

## Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*



## Feminist Freedom Warriors 2016 NWSA Panel

11/13/16

00:00:00

**LEC:** My name is Linda Carty and I teach at Syracuse University, which is where this project started. We'll tell you a bit about how we got started and what our plans are for today and how we would like you to be involved. In the end we will have an open discussion. So the project started out of another project that we have with Syracuse University called Democratizing Knowledge and Democratizing Knowledge is a project that Chandra and I and two other faculty members cofounded at Syracuse University to challenge the notion that there are mainstream and marginal knowledges. And our intent was to force the so called marginal knowledges to the center to challenge what we consider mainstream. At that time in 2009 when it started we had a very visionary chancellor at the University, Nancy Cantor, who was very supportive of this kind of inclusive work and gave a competitive seed funding to different kinds of projects. It was competitive and we put a proposal together and that proposal got selected. So the Democratizing Knowledge project started and we had - we invited many speakers to come to SU all looking at the framework of the university as public good. And how useful it ought to be in society and how to make the community part of the university and the university part of the community so that we don't have the town and down and hill and bottom people and the university- Syracuse University is on a hill so we talk about the hill and the rest. In doing that work and bringing speakers to SU, we started thinking about how to make this kind of work more, you know, broader. To make it more accessible. And so we - some of the speakers that we brought in were H.L. Quan from Arizona State University and Crystal Griffin, both filmmakers. Many of you may have known-may have seen some of their films and are familiar with their work. And we brought them to conduct a film methodological kind of workshop. To teach a video workshop. To teach us how

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

to make video documentaries cheaply. You know, like we could do this and do it on an iPhone and so on. Out of that project - out of that workshop they asked us to submit proposals that they could make a real scene for us over the weekend. It was the weekend?

**CTM:** Mhm.

**LEC:** Over the weekend that they were teaching us this. And Chandra and I put together this proposal that we had been thinking about because we've known each other for over twenty-five years and have been working together at different times and different places and doing a great deal of activist work that we thought we should make this gel, bring it together in a way that some of the people that we had been working with we can get them on a digital archive - feminist archive. That we would make accessible to particularly people in the global south for whom books are very expensive. Who we know as colleagues who teach in different institutions and don't have access to the material that we have here and so, so much of this can be used in that way. It was a great experience and the thing came together in amazing ways and really quickly, much quicker than we expected. And then we started putting it out. So we - this is an unfunded project. It's really important to say this. We have absolutely no funding. We have been traveling many places where we know some of the participants in the project and having them - we have discussions with them on video and we're going to show you a twelve minute clip. We're fortunate enough to have five of the participants here. We launched the project two, three weeks ago. Two, three weeks ago. And the website is feminist freedom - feminist freedom warriors.org. And so the first batch we launched three weeks ago and it's ongoing. As we do them we'll add more to them. And so members so far of the ones that we have launched are here: Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Angela Davis, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain from Canada. They're from all over the world. These sisters are from all over the world and-

**CM :** Barbara Ransby will be late

**LEC:** Barbara Ransby who will be late. She's here but she will be joining us later. So after we show the film then Taveeshi Singh who has been with us from the beginning of the project, is a research assistant on it, she will tell you what the experience has been like for her because the project is very inclusive and then Chandra will wrap up for you. So the video clip is twelve minutes and it's essentially the project in total -

00:05:06

**TS:** Thirteen and a half.

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**LEC:** Thirteen and a half minutes and so you will see-

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**CTM:** Just in case you all feel after twelve minutes you should get up and leave, you can't do that. Yeah.

**LEC:** So it's thirteen and a half so you have to wait for the extra minute and a half.

**CTM:** Yes.

**LEC:** And then - then we will have an open discussion when our sisters join us here.

**TS:** We just need the lights.

**CTM:** Yeah.

**CTM:** 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.

**LC:** 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.

**LEC:** 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.

**GJ:** 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.

**AYD:** 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

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

ground, doing activism against war, activism within the labour movement, activism against, for example, sterilization abuse.

**LMA:** 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.

**DN:** 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?

**AM:** 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.

00:10:18

**MBP:** 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... 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.

**ZE:** 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?

### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**ACH:** 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.

**AR:** 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.

**BGS:** 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.

**HB:** 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?

**BR:** ...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.

00:15:09

**MOR:** 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,

### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

right.

