Sandy Grande

10/6/18

[00:00:12]

LEC: Okay, Sandy. Welcome. We are really happy to have you today, October 6th, to join in our kitchen-table discussions about feminist freedom warriors. And we are so pleased because we have that relationship with you from the Institute – and before, in Chandra's case. So for this, we want to start with you telling us a bit about what brought you to feminist work and feminist activism and how the two come together for you.

SG: Sure. I mean, in some ways, just given the women that raised me and how I was raised, it's hard to imagine a time when I didn't think of the world as very woman-centered, as centered around women and created by women, governed by women. To be a little bit more specific about that, we identify as Quechua. My family is from Orcotuna, Peru. Both of my parents are from the same community. I think mostly the stories I was told over and over again, about how they came about, how our lives were created here… and they pretty much are all oriented around my mom and her own agency. And that was normative within her family, I think, and her community. So it wasn't so much exceptional, although there was pride and strength and stories around that. And then also her stories of my grandmother. She only spoke Quechua, so despite not knowing English or Spanish, there's a story of how she went to the courts to regain some of our family's land that had been taken in one of the various military incursions in indigenous communities. That's a story I also remembering hearing over and over and over again. I don't know that I could think of a moment of when it clicked for me. That's what seemed normative, and I think what happened over my lifetime is I learned that that wasn't the world I was living in. That was more of the realization of when that started to happen.

CTM: So in terms of your genealogy and your travels… map that a little bit for us, so that you talk about your real conscious politicization as well.

SG: Sure… I don't know how far back to go. [*Laughs.*] But anyway, I feel like growing up again, these strong women in my life and strong stories… and then also if we think about both material and immaterial for us, in terms of our spiritual practices, many of the major thinkers are women. It's like, even the immaterial world for you is defined by women. So I think in terms of my own politicization, at least when I talk with my students, I often think about a story where I got kicked out of kindergarten on my first day of school. For some things are really silly, and this is when I think, okay, I'm in a really different space now, where it was pouring rain out, all the kids were outside of the school building, the front door was locked. And I went back, and everybody's like, "It's cold," and it's probably September. My mom was waiting in the car because it was raining, so I went back into the car, thinking, "Oh, I'll just wait in the car," and she's like, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I don't know, it's raining."

She's like, "Well, is the door locked?"

I said, "I don't know, nobody checked!"

[*Laughter*.] "Well, go open the door, and go to school!"

So I went back, and the door was open, and there was a little coat room. I say, "Hey, come on in! Everybody, come on in and come out of the rain!" So then all the kids were in the school, I still don't know what happened to the teacher, but when she came in and saw we all came in, she just started screaming at us. Like, "You're not supposed to open the door! You're not supposed to come in!" And then, "Who told you you could come in?" Of course, all of the kids turn around and look at me, and they point fingers at me. I don't remember what the situation was, but she was like, "You know, for insurance purposes…" I mean, we're five! [*Laughter*.] And then I was not happy about it, because I was not used to getting yelled at, so I'm sure I said some choice things. Already, she didn't like me. Then within the first hour, it was during free time – and this was back in the … when would I have been in kindergarten? The seventies, I guess –

[00:05:11]

CTM: And where? In the U.S.?

SG: Hartford, Connecticut.

CTM: Hartford.

SG: She literally had a box of toys for the young boys to play with and a box of toys for the young girls to play with. You can imagine what was in both. I wanted to play with the wooden train, something, in the boy's box, and I got yelled at again. She was

just like, "I don't think you're ready for kindergarten." And she sent me home. [*Laughter.*] And even then, it didn't occur to me that this is all really bad, in a sense. I was just like, "Oh, well, I guess I'm not ready for kindergarten." Because I didn't know what kindergarten was. I was like, "Whatever it is, I don't know want to be here anymore anyway."

