the early '80s on, so many of them have died. I have so many friends who haven't survived. I wonder why *I* have. It's really striking and I don't know of any research about that—whether Black women succumb in greater numbers than white women? But it's really a sad fact that also makes life so lonely yeah?

**LEC:** Well there's work here but Black women in the academy – how they die. There are people doing that work right now. Like, what does it—it costs Black women so much, in the academy they—and there are people who have looked and said, across women of color Black women just die in the academy, like it kills them. So it's a scary thing to think about. A group of us, the other day, were talking about all the people we know in the academy, US Black women who have died, and after a while we just said, “No, no let's not talk about it any more.”

**GW:** “Let's leave it.”

**LEC:** The list was feeling so long.

**GW:** Yeah.

**CTM:** Yeah, that's true.

**GW:** Very practically also, like right now when I'm being asked by everybody and their mother, to come and talk to them, whether it's academic circles/classes or rotary women in the Hague, I mean, protestant church wants to have me to help them think about *White Innocence*. I really have to choose where I go because it's costing me. It costs me a lot of energy to talk to these white audiences about their white innocence. So I cannot afford to do that because they're eating me alive. This is what it entails, what the cost is.

**LEC:** Because you become the educator for their historical actions of erasure.

**CTM:** You should just say read my book. “Have you ever read my book? Why don't you read my book and have your own study group? That is actually a much more useful thing to do than to have me come and speak to you, because I've spoken in my book.”

[*Laughter*]

**GW:** Really. I've said it. I've said what I had to say, now *you*.

**CTM:** Because that's not...

**LEC:** “If you really want to know what I think about you, look in the book

**CTM:** Read the book.

[*Laughter*]

**LEC:** “Because I may not have enough time to tell you here. Read the book. Read the book and see if you really want to invite me.”

**CTM:** Because part of—you know but part of those invitations are also a part of the white innocence.

**GW:** White innocence! They don't have to do the work.

**CTM:** They don't to do the work but also then they can claim that they've had the conversation with you, which means they've done the work. So not only do they not have to do it, they've done it already because you came.

**LEC:** And they invite you because they didn't know. They didn't know about it. So, now they're prepared to *know* and the knowing involves the work, the work inviting you.

**CTM:** Of inviting you! So you do the work then.

**GW:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. [*Laughs*]

[00:50:00]

**CTM:** I think it's amazing.

**LEC:** No responsibility for their knowing—what they know and how they act out their knowing. They take no responsibility.

**GW:** No, no, no, no, no. Yeah.

**CTM:** But that's one of the difficulties in your situation where you really are alone in so many ways. If you—I mean I don't see it here—

**LEC:** Because you become the voice of white innocence. It's a burden.

**CTM:** Yeah, it really—because we have at least these people here, there are communities here. We have comrades and sisters.

**GW:** So you can say if you don't want to go then you can ask somebody else.

**CTM:** Or I can say invite three of us to come at the same time so that we can then intervene in what's going on. Not just one person who you can then tokenize or colonize in a very particular way.

**LEC:** Or you can use it as a form of exorcism. Just go and cuss them out, without investing too much energy or anything just call them out. "Why did you invite me? Okay, you haven't read the book. This is what it's about—your everyday actions in living. *Can we talk about that?*"

**CTM:** That's too much work.

**LEC:** No, that's getting it out of her system on them.

**CTM:** You mean instead of therapy? Go to that.



**LEC:** Yeah. Yeah, get it out of your system on them. Because it's all this silence and this constricting environment that they have put out there that pushed you into doing this book. It's like, "How the hell can y'all be so racist and not see it? Let me tell you." So you've done it. You've done that work. Now they want to call you so you can tell them more again. Tell them what you really want to say. Exorcism.

**CTM:** Right, exorcism. So final question—what do we want to ask her finally?

**LEC:** Okay so considering all this, no, and what your experiences have been, your experiential knowledge is incredible, across these borders and stuff, but your experience across the Netherlands, for example—for me it's like seeing it as white Europe, it's more than the Netherlands—what do you see as the future of your work? How would you envision a future and your contribution to that? And this is not a narcissistic question; it's about the environment.

**CTM:** And what changes do you want to see? What's your vision of—so if your work had the impact that you want it to have, right, how would you envision?

**LEC:** What would that look like?

**CTM:** What would it look like?

**GW:** Well what I would like?

**LEC:** Besides you being the Prime Minister.

[*Laughter*]

**CTM:** Yeah, besides the party...that party winning.

**GW:** No, no, no, I'm not going into politics. Never ever ever. No, no, no. I still have a lot of books to write. I really need at least three books to get out.

**CTM:** Okay.

**LEC:** You already have enough information to write them.

**GW:** So what I would like is that this *White Innocence* would be taken up in a lot of European countries and that people there will study what does white innocence look like in Sweden and in Portugal and in Italy, and all over the place. Everybody and their mother has had colonies, yeah? So—

**LEC:** You made me think so much about Diana.

**CTM:** Yeah, I know. Yeah, you know Diana.

**GW:** Yeah, yeah, yeah yeah. So that even if some European nations haven't had colonies they were part of that same ethos of being superior and full of entitlement

and the rest of the world would have to look up to them, so I would like to see something like that happening. And I...sometimes hear people in history for instance, historians have really surprisingly engaged with the work and want to refine what this content of the cultural archive is in different time periods. People want to start working on that. Kind of make it a program to look at the Netherlands from that point of view. I'm kind of done. I really feel that this is it. You go and run with it. I think one of the important things I did in the Netherlands is introduce the concept of intersectionality, kind of translated it to the Netherlands and why we need to do it. I see some of that blossoming that some younger feminists are taking that up. I kind of in my own thinking have always said to myself I am walking way in front of the music, I am not going to get the recognition that might be due, I'm not going to get it in my lifetime but I hope that future generations will make use of my work.

**LEC:** Yeah and the work usually outlives you.

**CTM:** Yeah. Wonderful.

**LEC:** So that's the hope, that's great.

**CTM:** Good place to end. Thank you.

**GW:** Thank you.

**LEC:** Thank you, this was beautiful. Thank you.

**CTM:** Thanks.

[00:56:44]

\*\*\*

*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.*