**AB:** 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?

**MVV:** 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.

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

**Audience:** [Applause]

**CTM:** So what we wanna do is have Taveeshi, who's been an extraordinary collaborator on this project talk a little bit about her experience working. Yeah and Taveeshi and Kim Powell who did a lot of work with us, who then graduated and

### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

moved on – did the filming, the editing, a whole bunch of different things so I wanted her to talk and then I'll say a couple of words and then I'll invite people to come up. Okay. Thanks.

00:20:00

**TS:** So I'm just going to read out a few thoughts I jotted down because I'm most careful with my words when I'm reading them. I have worked on this project in various capacities and I have traveled in and across many contexts before I did so. Recently from India to the US and back and forth. Across fields of study, from a positivist model of psychology where gender along with other axes of discrimination is just a variable. To a critical model of development where gender is just a chapter. To this project and my work now where women's experiences are not just centered in the framework of a "study", rather they're narratives are the bedrock of knowing, understanding, organizing, teaching and building community. So Feminist Freedom Warriors has been hugely influential in my own work. During the course of this project, this ongoing project I shifted my dissertation project and I don't just mean the topic but the larger project, my ways of knowing. The ethic I bring to my work and the politics underlying my work. So it's been an education in many ways. Every woman in here has amazing stories of struggle and hope to share. There's so much to learn from them. As a student, it has been incredible to witness the texts we read come to life through these conversations. To see in real time how genealogies work to personalize and humanize theory. To learn about multiple entries to multiple feminisms. There is much I could say about what the project means to me but I'll pull out a few things. So some of the most meaningful things I have drawn from Feminist Freedom Warriors are the significance of listening over and over from behind the camera to watching it onscreen and how narratives travel and that listening in a conversation is a co-constituted process. The significance of witnessing in the shaping of particular kinds of consciousness. History relayed, relationships in action, connections being forged and revisited. The power of the imagination in envisioning a different, more just future. In changing the status quo. This is of particular significance in the present moment when we must look to the people who have been part of anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist movement for strategies and strength. And finally those dissident young women who grew up without strong role models benefit hugely from feminist scholar activists' commitment to an ethic of mentorship in the every day. And this ethic in turn can strengthen and carry forward social movements for justice.

**Audience:** [Applause]

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**CTM:** Thank you Taveeshi. I don't have too much to say because you heard me talk in there about what our hopes are for this project. And it's really a project, I think, that intends to project a sense of collective struggle. So while these are individual stories and narratives of people who are involved in particular projects in different spaces, what we really want is for people to get a sense that there are all of these connected pathways to thinking radically and acting politically and in deeply radical ways. So its about sort of creating a space where these multiple narratives coexist and where people can both see these connections and the specific place based differences and identity cultural genealogies that people bring. So that's one. And we really, and honestly it's been such a pleasure to do this for Linda and me. It has sustained us. That's the other thing I was going to say. So I think that the pleasure is about also for me sort of this deeply collaborative work that has been so much what this project is. So initially with Linda but now with Taveeshi, with Kim who's not working with us anymore and with some younger feminists who are, you know, working with us on various things behind, the camera, et cetera. And you know the only way we can do this is if we have graduate students working with us right? I mean, that's really how we've sustained it. -Inaudible- devoted and committed.

00:25:21

**LEC:** And one of the things about the project is that we've been learning as we go along. There's so much that the experience has taught us. One of the real crucial things about doing this kind of work - it teaches you the significance of building critical mass in the academy. It's - Chandra came to SU a couple of years after I got there and you feel in some environments as if you, in the academy, and I know many of you have experienced this, as if you're in some kind of wasteland. Where you're working individually all by yourself because that's how it is and that's what it fosters. You know, like in training for PhD we work in isolation and then at the end they dump you all together in the department and say get along. And it's not possible because of so many differences right? And the stark competitive environment. So you have to find people that you can work with to make your imaginaries come to life. To make those kinds of things that you imagine as possible and the kind of change that you want to see in your institution make it happen by your work that you do and that is a challenge on so many levels because you have to, like we said we had a very visionary chancellor who supported this initially and once we got Democratizing Knowledge not the Feminist Freedom project but the Democratizing Knowledge project going. And once we got that going and then the chancellor was leaving and we decided we have to go out and hustle and get funding because we have a lot of things that we want to continue doing in DK and this was part of the DK. And we



### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

figured out how to make it happen with no funding. Now we have a real project in hand, we can send this clip out-

**CTM:** We're hoping somebody will give us money after seeing this.

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**CTM:** So what we wanted to do is to really have this now be a broader conversation and ask, you know, Beverly, Angela, Margo, Beverly and Barbara to just come and sit up here with us and we want to ask everybody over here to reflect just for a couple of minutes on what does it mean to be a feminist freedom warrior now at this moment. What does – what is it that we have to learn? What is it – how do we strategize? What are the questions and the kinds of collaborations, collectivities, forms of dissent that we need to in fact take on as a community.

**LEC:** I think that one of the things that we are forced to think about is the results of the election on Tuesday in the US so that we all should be thinking about mobilizing on a much broader scale. So we are thinking of a global kind of organization because we know that US economic hegemony impacts the world. So this was an election that had a result that impacted the world. So we need to think how we are going to, you know, not just react but how we are going to fight against what is about to come.

**CTM:** And part of the project is really how to create cultures of dissent and cultures of not just dissent but how to take difficult, disloyal positions which often we don't want to. So right now it means that we have to take some difficult positions. Beverly. The question was really sort of what does it mean to be a feminist freedom warrior right now. What is it that you would want to say? We have a – like a really large group of people here and we want people to leave feeling accountable, I think. We want people to leave feeling accountable to a certain kind of collective radical feminist project right now post-election. So anyone-

**LEC:** I just want to say that we want an engaged discussion. So I know that in the age of social media it's – the photo taking is important but it's less important for us right now.

00:30:10

**BGS:** Before I answer I want to thank you Chandra and Linda for doing this project, hustling and doing this project. So really really want to thank you. And I hope the audience saw in those interviews that the people were not scripted, just being very much like we are around a kitchen table talking. And that was a good thing, the way in which you set that up so thank you. So I want to assume that everyone knows who all of us are. So I'm Beverly Guy-Sheftall from Spelman College.

### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**Audience:** [Applause]

**BGS:** And I want to say that because I am very frequently one of very few feminist scholar activists from HBCUs in these spaces so I want to- I always want to name that location and I also want to say that my feminist intellectual political journey began at a black graduate school called Atlanta University. In 1969 so my journey didn't begin in an alien space where I felt isolated. Now I felt weird because I probably was one of the few feminist master students in an English department. So I want to just name that location from the onset. One of the things that I think is going to be a challenge for us is to not wallow in the horrendous toxicity of the moment as a result of the election. So I want to convince myself or tell myself that I'm actually more energized and more ready to do this serious work than maybe we would have been if the election had turned out differently. So I would like to think – and maybe I'm being unrealistic but I would like to think that what has happened will enable us to do the kind of the work that this project captures in ways that we might not have done it a week ago. So that's what I want to say to begin with. That we cannot act like it's not horrendous but we can use this as an opportunity to be more radical, to be more angry, to be more passionate and to be more strategic in our collaborations.

**MOR:** I want to follow you, Beverly, because I personally think this is a great time to be alive actually, this moment. And so I think being alive means not just the politics of dissent but really thinking about the politics of imagination. If we can't imagine it we can't have it as Tony Morrison said when she was talking about her book, you know, "Paradise". And I think one of the biggest tasks before us is to imagine what we want to create that's not just going against X, Y or Z. Z is probably Trump but anyway. So that's the second thing and the other thing I was thinking about when Taveeshi was speaking is, we as people in the academy – how do we teach a pedagogy of listening and what would that look like? And then another question I had is this whole – the difference between mobilizing and organizing – a lot of people come out for demonstrations but how do we actually organize in such a way that we're doing it in a visionary generative sustainable way where we can go the long distance. This is a marathon, it's not a hundred meter sprint. And so what that means for me is on what principle should we build relationships going forward? And I want to just take one relationship example. It's mentorship. What's the mutuality of mentorship, because it sounds a little bit like mentor mentee, right? Is there a way that we can think about it and maybe use a different word that really suggests and practices a certain kind of mutuality and reciprocity. Where the mentor is just as much a learner as the mentee and that's it for now.