And that just became a site of struggle for all of us, in the sense that we didn't realize school was a site of struggle, when it clearly was. It was unceasing after that. At times, I went in and out. I dropped out and went back in, whatever. It was always a struggle. I think, through that, I learned a lot about the world and that change that needs to happen, and that change happens in a variety of ways, and sometimes adults are supportive. Sometimes they're not. Most of the time, I think it's in my opinion … kind of had their finger on justice much more than adults did but didn't have the agency or power to do it. I think those formative experiences led me in various ways as I went through my education to then go back and figure out what was that really all about, what was happening. I didn't have a language to understand it, so I think a lot of my – once I got into college and graduate school – work started centering around what was that all about.

CTM: So it led you to education as a career?

SG: Yeah, I think so. Absolutely.

CTM: And then what about becoming involved in larger feminist indigenous communities' struggles?

SG: I think a lot of that… probably when I got to college? I went to Syracuse University, and so as you know, there was a lot of major Onondaga community there. It was the first time I was around a very diverse community of indigenous students, so indigenous students from all over, wherever. They have this native student group. And I'll never forget going into my very first meeting, and I've talked about the story with him since, but Rob Porter was a senior when I was a junior. Really tall guy who later went back to work at the law school at Syracuse University, I don't know if you've ever met him. But he looked totally different. He was very light-skinned. I was like, "Who is this guy, leading the native students?" [*Laughter.*] And I learned about more of the diversity of the young people who identify as indigenous. So there was some campus community activism and events and stuff there. But then I got to meet some young women from the Onondaga community there, one of whom ended up leaving school before the end of her freshman year because she got pregnant. They have a similar but different history around women at the center of Haudenosaunee life, so I think I learned a lot about their stories and their participation in the longhouse and all of that stuff, which I was very unfamiliar with. I think it was kind of mostly through those spaces and the women that I met.

And then in graduate school, it was a little bit more of an organized and concerted effort. I went to school at Kent State, so the closest city was Cleveland, which was a relocation city. There's lots of women there, women from AIM, and women running centers that went back in the day from native relocation. A good friend who since has passed, very sadly, but who also trekked her way through Syracuse at one point… her family was a family that had been relocated but also [had] very strong and deep roots in the America Indian movement, and her mom in particular had been very involved, and so she had a very compelling personality. This was when we were both students. Together we taught the first class and created the first Native Studies program at Kent State together as graduate students.

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So the work we did on some level was always informed by our grounding as indigenous women, which I think by definition sort of carries a feminist politics to it. And all throughout, as we can kind of see in the moment today too, also struggling through other feminist spaces that weren't always supportive, primarily of white women. [*Laughter*.] So trying to figure that out… which is still, I think, quite confusing… but always, on the other hand, finding circles of women and then actually work… much of the work in the likes of certainly what the two of you have been a part of: a very expressly anticolonial, antiracist, transnational, antifascist women's work, grounded in communities. That always spoke to me, made a lot of sense to me. That helped me see connections across different kinds of communities.

LEC: So when you're reflecting over your work that you've been talking about over the last decade or so, and the kinds of things you've been involved in, and the changes that you would like to see, what would you say some of those changes are? Looking at U.S. society now, looking at the state of First Nations still, what are some of the changes you would like to see in the community in women's eyes?

SG: Well, I think one of the biggest concerns and struggles for native women is the ongoing disappearance of women, the murdered and missing women. The death and violence is not going away. In Canada, there's just this disappearance of women, and it's often pregnant women, sex work … I mean, it's the same kinds of women are getting both trafficked and targeted across different communities. Similarly, in the U.S., you see some similar patterns. In the South, in Peru, and around a lot of the environmental activism, it's women leadership, leaders that are disappearing. I think that's, sadly, if you want to call it 'a lesson learned', at least in Peru, in the time of the Shining Path … the Shining Path was a very obviously grossly masculinist revolutionary, seriously patriarchal … and so they conscripted, they killed a lot of the native men without knowing again in most of the communities, they really slept on powerful we were. And the women organized and basically took them down, and that story is still not really being told. They organized militarily, they organized families,

they organized communities. And sadly, I think that in this iteration of organizing around issues around climate and the environment where women are in leadership roles, now they're being targeted. When you're starting still at that level of women being killed and disappeared, it's tough. So I don't know in terms of what needs to change.

