Zillah Eisenstein

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CTM: It is the last day of April 2016 and we are interviewing our dear friend Zillah Eisenstein. So Zillah, good god! We've known each other forever. And you've known Linda, too, forever I think.

ZE: Yeah, a long time, a long time.

CTM: So, a lot of roads that we have walked over the years, you know, together.

ZE: I was thinking just how many different roads there have been, you know, in terms of just thinking a little bit about the issue of women's liberation, the history of feminism in this country and I was really taken aback at thinking about what the different moments have been, at least, you know, for me; my entry, my different moments of entry and that the way that in this moment some of those moments seem to be reappearing, you know, but in somewhat different form, but not in as different form as I wish , you know. And then in other ways, the constancy of some of the earliest feminist activism I did was really in relationship to the Vietnam War.

CTM: So start with what brought you to feminism and feminist work, however you want to tell that story. You already started.

ZE: Feminism to me was a particular politic and a particular moment for me but being brought up in a communist household with deeply antiracist activism—I mean my sisters—I had three—you know, we would spend Saturday mornings picketing Woolworth and the segregated lunch counters, so I mean you know - that's a particular kind of life, Saturdays picketing and also being very young at that time. I was maybe ten-twelve and being violated and accosted for being part of the Civil Rights Movement. It made me brave at a very young age I must say; and the bravery of my parents. But, they were—particularly my father—clearly a Marxist and antiracist and he was tough on us, you know, as his daughters. There was times when we would just wish he would let us just do and be and so often he

would say these are segregated, even if these are not legally segregated, these are segregated communities, whatever, we're not living there, you're not going to school there, whatever. So anyhow this was at the core of my being and of course for my sisters' as well. The people who loved us the best and supported us the best, were black and a lot of the hatred came at us from whites and particularly white Jews who were part of institutionalized synagogues, etc. I mean, I guess I should also say we were also raised atheist so that was just part of our identity. So, it was interesting though, that the world in the early to mid-60s, that was the height of so much of the civil rights, but then you have the Vietnam War and you have the beginning different aspects of the Women's Movement. I should say the Women's Liberation Movement at that point. So I really started to identify very much as a feminist, not just an antiracist and someone who was against war, in this moment it was Vietnam. And my older sister Sarah was very much involved in some of the earliest radical women's groups—socialist, particularly—in Boston and then I started to connect with that through her, being somewhat younger and at the fringes of this. But—

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But so much of the debate and difficulty that I went through was very intimate in my household, because my father didn't see the need for a different feminism from Marxism. So, whereas many people have arguments with their parents, mine was to be able to be a feminist as well as a Marxist and antiracist. So, that was the beginning and then, it was at that point that I became very involved in the anti-war movement, but, as a feminist, to not be kind of relegated to Left politics, you know. So, of course, for the last two years it feels like everything I've been doing is really saying that, you know, progressive politics isn't good enough for feminism or anti-racism. So in that way what I was thinking about—

CTM: How similar this moment is, to those early years.

ZE: Exactly. And then the work I've been brought in a bit to advise and discuss with some of the young feminists in the Bernie Sanders' campaign. And it's just so interesting, the arguments are almost identical. I mean, he's not a Marxist but, you know, that layer of that kind of work with some of the involvements and then later with the way that the thread of anti-militarism and anti-imperialism was just carried on very much through the Afghan war, the Iraq war.

CTM: Bosnia…

ZE: Right.

LEC: So tell us a bit about that moment—in the resistance or forms of resistance to wanting that kind of feminism inside of Marxism. Was there resistance?

ZE: Well, there was enormous resistance and it was pretty brutal, both intellectually and personally. The earliest intellectual work I did starting with my dissertation and then a series of early articles demanding that socialism needed feminism and a discussion of capitalism needed patriarchy. And at that point I wasn't ready, as a white woman to really theorize racism into that system. That comes later for me, in *The Color of Gender*. But, in that early period, what it was that I was disinvited to many leftist activities and I was called a revisionist, which of course, what could be worse?