00:35:13

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**BGS:** Just say one more thing about Combahee –

**MOR:** Right. So I was very much influenced by being a member of the Combahee River Collective.

**Audience:** [Applause]

**MOR:** I'm Margo Okazawa-Rey.

**BB:** Hi. I want to start by also thanking Linda and Chandra and Taveeshi for this incredible work. This amazing work. -Inaudible- I also want to thank the women around the table because - while we talk about – this is an incredible – the women around this table have been doing this work for decades. It's the reason why we can actually think and feel that we do have strength that we can move forward. Because this work has been happening for years on the ground and it's good when we have this kind of forum to remind us of the work that has always been going on so that what we're seeing now in terms of the mobilization around the anti-Trump fever is – it's good that it's happening but also to recognize that work has been ongoing. Lives have been lost, this particular period is not the worst. Even though, I heard out there today that people are saying this is the worst period but it isn't. Blacks have been dying in the street everyday. Women have been dying in the street everyday. There's an anti-Islamic backlash. People have been dying but people have also been mobilizing and organizing. So it's important to acknowledge that and to acknowledge that we have something to build on and to move forward and to strategize and to keep going and that one of the things as an educator – what is important to me is to be able to take this kind of work into the classroom. So that a work is not simply one that which is pedantic but it's also one that becomes about struggle, about activism, about action. So I'm really honored to be here and to be in this room with the women around this table and also to feel a certain kind of resurgent energy that we are going to be moving forward and we are going to be moving forward together. Thank you very much.

**Audience:** [Applause]

**BB:** I'm Beverly Bain.

**BR:** I'm Barbara Ransby. And I also am always proud to be in the company of these amazing people and many people in the audience who are doing such inspiring work and who bolster and make you feel fortified to go forward. And to thank Chandra and Linda for this. When I was first interviewed - this is a theme with me right? In the panel yesterday I wasn't quite sure where I was supposed to be and then when I was being interviewed, we were there, we had nice dinner and everything and then it was like it was going to be this interview and there was a camera.

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**BR:** I was like okay and then I figured out this is a part of a big important project and so I hope I made sense. Did we have wine before or no?

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**CTM:** We had wine after.

**BR:** That's good, that's good. I think it's important to document the work that so many important women are doing. And I also feel like we really, as I said yesterday, need to anchor ourselves in this moment. Right before I came over I looked at some of the Twitter feeds from demonstrations that are going on so in Chicago there's ten thousand people in the street. In LA they showed an aerial view, I don't know if people saw it, they showed an aerial-somebody was on a terrace or balcony or something and it was people as far as you could see in every direction it was freaking amazing and I thought in a moment of fear and doubt and despair. I just thought: our people are showing up, our people are showing up.

00:40:07

**BR:** So I think coming to gatherings like this, being in this company reassures me. But I also think we're in a different period. It's not unique in the world but it is a different period than we were in before and the elites like to talk about 9/11 as this threshold but I think 11/8 was a threshold too and that we can see it both as a certain kind of defeat but as a new opportunity and creating a basis for what in Ella's Daughters we used to talk about as political quilting. That is getting beyond coalition work to really feel each other's pain, to listen to each other's stories to figure out how we can work and conspire together in a sustained way. Not just for the big demonstrations that are going to happen and I'm excited that they're going to be there, whether my ankle is working properly or not I'm going to be out there hobbling. But how can we sustain that, how can use it as an opportunity to deepen understandings. To deepen commitments and to really also transform the way we see ourselves as scholars. What is the work that we need to do? What is the kind of teaching that we need to do? What is the kind of solidarity with our students that we need to do? What are the reservoirs of knowledge beyond our campus that we need to tap and honor in ways that maybe we weren't doing as diligently as before. I'm sort of glass half – I'm trying to embrace the glass half full as I see all of this resistance coming from all different places but it is a serious and sobering time and I look forward to the fight. We had a – did you pull it out? There have been a number of discussions about statements that feminist scholars might make in response to the election and I just saw Brittney Cooper on the elevator and I said everybody's really

### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

busy but you write really well and really quickly can you come up with an eloquent statement and so about eleven-thirty last night she came up with an eloquent statement and we edited it and so this will be shared in some form inviting individuals to sign on I'm not sure if it's an NWSA statement per se but it's definitely a feminist scholar statement so if I may just take a minute to read it. "On Tuesday November 8<sup>th</sup> 2016 a sizable minority of the US electorate chose to send billionaire Donald Trump an avowed sexist and unrepentant racist, who has spent nearly forty years antagonizing vulnerable people to the White House, spewing hatred at women, people of color, immigrants, Muslims and people with disabilities is Trump's most consistent and well documented form of public engagement. Trump bragged about sexually assaulting women because as he argued class privilege gave him the right to do so. In the four days since Trump was elected there has been a sharp uptake in suicides by young trans identifying people. Tuesday's vote reaffirmed the structural disposability and systemic disregard for every person who is not white, male, straight, cis-gendered, able-bodied and middle or upper class. As a community of feminist scholars, activists and artists we affirm that the time to act is now. We cannot endure four years of a Trump presidency without a plan. We must protect reproductive justice, fight for black lives, defend the rights of LGBTQIA people, disrupt the displacement of indigenous people and the stealing of their resources, advocate and provide safe havens for the undocumented, stridently reject Islamophobia and oppose acceleration of neoliberal policies that divert resources to the top one percent and abandon those at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. We must also denounce militarism at home and abroad and climate change denial that threatens to destroy the entire planet. We must also reject calls to compromise, to understand or to collaborate. We cannot and will not comply. Our number one priority is to resist. We must resist the instantiation of autocracy. We must resist this perversion of democracy. We must refuse to spend and challenge any narrative that seeks to call this a moment of democracy at work. This is not democracy. This is a rise of fascism. We must name it so that we can both confront and defeat it. The most vulnerable both here and abroad cannot afford for us to equivocate or remain silent. We owe this" – It's almost over, sorry. – "We owe this moment and the communities we fight for our very best thinking, teaching and organizing. We must find creative solutions to address the immediate needs of those who will be acutely affected in the first one hundred days of Trump's presidency. We must push ourselves into new and more precise and radical frameworks that can help us to articulate the stakes of the moment. The most important thing we can do in this moment is to make an unqualified commitment to those on the margins through our actions. Insist that the media be allowed to do its job and protect the right to protest and dissent. We recognize clearly that our silence will not protect us. Silence in the aftermath of 11/8 is not merely a lack of words it is profound inertia of liberatory thought and praxis. So what are we waiting for? We are who we are waiting for. We pledge to stand and

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

fight with fierce resolve for the values and principles we believe in and the people we love.”

00:45:51

**Audience:** [Applause]

**BR:** So sign it when it comes your way.

**AYD:** Well I'd also like to join with the other participants in thanking Chandra and Linda and Taveeshi for this amazing project. I found myself in watching the excerpts except myself I never like to watch myself it's always traumatic.

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**AYD:** But I found myself wanting to hear all of the other conversations. And it seems to me that as it has already been pointed out, the project actually is an example of the kind of collectivity we need to cultivate during this period. I was struck by something that Zillah Eisenstein said about problematizing the notion of allies. Because we tend to think often in these very formulaic ways and considering the fact that fifty-three percent of white women actually voted for Trump, that to me is evidence of our failure to do the kind of organizing both within and outside the academy. And I think – I really appreciate the statement that Barbara shared and at the same time I think we need to think more deeply. Because the answers aren't always immediately available. And there's something deeply wrong with this country and it's not going to be –

**CTM:** You mean the US. This country is Canada.

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**AYD:** I apologize. There's something deeply wrong with your neighbors to the south, which always has a tendency to flow north. I'll put it that way. There's something really deeply wrong with this region. And we have to, as scholars it's our job to try to figure it out and to help us all understand how it is that one half of the population of the US could not resist the demagoguery of someone like Donald Trump and I think that those conditions are even more important than the triumph of Donald Trump. And so we have to figure out how to understand them. Feminist methodology can be more helpful than any other methodology in developing these analyses and these theoretical foundations for the kind of practice we will have to engage in over the next period. I think that many of us felt that we needed to do whatever we could to prevent the election of Donald Trump and if it meant voting for a candidate that we had no faith in or could not relate to at all, it meant doing that. But many of us didn't do that so now we have to figure out what our strategy is going to be from now on

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

and I think that the words – thank you so much for the amazing words and the amazing images. And I have to admit I was very reluctant. I don't like to be interviewed in any way and Chandra and Linda kept saying “you've got to sit down with us” and they finally forced me to do it.