I mean, one thing I have to say, in terms of the organizing that I've done, is to work with some folks around the issues of Standing Rock and having spent some time there, and then here in the city, there's an organization called 'Decolonize This Place'. That works across multiple, different organizations. So when I think of anybody that's really doing the work to build coalition, it's probably that organization. And at the time of Standing Rock, we were very active in that struggle to remain active, but they are very strong and kind of still continuing on with their work.

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But even in those spaces, I don't know how much attention we really pay to spaces of teaching and equal education. Whether it's K12 schools or other kinds of spaces of schooling, popular spaces of schooling ... really, that everyday act of teaching the foundations of revolutionary struggle and that discourse and that language, so you don't have kids that when they're five and they don't know what's going on, that they can actually name it. Putting different books in their hand.

I feel like that work, which of course has been consigned to women in the U.S. historically, is still very dismissed among lots of different, even progressive communities and movements. Because it's not super sexy. [*Laughs*.] It's teaching, in there, every day, putting, defining. And it's a struggle, fighting 'ed' policy, testing policies. I mean, it's not the sexy work of going out and 'doing', but to me, I wish it got more attention, because I think it could bring some change.

CTM: So education is something you feel hasn't been a site of struggle in the way that it could be. Some of it is also of course is that we don't have and we don't teach alternative narratives of struggles, revolutions, and communities that are made invisible but have always fought. I think that makes a lot of sense. It's almost like we wait until people are in universities to sort of talk about consciousness-raising, politicization, all of this stuff.

SG: Just as an example, I did some work with the folks at ... Alayna Eagle Shield formed the 'Defenders of the Water School', on-site, on camp, at Standing Rock, that schooled all the children that were at the camp. At one point, when you have over 15,000 people present, there's going to be a lot of children. And the young women had the foresight to know that, that if that was going to be an ongoing encampment,

they would have got shut down week one by Child Services, that they had children on-site that weren't in school. So they did the groundwork beforehand to do whatever paperwork, whether it was homeschooling or ... I can't remember how they managed it. And there were some mistakes made, but in any case, they figured that out. They had a structured school on a curriculum that lots of the kids could learn things, learn from the elders, it was intergenerational. It was a process to get to this point but also a place to process what they were seeing, something that was traumatic. But it was the school, the kids just gravitated towards that. After the whole thing, it's been so hard for so many of us to just get that school story. Nobody's interested in that story. They're interested in the warriors and the people who got hurt. Or even the ways in which the kitchen came up in that space, and the kind of space that kitchen became in the camp; I don't know that there was a story about that.

In New York, it's been a little bit of a struggle. There's been an orientation to do these more spectacular demonstrations, which of course are important. I would never say they aren't important. Protest in support of shutting things down, in support of whatever you can throw at 'the thing' right now, is important. And to generate press. But it's sort of the more low-intensity stuff that happens every day, and I think a lot of women in movements end up doing that work.

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LEC: Precisely why they're taking it on. It's 'women's work'. So they take care of children. Why would they talk about what's happening to the children of 15,000 people?

CTM: And actually, in fact these small daily practices are really the practices of democratization and decolonization. That we don't even want to think through. What is it about the practice that indicates larger questions about how you change hearts and mind and how you think about struggle and justice?

LEC: And how people become active agents of change, because somebody is taking care of the children, so you can become part of the march that's necessary then. Nobody thinks about that, so that's ignored.

SG: And now they're being educated in this complete opposite way, to be these compliant. There are all these charter schools, they're run by drill sergeants. They have to sit a certain ... I mean, it's completely damaging. That's why we struggle at universities when we get these kids, and they're like, "Oh!"

CTM: But also, so much of the part of indigenous history, with all the boarding schools and all of that, has been about that kind of education and schooling as a form of decolonization. Thinking about the freedom schools, which we talk about bow, and how significant they were, but we're not talking about anything similar in this context

at all. So that's interesting, no? Maybe we have to start thinking about what it means to have freedom schools again, you know? For different communities and for across communities.