CTM: That's the worst. It's the death for leftists.

ZE: Although to me, I thought, "Good! We need revision all the time." So, then of course, the way that you're attacked for not being smart enough, just all of it that comes together and I do think, that just some of my earliest childhood is what gave me the bravery to say, "I'm not stupid, I know what I'm doing and I really want to work with other people who want to do this."

CTM: Because I'm thinking about the *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, which was actually a book that traveled all over the world, you know. I remember reading some of that and thinking nobody had been doing this work. We had a tradition of Marxist-feminists in India, but they hadn't been published in the same way and taking on the same questions, right, as that book, and that book is where the Combahee River Collective is first published, right. It's so interesting that that was so groundbreaking, and of course a book comes out and you have no clue what the labor and what the costs are that are associated with doing stuff like that.

LEC: But that's why I asked the question about the resistance, because I remember the antagonism on certain levels to that book on the left, and in certain circles. So it didn't deal with, as you said, the race question, because you weren't there yet of how to insert that but they still had resistance, incredible resistance, you know—"Capitalist Patriarchy", because to insert patriarchy into Marxism is to really challenge them on the woman question.

CTM: Is to dilute Marxism.

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LEC: Yeah.

ZE: Right and it wasn't just about—I mean clearly Marxists talked about women and women's labor all the time, but not structurally as a system. But here we are still talking, trying to get people to see what 'structural' means. And, of course, 'structural' doesn't mean—for me at least—what it did thirty years ago. There are

new brilliant structures that make it look really different and more complicated, more complex and now I also think though, that some of the complexity opens up new possibilities for mobilization and camaraderie, as long as we really nurture them, you know and try to see the complexity of it. But just to come back: to give full recognition to the different kinds of feminisms, I have to say that when some of the most brutal attacks were happening about my Marxist feminism, I was asked to participate in a meeting that President Carter was calling, to meet with feminists. Bella Abzug, at that time was very key in organizing this and it was for feminists to tell Carter what we wanted; the different kinds of feminism. So when she called and asked me to come, I said to her, "Bella"—who I knew—"Bella, I talk to Marxists about why they need to be feminist. I don't know how to talk to liberals about how they should become Marxist." you know; I mean, liberal feminists, on that question. And so it was really interesting, and I said, "No, I don't know how to do that." So I hung up the phone, and a group of socialist feminists were having dinner with me, and said, "Zillah, try it! Try it." you know. So we sat there and I tried to figure out, what could I say. And so then I said—which changed my life—"Okay, you say you want to be equal to men, so which men do you want to be equal to, you know?" And that started the dialogue. I called back, I said to Bella, "I would come, and go." And what was amazing was it was a lot easier to get feminists to become Marxist than it was for me to get Marxists to become feminist. And that was fully transformative and that was why the book that came out of that struggle was called *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, which has not happened.

LEC: Up till now.

CTM: And that's so interesting because now I'm thinking, I guess all these presidents have these meetings, right, where they invite…so I went to one such that Obama called, that Valerie Jarrett called, and I remember sitting in that room and it was quite a few women of color in there, right, but the discourse was still very much a liberal feminist discourse. And the level at which I remember being able to get through was when I started talking about what citizenship means, actually, using the kind of analytic frame that I was using and talking about truncated citizenship, if you don't pay attention to all of these different layers of thinking about feminism. But it's so interesting, they seem to do this periodically and it's meaningful, only, I think, to the extent that you can connect with the other communities that are in the room, or the other people in the room and then figure out what the agendas can be.

LEC: But they specifically wanted to talk about feminism and some elements of Marxism in the Carter period. Did these people want to talk?

CTM: No, they want to talk about exactly what should be done, what do women want and what should —

LEC: Yeah, so it doesn't even have a name.