00:50:40

**CTM:** And we gave her wine too.

**LEC:** We gave her wine before.

**CTM:** We gave you wine before probably.

**Audience:** laughter

**BR:** So you gave her wine before? So I had to wait until after.

**LEC:** Now we want to open this up for your thoughts on what you've seen and heard and what you feel that you need to do and how we can do this collectively. We only have a few minutes left so-

**Audience member #1:** Hi. So Angela you mentioned about - with the election there were over fifty-three percent of people and they thought about it in a sense that writing and voting seems like more of a privilege now. Especially legislations that have struck down on instances like the Voting Rights Act and very viable parts of the Voting Rights Act, it could've prevented a lot of voting discrimination and in the instance that undocumented immigrants cannot vote and also the instances that felons cannot vote. I think one way I can see – and obviously it's still something that I'm still processing it – I came here on a redeye flight from San Francisco when the election results were tallied and I think one thing that we can do is to also look outside from the system. Especially when so many people who were affected were not able to cast a vote, were not able to have their voices heard because the government and the legislation prevented them from having it heard. One way that we can strategize is to give spaces and opportunities for them to speak out and for their voices to be heard because if the ballot is not gonna have it out there are other avenues that can have it out.

**CTM:** Lisa?

**Audience member #2:** Just to add onto that. The other piece of it is – that piece is super important but also the legitimate terror of our students. You've got to put the correct number on it. Half of the country – no it's twenty five percent of those eligible to vote and that number is even huger. That's a terrifying number but it's different than the number that exists.

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**CTM:** Good distinction.

**AYD:** Yes, that's really helpful. Thank you.

**Audience member #3:** According to a German newspaper actually only eighteen percent of the American –

**BR:** Could you – could you speak up?

**Audience member #3:** According to the German newspapers only eighteen percent of the American population voted. They made a scale on one of them. It showed one hundred percent, this is three hundred and fifty million. How many were not allowed to vote and support and it's eighteen percent that in the end voted – ended up voting.

**BR:** One. Eight.

**Panel:** Eighteen

**BR:** Now that's not a – that's not of the eligible voters that's of the population. Is that what you're saying?

**CTM:** But it was still a huge number.

-Inaudible-

**BGS:** We should also say that fewer US people who were eligible to vote. Huge numbers voted less in this election than in 2008. Which is amazing given –

**AYD:** But also we should recognize that electoral politics do not constitute the only arena for political expression.

**Panel:** Exactly.

**Audience member:** yes, yes!

**Audience:** [Applause and snaps]

**AYD:** And that's not even the height of political expression.

**MOR:** I think a question that I've been thinking a lot about both – in relation to both people who voted and people who didn't of the eligible people, however you're framing it. I've been wondering a lot about what is the deepest yearning that drove people to vote for Trump and drove people not to vote. What's the longing, what's the yearning that people were hoping would be fulfilled by voting and so how do we uncover that, at least for my side. What's the longing that would bring our side together in a way that really is sturdy? What's the deepest longing and yearning? And I would like to have those words be part of our political language and it's not just



### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

psychological I think it's deeply spiritual, political, et cetera. That's just what something that I've been thinking a lot about.

00:55:42

**LEC:** I'm still stuck – I'm still stuck with what Laurie Joseph said “Capitalism doesn't mean democracy”. What is it that people think in this society that brings on political apathy that we don't necessarily understand that there are other options as Angela was just saying. That it's not the only expression. But we don't seem to - the majority seems not to understand this so that we can just engage in political apathy and not recognize the implications of the possibility of this man winning the election and now that he has it's the fear and the terror really coming home, that this is the beginning of fascism.

**Audience member #4:** Hi. I think that this is a beautiful project and I know that one of the things that I'm really interested in thinking about given that this isn't the only political sphere that's necessary. It's thinking about the kinds of feminist pedagogical practices that really use the classroom as a personal space to enact, to rehearse and in some level habituate the body to moving politically because there's a way in which the neoliberal university puts us in a position to have some of these other practices. They throw some texts at other people, they read, they have some critical engagement but it really really leaves our bodies out of it and so I'm wondering if part of the thing that can be circulated or at least some of the things that I would like to see more of is other ways in which we can use this space to habituate our bodies into action. What kinds of strategies could we use for that?