LEC: Because education, as you see, it is mainstream. It's really designed to create conformity, trying to get them to conform, so any kind of resistance should be really brought to light.

SG: Now I feel like it's designed for sure to do that, and even deeper than that in some ways, to destroy any kind of collectivity or community. It's all individualized learning. That's polarizing. We're going to create a learning that's just for Linda and then just for Chandra. I can't think of anything more frightening, honestly. So they can't even imagine what a collective is or what public is. The whole point really is to dismantle not just the actual public, because that's been happening, but even a sense or desire for a public.

CTM: And that is deeply scary.

LEC: Sure.

CTM: We confront this all the time in our classrooms.

LEC: Our students don't know how to think in terms of a collective. Students will write you and say, "What can I do in my community? This course has gotten me thinking, but what can I do?" There's no sense of beyond the self. Because the education system itself is all about individualism, and that's what gets rewarded.

CTM: Which, of course, fits corporatization, neoliberalism.

LEC: The whole university structure.

CTM: Moving towards authoritarianism.

SG: Everything is 'on demand'. We don't even watch that show together. It used to be so common.

CTM: Which, of course, was a part of all of our cultures, historically.

SG: Almost no family, even. So I definitely think about that more and more, especially when I think about the kind of work that you guys are doing. We somehow really struggle – and I don't even know who I mean precisely when I say 'we' – but there's clearly this long history, particularly of women doing this organizing, collectives, the [inaudible], the freedom schools, whatever. Then there's 'new collectives', but I don't know how much we are ...

CTM: Aware of the ...

SG: Building, growing together. Whether it's Black Lives Matter or ... they've been actually quite good and conscious about talking about connections of a legacy that they've been building on, but ...

CTM: Do you see some of this within indigenous communities, specific to indigenous feminist communities?

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SG: I think there's more of a consciousness maybe, about, like you guys were saying, what's the genealogy of the struggle? What's come before? Who are our scholarly ancestors? At least in the U.S., the collectives, the social movement stuff, again, that's kind of been the spectacle and the eye. It's still been male-dominated spaces; that's the American-Indian movement. Even though there were women in all of those spaces. It's similar struggles to continue to surface, how women have been engaged with these questions for so long. But the struggle seems to be around, I don't know, helping others to see how they remain relevant? I'm not really sure why it seems like it just keeps getting disappeared or dismissed or erased or whatever. Other than that, this is a political climate that seems to just swallow everything other than white masculinist ... Really horrible and violent.

LEC: In terms of education, listening to what you're saying, I hear there's some of this ... there's a kind of education efficiency. For example, I was thinking last week, now we can have so many films on campus at SU. So it's beneficial to tell the students – in a way, you're thinking efficiency-wise – "Look at the film before we come to class." So you don't get to do the film in-person. "Look at it and then we'll talk about it." So much is missed in doing that.

CTM: Yeah, because you're not watching something together.

LEC: You're not watching something together, and what is happening in the processing, you're bringing new individual thoughts. So much of education is geared towards this individuality. And I call it "efficiency education", because you're saving time, it's saving this. But it's a problem. Because it's preventing a sense of the collective. So that's why you will get students writing and saying, "So how would you suggest I start something in my community?" There's no connection between the school and the community, between the education and the community, between the self and the community. There's no connection, so part of this is by design. You have all of these terrible things happening in education, but you don't have any sense of "How do we organize to protest against this to force change?"

SG: Some don't even know who their community is. I mean, I've heard that from quite a number of students. "I'm not really sure," or don't feel like they belong to any particular community. And it's absolutely by design. Sometimes it's even sold to

them as a kind of empowerment or agency. "You don't want to be dragged down." I don't know, but it's like, "What's your voice?" Certainly, in the political discourse, it's all about everybody's truth. "What's your truth? And what's your truth?" It's not like, "Let's not draw together and figure out what kinds of truths are circulating." It's like, "My personal truth, my personal everything. My personal medicine is completely transformed, geared towards whatever problem."