CTM: No. And what should be the agenda for women's studies and women's rights…something like that. Yeah, it's a different language. It's a neoliberal frame.

ZE: But it's also, I mean, in this particular moment we're in with Hillary Clinton probably as the Presidential candidate and maybe the President. Of course when Donald Trump was challenging her on her woman card, of course she said, you know, "I'm in, I'm in on this." What was she in on? Women's rights—

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You know, way back, as opposed to justice for women. And the other point she said was I'm in for women being treated the same as men. And I heard that and I thought, "We are back—backwards". You know, this is backwards.

LEC: Yeah it's the same thing I said. And I was thinking with a group of young feminist women of color saying there's no movement that has taken place for this woman. There really isn't any kind of movement that has taken place because, what is that you are fighting for now? What about the questions of social justice? What about the inclusiveness? Oh, she wants women to get equal pay for work you know, that men would get the same pay if they're a part of that, but what needs to happen for that to take place? Nothing about analyzing the economy, what is going to happen in the workplace, what kinds of questions we need to ask. She doesn't have any movement thinking to go forward into that. It's really discourse.

CTM: Right, so, you've already talked a little bit about this—the challenges you've encountered over the years - so, say a little bit about how these particular challenges, in fact, had a key impact on how you begin to rethink things, or rethink what your goals are or anything like that? You know, what are the shifts that happen, because of these moments, or these particular intellectual political challenges that you face?

ZE: It does seem like I have, I think, consciously I would say at this point that I kind of trust the world to keep me honest and fully involved in trying to find out what really does an antiracist, anti-imperialist feminism look like. That's a big abstract question, but then when you're asked to actually deal with, let's say, the trap laws in the US in Alabama and Mississippi, that are basically making it impossible for black poor women to get abortions, or to have to really rethink what is the difference about abortion today in this country, how is class redefining it so that so many middle class women really don't have to worry about it because of the morning after pill, but poor people still do, but you don't have the middle class basis for mobilizing around abortion. Why is it that we are so quiet about reproductive rights in this country as they are completely being challenged? And it's Planned Parenthood with—I want to completely support them but their politics is, you know, very mainstream and liberal, still. Not neoliberal, but liberal. So, the moments as they kind of compel, I'm

wondering what is going to happen for those of us who are committed to an anti-imperial framework. How is the new complexity in Syria—I mean, what is going to be our responsibility here? To do something and to say something. 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?

CTM: So, give some examples, because you've been doing some of this work as a white woman with these feminists of color communities, specifically black women's communities, around a whole bunch of different stuff—around, you know, the murder of the black women—concretely, that would be useful.

LEC: Yeah, that would be useful and I want to tack on this part: what do you see happening with young white feminists–well, feminists in general—to make this movement that you're talking about happen? This coalition—because the coalition is necessary.

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How is the coalition to happen if, in some communities, that work is not taking place? So that question that Chandra is asking is directly connected to this. What's happening with white feminists to make this movement possible?

ZE: It's a difficult question because I'm not sure. I think that the least organized part of feminism in the United States is white women, you know. Of course, that's not really fair. That's putting my blinders in there. Now you have Planned Parenthood, you have—

CTM: But you're defining an antiracist, anti-imperialist feminism and you're saying within that—the least organized, perhaps, are white women.

ZE: Right. Just like I think that the least articulated ideas of feminism or feminist theory, has been liberal feminism or neoliberal feminism. It's a practice but it's not a theoretical stand. The most interesting radical work is being done by women of color who are feminists. That's not to exclude the fact that there are anti-violence activists in the United States and globally but most of them are not white, actually, at this point.

CTM: So now place yourself within that frame and what is it that compels you to both see this - well, see this because of your history - but actually figure out ways to build a coalition or the solidarities that allow this kind of work? Because, I think that would be really instructive, just as, you know, a pedagogical or strategic practice.