**LEC:** Other thoughts you want to share?

**Audience member #5:** Hi I'm thinking about being a social work educator right now and what that means and how social work education essentially is going to have to completely – I mean it has its problems that's for sure, lots of problems but in terms of my own pedagogy, getting ready to teach a class on community organizing next semester. How it completely – this whole election cycle, how it completely changes how I approach that work and how those of us who are in professional fields, how this election completely changes the stances we have with our students. Social work has taken a very clear position on not being neutral about stuff which means we have to be empathetical to some of our colleges who want us to be neutral and the profession itself is not neutral. That's something else that I'm thinking about – I'm also thinking about the fact of how do we make sure we place people of color in rural spaces too. Because right now the narrative is that rural spaces is purely white faces and they're not because increasingly poor people who can't afford to be in cities are

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

being shipped out to rural spaces and so in rural Minnesota this is what I'm seeing. I'm seeing black and brown faces, not a lot, but they're all sort of huddled in one place. What happens to them?

**CTM:** I also think there's one other thing that, I think, for me I've been thinking ever since this fifty three percent white women voted for Trump thing came out is that I really want to pose a challenge to white women and white feminists in terms of what does it mean to be an anti-racist white feminist now? What do you all have to think about?

**Audience:** [Applause]

**CTM:** I really think it's a deep and important question and like what Angela said we don't have easy answers. I don't think these scripts are easily available but unless people work on them and unless people actually take it on as a collective project this is – I mean I guess in my class room I said there's work to be done specifically by white feminists.

01:00:26

**BGS:** And Chandra, what does it mean that ninety-three percent of African – of black women-

**LEC:** voted.

**BGS:** -who did not necessarily feel connected to Hillary. What does it mean that we voted. Ninety three percent. Across class, across region, across all kinds of differences. I mean that is profound. That fifty three percent of white women voted for Trump and over ninety percent voted for Hillary Clinton. It's amazing.

**LEC:** Black women.

**BGS:** Black women. Black women. Not black men. Black women.

**Audience member #6:** Thank you all for sharing such a beautiful project and I'm really excited about using it in the classroom. One of the things that I'm thinking about looking at is – somebody in there talked about humanizing theory. So knowing all of your work, I'm also interested in your relationships with each other and how that influences your own scholarship. So also – and I know that you're not just academic colleagues you probably also marched at demos together you've probably inspired each other-

**CTM:** Yeah, drunk wine together.

### Feminist Freedom Warriors

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**Audience member #6:** Probably done retail therapy together. I'm thinking about different ways in which you inspire each other and sort of seeing the other side of yourselves and how you can talk about that and also part of your politics.

**CTM:** Thank you that's a really important question and you're completely right and that's what we try to convey when we began the introduction. That so much of this for us comes out of the kind of deep relationships and friendships with people that we have traveled the road together with. So part of this is really about a politics of traveling the road together, standing with each other, standing behind each other when necessary. Margo is always talking about relationships and about connectivity and what you just mentioned; humanizing. There is something about, for me, a deep commitment as a feminist to really, really think carefully about relationships and about on what ground do we build relationships and what does friendship mean and what does the politics of friendships, how friendships are deeply political, that allow you to disagree with each other but to stand together because you know in the end that you are working together and you trust each other implicitly. Of course I know that we can't have this be the only model for politics because all of us can't actually be friends and work together but I think there's something about building critical mass that I feel we were trying to convey in this which is a deeply political act in fact.

**AYD:** I really embrace this notion of community that gets constructed at so many different levels. So that we don't have to compartmentalize our intellectual work, our political work, our personal relationships. For example, a number of us, Gloria, Chandra, Barbara, and Gina and I traveled. Is there anyone else?

**CTM:** Premilla.

**AYD:** Premilla. We all traveled to Palestine together and that was a really profound experience for us all and we've been connected by that common project of trying to convey what we've discovered on that journey to ever wider circles.

**CTM:** Oh and Gina went with us too.

**AD:** Yeah, I said Gina. And I've also been thinking tentatively, I should say, about the connection between certain kinds of spiritual practices and community building. A lot of us have done yoga together and meditated together and that actually helps to strengthen the bonds. It creates yet another level of connectivity and I think that this is the kind of community that we need to model and to strive for and write about and to imagine, to project especially during a period such as this.