CTM: You've talked a little bit about the work you're doing and what you're thinking. Tell us a little bit specifically about the work you've been doing for a while, both scholarly and activist, and then where you see yourself going with this?

SG: I think there's two strands of work right, or maybe they've always been there, I always try to balance it. So one is a real commitment to the space of teaching, between teachers, whatever. Trying forever to fight against the encroachment of corporate actors in that space. It's just a tsunami that's completely taken over public school, teacher education, every aspect of education, curriculum development. It's really challenging.

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Because at least on paper, native communities have the sovereignty to really design our own educational system. It would take a lot of pushing to actually have that sovereignty recognized, but to work with communities to really recognize that themselves ... because often communities want the legitimacy of whatever the settler state is offering, in terms of test scores or all of that. In a sense, they know both that native students, as one example, perform poorly, but they also feel like the project should be about getting them to have good test scores, instead of, well, let's just look at what the test is doing in the first place and do something else.

So that's ongoing, and in terms of just projects coming up, I'm going to be meeting with some of the folks at the NIEA, the National Indian Education Association Conference in Hartford. I might start doing some partnership work with them in the Indigenous Teacher's Ed program. And then some work with teachers out at Sitting Bull college in North Dakota. So that seems like it will always be important to me, just a [inaudible] of what it means to work in educational spaces.

In terms of my scholarly work, for the past ten, eleven years now, I worked as a primary caregiver for my aging parents. My mom passed away in 2014, after ten years of some medical chronic and acute illnesses. And my dad is ninety, he'll be ninety-on in January. Very healthy, but I care for him. And so my new project, which I hope will come out relatively soon, is really looking at indigenous elders and aging as another site of post-struggle but also trying to define spaces of resistance really, in the function elders serve in communities' lives. How does that map onto how in the

modern inner workings of the settler state, that the aging population – and we're going to be hearing more and more about that, because I think it's by 2025 that all the Baby Boomers will be at least 65? – and so there's a lot of anxiety on the part of the settler state around that. If we're not going to have someone do all the math, what's going to happen to social security? So I do think a lot of the uptick that I experience in the discourse around individual responsibility, and it's always been there, but there's certain neoliberal intensifications around that. They're talking about individual responsibility for your health or for everything, as a form of empowerment and agency. What I think it really is, which is the state stepping back from responsibility. [*Laughter.*] So really looking at aging as a critical analytic in all of the work we do. I've certainly ignored it in my work, so you can just imagine. We always talk about the subject that people write about in their work; the default subject is always the 'white male', and I think people have worked hard to disrupt that, but I think it's almost always too the 'young' subject. And we don't think about ...

LEC: We forget about the older ...

SG: The aging subject, the not-able-bodied subject. So I think the folks doing work in queer and critical disability studies and stuff like that, I've looking at that literature too.

CTM: Very interesting.

LEC: In the work that you have done, in the schools and outside, the hope that you have, what are some of the challenges that you have seen? Two parts to this. What are some of the challenges that you have encountered, and what has happened in addressing those challenges? And what kind of hope do you see for the future?

SG: That's a tough question right now. [*Laughter*.]

LEC: First part could be the challenges.

SG: Yeah. I mean, I think that there's just always a challenge to kind of register the distinctions around indigeneity. Particularly when you're trying to form spaces of solidarity and coalition and the articulation of that difference without registering it as a hierarchy or anything. That has always been fraught.

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But within a U.S. context, one of the ways that I understand it is, within the space, having always had sovereign nations, many of whom never certainly relented or gave up their sovereignty in many ways ... many nations have treaties with the U.S. government. So the political project was never about inclusion or never about extension of rights or an enfranchisement, and there's a history of that among other groups, even women, like the struggle to vote, the struggle for citizenship, always to

kind of be recognized by the settler state. And I think it's be a really different project, which isn't to say there can't be at all ... I think one of the things, at least in Native Studies and native organizations, there's a lot of attention right now to how do we map those tensions and intersections with other groups that we see ourselves in alignment with and also struggling. But when you have fundamentally different relationship to the settler state, that can get challenging.