ZE: What I think is really difficult about coalition work right now is that there are a lot of serious fractures within communities and the way that you find the ability to make coalition is that you need people who voice the need for it and on some level the people who can voice it least well, at the moment, are white women, I think. Or I think that many of them think that.

CTM: Why?

ZE: Well, I think some of it has to do with this idea of ally. In other words, you support but you don't lead. So, I would agree with that but at the same time the idea of being enormously invested and involved, that need not be a position of leadership. But I think that these are all very difficult issues that really need to be talked about. You know, that people need to trust each other enough to really work on it. In some of the work I did and writing I did about really trying to see black women and say her name and really mobilize around the violence against black women and really deal with the structure of patriarchy as well as racism, okay, in the work of Kim Crenshaw and really multiple people right now who are focused on that. It also becomes difficult for many white women who don't have an articulated stance. Their idea of being involved is to be supportive but not actually to be an activist. And even in the discussion—I don't want to be too specific, so that this remains—but in all of the discussion about Lemonade and Beyoncé, there's been a lot of stuff that says this is a black woman's moment, this is about black women and as a white woman I'm thinking, yes I mean I'm ready and willing to love this story and to enlarge my life with it, right, but don't say that this is just a black woman's story. Why does it have to become exclusionary that way?

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Or, I think that maybe all of us suffer a bit for the narrative in our society of exceptionalism, so we're exceptional as a country and each of us have an exceptional history, which is both true and not.

CTM: Exactly. But also, that prevents any kind of critical…then it prevents even criticizing other communities.

LEC: Yeah, but that at the same time, that's true and that's what frustrates us, but a part of this reality is that the feminism that we want, has not happened yet because the breadth of—exactly what you're saying, and I get so much of this from your work—the antiracist feminism is not being done in a large enough frame, so I have to constantly use Zillah's work because you're looking at white feminism to find that it's not there, Zillah. So, the coalition thing you're pointing to feels and seems almost impossible and that's why Lemonade is taking that position, why the discussion around Lemonade is going in that direction because "black women's moment, you know, it's about them—we can't really engage here or we shouldn't too much",

without recognizing, this is your responsibility, too, because it is inclusive of all of us. Like, what has happened there is more than black women's story.

ZE: Right, and the more has nothing to do with saying less.

LEC: Exactly.

ZE: That's the point. If we could just go backwards one second, so when I wrote *The Color of Gender* for the first time, as a white woman, I was going to risk everything. I knew I wouldn't do it perfectly but you know, I had my dad in my heart and brain, and my mother, and you may not remember this but the end of the book basically says—because the book is, *Reimagining Democracy* is the subtitle—the way that we can maybe come closer to democracy is to imagine a black woman who is pregnant…

CTM: I know, I've noted that.

ZE: And so, maybe we can move closer to democracy.

CTM: Okay so play that out.

ZE: Intellectually, the idea was to say that we're all trained to think that the more specific we are the more narrow we are and I'm arguing here, that the more specific, the more inclusive and the more general because, why? If we can meet the needs of that black woman, even though I knew, oh my god, I'm making her pregnant, this is ridiculous! But I couldn't do it any better. So I thought, "What the hell, try it!" But the point here was to say that this specific lens excludes no one. So in other words, you could be a white man and as long as those needs are being met for this black pregnant woman, nobody is excluded. So that's the inclusive moment, okay? I'm saying this as a political philosopher**:** the shit I took for that! But it was really asking for the revision of what people would say—I used to say this in my classroom, okay—so, "I'm not a feminist because that's too specific, I'm a humanist because that means I'm talking to everybody." And so my point here is no, be a feminist and you might get to…

CTM: Talk about what you want.