1:05:43

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**MOR:** I think it's important to think about relationship and connectivity as actually verbs and trust all these things. Nouns are actually verbs and they're ongoing. It's these processes that are important for us to engage in and the other thing is that we all live with contradictions. There's no kind of pure place to stand and so I think for myself – sort of thinking about the question of when does a contradiction turn into hypocrisy. Just asking those kinds of self reflective, reflexive questions collectively is an important part of the political project as well. So verbs, nouns into verbs and thinking about how to live with contradictions.

**LEC:** And it's a little easier to live with contradictions knowing that you are on the same path and you're headed in the same direction and you won't let the contradiction sway you from-

**AYD:** Well sometimes, as Audre Lorde said, contradictions don't always have to be tolerated because they can be generative and productive and creative and I think that the kind of feminism we attempt to practice embraces contradiction. We try to learn how to have inhabit contradiction for producing something new.

**LEC:** You never let them become obstacles.

**AYD:** Exactly.

**MOR:** And we need spaces where we can really engage them.

**CTM:** Go ahead. You had a question.

**Audience member #7:** So how do projects like these vocalize people outside the classroom to bring about a sense of interdependent work that's liberatory and unifying politically spiritually academically and in the community?

**CTM:** I think she said how do we use them? Part of why we're doing this is not for the academy. This is not about the academy. And none of us I think would identify primarily only with the academy. In terms of the work, we don't. So hopefully these stories are in fact useful and important for people in organizing activist community contexts. So I don't know, we can't predict how it can be used but we're hopeful that they can be used because in these conversations we're not necessarily asking each person about the book they wrote or the concept they developed. That's not the project. The project is really how do you live a political ethical life and what choices do you make and what is it about your genealogy, your history, the community, place, et cetera you come from that leads you to those choices. And then when you watch this you think okay well that's interesting I wonder if I can connect to that. Would I make a different choice? Or do I know people who made similar – do you understand? I think it's about that. So I think how one lives an ethical life is what hopefully this is-

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**LEC:** There are no kind of borders around this work. I think that's part of what Chandra's getting to. So the kind of activism that we have been involved in is inside and outside the academy. And many of us have been serious activists. Alongside being activists in the academy outside in communities. I know that we've known each other on different levels for decades like Beverly was saying. I've known Beverly when we were undergraduates at the university of Toronto, mobilizing against the university around issues of divesting south Africa and being on the streets as black women fighting against Canadian state racism. It's the country to the north that presents itself as pure white and not as in race-white but it has got the same kinds of racism as in the United States and we were always putting it in its face as part of a larger group of women of color in this country. So long histories of struggles across borders. Taking buses going to the United States and going to marches down in the United States, down in the US. It's a very long history of activism on different levels. It's a very long history of activism inside the academy that we do. It's a natural up growth of what you come to understand as necessary politics so Chandra is absolutely right we don't know how it can be used but we know what made it happen and hope that it can be effective to you in however you see fit to use it.

1:11:05

**CTM:** And it's really a labor of love for us is what I would say actually. That's where it comes from so we hustle –

**Audience:** [Laughter]

**CTM:** -but wouldn't hustle for anything but love.

**BR:** I'm assuming you're a student. Are you a student? Yeah. I just wanted to offer up some practical thoughts too about how I think this kind of work is a gift and I hope it will be accessible in libraries and places outside of the academy. Robin Kelly was writing in Boston Review about 6 months ago about student protests and student organizing and what new creative sites of learning debate and intellectual work that young people can do and he was really saying find sites of intellectual engagement beyond the campus. So this project, I think that screening it in a library or a community organization and talking about it provides an entrée and an opportunity to create those sites beyond the campus. Different places – in Chicago we had something called the Communiversities and when speakers came to campus, we took them to the community and we did film screenings there and we talked about it. So just sites for analysis and collective thinking that are not confined by the titles that we carry with us in the university by the structured ways in which our work gets constricted within the university. That's what I'd say.

**Feminist Freedom Warriors**

Linda E. Carty and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in conversation with  
*Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Margo Okazawa-Rey, Beverly Bain, Barbara Ransby and Angela Y. Davis*

**CTM:** I think we are five minutes over time but I'd just like thank everyone around the table and you all.

**Audience:** [Applause]

01:12:50

\*\*\*

*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.*