CTM: Very difficult.

SG: So I think that's a challenge, and certainly the ongoing challenges of kind of situating women at the center of a lot of this work is ongoing. And then I think, in terms of educational work, education as a field is very conservative. Even if it's not how we think of conservativism in the traditional way, even in progressive spaces, media has always been seen as a socializing agent. So the question of appropriateness always gets raised. "Is that appropriate for little kids to watch? Is that appropriate?" It's always that question, which is interesting. Because I think it's seen as an institution of socialization as opposed to disruption, and I think maybe what we really need right now is institutions of disruption. It's a similar struggle to when I worked with, and I'm just starting this work around, elderly people. They have a sense of [how] that part of your life is really about decline. So we really talked about older people as having a kind of agency, somewhat moving against the grain.

And I think all of that, maybe, can get wrapped up too neatly in the sense [that] the main struggle is really around a liberal politics, that imagines what the perfect liberal subject is, the citizen-subject. Even if it's a woman, even if it's, you know, whatever, a fundamental belief in "We got to make this work, whatever this is", that just always emerges as a central challenge.

In terms of what's hopeful ... [*Laughs*] ... if you think that it's so extreme right now, that people are asking questions that they never asked before.

CTM: That's hopeful, right?

SG: Yeah, they see the limits of liberals' 'civil society'. I think they do. I hope they do. I think people understand at a deeper level, although when you see the statistics of where white men stand ... [*Laughs.*] I'm not so sure, but I want to believe they understand how deep patriarchy runs, how it is so definitive of even the institutions of this society. And then they also see white supremacy and white nationalism in a way on display, that hasn't been in quite a while so publicly. So the intersections of those things, I think, are giving more people pause. I want to believe, anyway. So that seems to open up spaces of possibility, to kind of then get in there. And I'd love to see a freedom school movement. Of "Okay, I'm a young woman, let's say, and I

watched this now, and I understand it's awful, where do I go now?" There really aren't those spaces. I'd love to see those spaces get created.

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CTM: It's almost like, popular education, you know? The beginning of popular education sites ...

LEC: When I was growing up, yeah.

CTM: Now, for young children. For little ones.

SG: So The Peoples' Forum place is supposedly going to be that.

CTM: It's going to be doing that?

SG: And I went in, I didn't see any books for little kids. I said, "I'm going to donate. I'm going to carry and donate. Start your children's library." They're like, "Oh, that's great," and I said–

CTM: Because there are some amazing things around now, children's books.

SG: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

CTM: [*To Linda*] So—should we move to this one? ... Sandy, because I've actually seen you over the years, I've also seen you in many, many contexts where you are in conversation with various communities and sets of people, I actually really see you as someone who has crossed various borders. I think that happens to some of us who are not born here but who have genealogies that go to other geopolitical spaces, right? We don't have a choice. We do it. And then we have to figure out how to bring those parts of ourselves also into where we are, and then connect. It allows us sometimes to connect with sets of people that we may not have connected with, had we grown up in the U.S., for instance. So talk a little bit about what you see as the sort of ways to make connections and solidarities and coalitions across the various divides and borders that we find ourselves facing at the moment? Even from your own experiences of when you felt really ...

SG: I mean, in truth, I haven't given it a whole lot of thought, but I don't know how much of it is how I was raised or my own experiences coming in and out of the U.S. often when I was younger. But I do feel comfortable in a lot of different sites of struggles, even if they might be quite different. And I'm trying to think of what the connection ... I mean, I would have to say, no matter what community that I might work in, there has to be a shared understanding and acceptance around an anticapitalist agenda and an anticolonial agenda. Those two things. And I think those cut across always, but especially now, when you think about what's happening in the Global South, what's happening here, what's happening in so many different places

in the world, and globalization, itself, which I think is sort of a depoliticized way to talk about the circuits of global capital. But it's inescapable, in a way. I think it always was, but it's inescapable now, in a way, to make sure that is the ground around that we walk. And then certainly if you're engaging those struggles and practices, you have to center women and feminist frameworks. I mean, I guess you don't have to, because somehow people manage ...