ZE: And that the whole history of the world has been what? We took the universal, right and tried to push everyone in and now we're still doing that. Which is why, again, intellectually I would say, democracy does not work. I mean, liberal democracy, it does not work because we'll just keep—

CTM: Adding people. And then, now we have refugees, and people who've come from this other country, "let's try to figure it out"—

LEC: We have a big diverse pie, but we have intense oppression still that's continuing, because we're still not doing this inclusive work, what antiracist feminist means, you know. What does it mean—it does not mean to, you know, just talk about black women. It doesn't mean that, but that is not happening in the white feminist community. So—

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ZE: But the other thing, too, though—I mean I'm being as honest as I am about this—we are so much more a diverse country than we were in the 60s. I mean, black/white just does not do it. I was just thinking, "My god! All of the ways that women of different colors are punished for their—"Becky with the good hair'"—right? I mean, if we could just really carrel all of us together here. So, I just wish that black feminism was taken seriously enough to actually be inclusive in this kind of way. Of course, then I'm back to**:** and I'm a white woman. But the point here is I also think that you have to risk everything and people almost have to do that simultaneously. And I understand that white women have to be willing to really risk right at the get go because the assumption is, we're not going to.

CTM: So do you see critical mass of antiracist white feminists doing this work? I think I see some in movements, but I don't see enough in the academy. I don't see people teaching this and it seems to me, that some of what needs to happen is people have to be teaching it. Like you were teaching it, right? So when you were teaching, what kind of community did you have that you felt (of white feminists) who were doing what you were doing?

LEC: And not just in your institution, but people you know.

ZE: Well, early on—the fabulousness of the 70s and maybe into the early 80s is that there was a women's movement that could make us all brave. So I didn't care about what anyone said about me in my institution or in the academy. They didn't value my work. It was only many years later, when, because of feminists who valued my work that my discipline came to give me any level of recognition. That came that way. But now for women, they don't have that source of support, outside. I don't think we can be inside without some piece of our bodies outside and so people have to find that. Now I do think that people find it but it's hard to find it for most women and I think—yeah, the source of radicalism of feminism came from the university through maybe mid-80s, would you say? And it doesn't anymore. I don't want to be, you know, saying this and excluding someone who is doing important work because people are but there isn't the sense of—I mean, the first time I met bell hooks and Angela Davis was at Haverford College, to do a panel called *Racism and the White Women's Movement* and then I continued to know them—

CTM: When was that? '80s?

ZE: No, much earlier.

LEC: Late 70s?

ZE: Yeah, late 70s. Hortence was the Provost.

CTM: It must be early 80s because it must be after bell publishes "Ain't I a Woman?".

ZE: When did Angela get out of jail? Because she had just got out of jail.

CTM: Okay I think—

ZE: Okay whatever.

LEC: '81?

CTM: I was thinking it would be early 80s, which is when "Ain't I a Woman?" comes out, too.

ZE: It's that year. Through maybe a good portion of the 80s there was this incredible radical community of feminists of all sorts and it was to the extent that the conferences were even funded - through universities and colleges. That's how we did, well, you did, work. But today, there's nothing. You go to an individual conference…but the point here is, like Barbara Smith—I mean I knew her through…we never lived in the same town. I mean I didn't live in the same place as anyone.

CTM: Well, that's actually true about our lives, too, no?

LEC: Yeah.

CTM: How we were formed.

LEC: Connect and work and everything… but you're not in the same place. I was in Canada.

ZE: Yeah, but it was that sense of community and it was much more international. I did a huge amount of work in Canada at that time. Very, very different.

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CTM: Very different moment. So what is it going to take for us to actually intervene in the—

LEC: More courage. Has to start with more courage. And wouldn't you say that we have to really deconstruct the kind of capitalism that we see starting in the United States anyway? And it forces one to do antiracist feminist work, because you see the lack of inclusiveness and the separateness and the exclusivity that is so destructive. That's what the state, on so many levels, supports, not as intentionally divisive—I mean, look at the structure of what the state can become in this country after this election. That's like a huge step backward. And I'm sorry, even if Hillary is elected, it's not going to be as bad as if Trump is elected.

ZE: Well, I don't—depends on what you're looking at, I think, truly. I do think, on this theme, I mean one of the questions is, could we really mobilize an incredibly progressive antiracist feminist agenda that really exposes the white neoliberal feminism of Hillary, not to see she doesn't get elected, but rather to say that these are the demands? You know, you want our vote, this is who we are. I mean, nobody takes women seriously, politically, even in the narrow electoral sense. So, the question is, I mean, some of the work that was begun with the Bernie Sanders' campaign, and I think, just in the next couple of weeks will be sorting out whether, how could we possibly do that? And then maybe it will be time to try to really build a coalition between different women of color groups here, along with the anti-violence, which already has huge numbers of young black feminists in that.

LEC: It's really taken root.

ZE: Yes, but sexual violence is at the core of war, so I mean how can we not make that anti-imperialist at the same time and really see if we couldn't mobilize? But, that's also where we're going to see the incredible complexity of politics at the moment, because many of the…there are many black feminists right now who are very supportive of Hillary. That's what I'm saying is that I don't see how we can remain silent, because it's gonna get hugely messy, because Trump has already made this an issue. Feminism is now going to be an issue, or at least womanhood.

LEC: There are so many levels to this. Part of this, I think, has to do with so much of the African-American history in this country and the Civil Rights Movement and what it has meant to the transformations that have taken place for those people, yeah, which are incredibly significant, which we must recognize, which we could never forget, but on a certain level that, when there are critical times and moments like this one, this frightening moment right now, the narrow frame of elections in this country, where it creates a certain kind of fear that one feels as a black person that that history is going to be erased.

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And not just the history being erased but the people themselves are feeling threatened in particular kinds of ways. So, the community finds itself embracing and supporting

certain things that are retrograde, but they can only imagine what the alternative is. Yeah? So the fear intensifies and you think, well it's so much better than what the alternative looks like. So you hear people saying, well—you know, like John Lewis—yes, Bernie Sanders, he wasn't there in the '60s when we were there, you know, "where were you?" When none of it was true. I find that kind of stuff so disturbing. Because that's the kind of thing that's preventing the coalition that's necessary on all levels, and of course, we see on the feminist level what is important and how we can do this, but that seems more possible to me than the larger coalition that's necessary. You hear what I'm saying?

ZE: Yes, I do, but I think that though also that that goes back to something I said earlier in the beginning about how, you know, the incredible complexity of this system of racism in this country. There is a lot of black power leading this country, you know. There's a Black President. So, but the point here is that if we don't really find ways of building a coalition that recognizes the complexity of that community, of the community of black women, of the community of white women—the point here is that the points of coalition can't be as though we're each homogenous. Right?

CTM: No, you're absolutely right.

ZE: So, but I don't think we've developed a coalitional strategy.

LEC: That's exactly the point.

CTM: No, because I think the frame—partly because the frames that we are using are not the deeply intersectional frames that we need to use. How else do you not homogenize communities? How else do you, kind of, complexify identity politics, but through thinking about the crisscrossing frames that are a part of all our communities, no matter where in the world we come from. And I think you're right, that hasn't…it's not happening in the ways that it should, that we want it to happen!

ZE: But I think we are ready. I mean I really do.

CTM: Yeah, yeah.

LEC: Exactly.

ZE: What is it going to take to mobilize the connectivity rather than the differences?

CTM: Yeah, or the divisions, more than the differences.

ZE: Right, no. The divisions, right. And even the fact that there is a hierarchy here, there is a power struggle. But I think that the complexity right now is that actually there is the new potential for a shared coalition, because there are kind of new systems of privilege that cut through old systems, that really mean we have to look for—there are new possibilities, I really do think that. And again, I think that it's part

of the success of the oppressive moment that we live in, that we're not pushing for those possibilities.

LEC: I think though, in the next probably couple of weeks to a month, it's going to come to a crisis, because the Democratic Party will have to think about the parts of Bernie Sanders' thing that they must embrace. He's brought the discussion and everything to a phase they cannot ignore and I think that that is the moment when the insertion of the necessities of the antiracist feminist—me, I'm completely hopeful this will happen. And depending on how he plays that, not do "I can't tell my supporters what to do" and kind of withdraw but—

CTM: But take positions.

LEC: Yeah.

CTM: Yeah, now you have—somehow we should move towards the—Zillah's kind of talked through all our questions actually in many ways without us having to pose them. But—

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LEC: Yeah.

ZE: But I will—I mean, on what you just said, I do think that the only way—given the work I've done supportive of the Bernie Sanders' campaign, not as really part of it—unless there are articulated antiracist feminist voices that come out, this will not happen, you know. So the climate change—I think that'll have an agenda and that'll get… push Hillary. It will.

LEC: Oh yes, that'll happen.

ZE: And that's really what's left for not only the women who have been part of Bernie Sanders' campaign. They have been—many of the women have been very open to making absolutely sure that's it's an antiracist agenda, okay, but we didn't get most of it in play. So the point here is, it would have to be put in play and, you know, I'll be talking to both of you if it looks like there could be something we could do that you know, people have to do it wherever we are.

LEC: Because that's the only kind of hope. Saying the thing about hope now, what do you see as the future of feminism that we have just talked about—*that* feminism—in this country?

ZE: I'm not sure I get—what?

LEC: In line of what we have discussed and all of the historical moments in that trajectory went through, which is yours and so much larger, right, because we've all known your work, followed everything, it's been pioneering in so many ways—always, what do you see—where is your hope for the future of feminism in this country? *That* antiracist feminism?

ZE: Well, my hope is for a deeply revolutionary antiracist feminism that embraces the complexity of the new meanings of racism and the new meanings of a misogyny that are no longer homogenous categories. The period of chattel slavery, it was homogenous. It is not homogenous today. And so, given the different layerings of class, and therefore, the different experiences of gender and race, you know, it seems to me, if we don't come to that complexity, we cannot have a feminism that matters. And for me feminism is the heart of any possibility. I am hopeful that we can really embrace the newest levels of fraction and faction within ourselves. The one thing you know, I did think about before we started, I want you to know, I was trying to think about so what were some of the most difficult conflicts in the early part of the women's movement? And it wasn't race, not in terms of whiteness at that time. It was the gay/straight split. And I remember so many of my friends who were gay and my heterosexual privilege, both having to defend myself and also expose myself. The point here is, if we took that today, it is so much more complex. I mean, there are multiple choices.

CTM: Yeah, and multiple privileges.

ZE: Right, exactly. And so I was just thinking, you know, that was the simplicity of feminism at that time and I argued early on that, with that simplicity is what radical feminism was allowed to declare, as a revolutionary critique against patriarchy. And again, if we're going to do our historical analysis, without that I don't know where we'd be and history allowed it, you know so now that I just think—

CTM: It's the same as the anti-colonial struggle and the fight against slavery. Those were moments when those arguments were key to any form of thinking about freedom or liberation.

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What does that mean now? What is it that are the sort of core issues, questions, ways of thinking, identities that need to be rethought for the same kind of passion to happen around freedom? It's such an amazingly difficult and also generative question, I think, for feminism right now.

ZE: Right. Also, just your project of what you're doing. It really seems to me that it really bespeaks the fact that nothing stands still and feminism is, you know, it is what it is in the moment that is demanding it.

LEC: Well, this moment is demanding it.

CTM: In a serious way.

ZE: But also demanding a new—

LEC: Way of thinking about it. A new frame of thinking about it. Like, how to get those experiences and those historical moments in the psyche of people now who are so antagonistic to those things, to project it forward, to make this happen that we're talking about. Like, when I think of the t-shirts and the audiences that you see at a Trump campaign, it's vile. And that is public and acceptable. And people who are running to be president of this country, it's narrow for us in saying well, it's a political kind of thing, the narrow politics. It's scary to peoples' existence. People talking about how to migrate if this is going to be the leadership. Where that level of misogyny is acceptable, it's scary. And then when it's compounded by race and everything else, you just feel like there is no space in this brand of capitalism for me and what I look like, represent, believe in, coalition struggles. No space. So it's very threatening. Very, very threatening. Because the reality is that this man could become president. I know when we think about it, hell no, we're not going to let that happen, but…

CTM: But here's the thing. He can become president but, if you think about women who have struggled in resistance in different parts of the world under the most totalitarian regimes and fascist regimes, you also need to pay attention to what are the ways we can be more courageous, be brave, be creative and imaginative about the kind of communities we're fighting for. And that's the only way we've survived, because if we actually allowed ourselves to think that the state is completely determining of who we are, or the institution we teach at, is completely determining it, we wouldn't do any of the work that we did. So part of it, I think, is also what you said earlier, one foot in and one foot out, and being able to create the communities of resistance that can help us imagine and enact, relationally at least, a different kind of future, which to me is what feminism has really radically done is provided different moments, historically, different spaces to rethink and imagine communities on different grounds than the kind of oppressive, you know, privileged capitalist sexist, misogynist, racist communities that the nation, for instance, in many places, has put in place, right? So that is really hopeful in some ways.

LEC: Yeah, it is but there are moments where I feel excited and hopeful, like I'm thinking of what the next two weeks to a month is going to be like. What those will look like, what Bernie Sanders can do, can't do and how many of us are doing all kinds of work outside that we want to impact that? So, I hear you entirely. And there are moments when I feel, "Damn, this is—", because the courage that we have seen is necessary, the courage that those women in the global South who have everything to

lose—and everything is very little—and they come out and they fight, yeah? We don't see that courage here.

CTM: Yeah, they get killed and they get assassinated.

LEC: Exactly. And we don't see that courage—

ZE: How can we not be in the streets right now?

CTM: And how can we not be in the streets? That's completely true. And that's where that whole—we're never going to end at this rate—whole ideology, a neoliberal ideology which tells people that we have it good, no matter what.

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We still are number one in certain ways and we don't feel the urgencies—except for those people who live those urgencies—we don't have to feel those urgencies. So I think those are some of the challenges of solidarity that are so hard to think within the culture we live in right now as well. Here, in the US, I mean. See what's happening in India with all of the stuff that students are organizing because the state is so clearly repressive and criminalizing? We know here, after Black Lives Matter and all of the violence against black women and the deaths of black women, that the state is a criminal and criminalizing. We know what the state is doing. But are we seeing the kind of large numbers of people out? We're not!

LEC: I was just about to say, they're out in the streets in India. They're in the streets in India. Why aren't we —?

CTM: Out in the streets!

LEC: That's my question everyday. I'm not looking in the academy. It's not there, it's not gonna happen. But why isn't it happening? We're not in the streets. I mean this country is at a crisis point. We're not on the street.

CTM: Anyway, at this point we should end or we'll get more and more into what hasn't happened versus what can be happening, which I think is—

ZE: On this, I think that if it were possible to really get just a massive coalition of women's groups out there on a given day, you know, whatever the differences between, in the same way as the Climate Change March…it was all these different groups, it wasn't unified. We were every different kind of group out there. So, if that, you know were possible and so I think that I'm hoping that maybe—

CTM: There will be a call for something like that—

ZE: One of the people that I'll meet with next week really has just millions of women on this Women for Bernie, if that could be an initial mobilizer, then—

LEC: That can happen.

ZE: And then, really just everyone we know tried to get the different groups that you're a part of. It can be chaotic, that's great!

CTM: Yeah, that's fine.

LEC: Yep.

CTM: Ok, thank you my friend. It was wonderful.

LEC: Thank you.

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