CTM: To not do that, exactly. [*Laughter.*] That's true.

SG: [*Laughs*.] But you have to if there's going to be any kind of change. So I think both as women doing the work, maybe, and constantly kind of making that apparent, seems hopeful to me. But I don't know. It's almost as if as the machine keeps grinding in a way that's just so offensive, it seems odd to point to that as a site of hope or possibility. But it almost seems to be emerging in that way. I think 'crisis', as much as I think that's a problematic framing but, it does have a way to galvanize and find yourself. You find yourself working with people you might not have worked with.

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And I think organizing, as a praxis, in general forces you to just ... whether it was 'No DAPL', a really simple initiative. We just want no DAPL, we just don't want a pipeline. If you can organize around that, and if you can't and everything, there's a lot of teaching around it, there's a lot of teach-ins on the ground. But you can come from lots of different places and situations and communities and understand you need water. There was power, for me, around that. And so the rate at which things are happening, I think maybe our struggles will become that principle in a way. Like, we want water.

CTM: And in a way, that struggle ... the more you learn about it and can teach about it, the more explicitly, I think, it becomes anticapitalist.

SG: Absolutely.

CTM: Right? Because –

SG: And feminist.

CTM: And it has to—yeah, exactly. Because who are the people at the center of this? Who are the people doing the work? And this is global. So that makes sense.

LEC: We're just about wrapped up now, so we usually finish up by asking, what kind of future you envision? What would you like to see? We all have our imaginary of a 'tomorrow', especially in the current state of things now.

SG: Yeah. Boy.

LEC: Thinking across the questions, thinking across the solidarities that we talked about as possible, which you were just referring to. What kind of 'tomorrow'?

SG: I mean, it's hard to imagine a 'tomorrow' without struggle. But in my ideal, if it were just going to be a nirvana or utopian kind of idea, it would absolutely be multigenerational. That's really important to me. It would cut across multiple communities, mostly communities of color, with women of color centrally situated in the space. And for me, I think a lot of that automatically assumes a connection to the nonhuman, so whether it's women as water and ceremonies on water that center women. And whatever our relatives are, however we imagine them. It's like, all of us have the opportunity to live as we can, [as] what sustains us. Not driven by ...

CTM: Exploitation?

SG: Profit motives. Exploitation. All of that. Happy. Lovely. [*Laughter*.] I don't know what's possible, but we keep fighting for it.

LEC: We believe it's possible. That's why we fight for it. We know another world is possible. We know it, and we want to be part of creating that other world. Because this kind of hell can't continue, and it shouldn't.

CTM: And I think we occupy another world, when some of us are together and are able within our collectives to actually dream big and interact with each other on grounds –

LEC: In a way that's not normative.

CTM: – yeah, that is not normative, that's decolonized. 'Equal' is not the word I like but on grounds that are actually not about hierarchy ...

LEC: Yeah, levels of sameness, beginning with the sharing of understanding. So there's empathy, there's heart, there's love, there's soul in what we do, and for whatever that purpose is, it's a shared hierarchy. And a spiritual centering of that makes that possible. It's not normative, but that's the imaginary that keeps us going.

[00:50:02]

CTM: But this is the kind of education that would be fabulous, no? To really envision education on these grounds and some of these values.

SG: That's when it feels most alive, when you're actually working towards something. Whether it's stopping a pipeline or defending your community from some kind of encroachment or protecting women's bodies or not wanting black people to get killed by the police ... [*Laughs*.] When it's concretized, and you're organized, I can't imagine my life without being involved in some sort of organizing, because otherwise it just seems pointless. You're writing into the darkness, or you're teaching

into the darkness, or you have to connect it to something. And I think our students are desperate for that. I know that they are. Because I usually teach that way, and they talk about that. It's so much more meaningful when you connect it to something.

LEC: They gravitate toward that kind of pinnacle.

SG: Absolutely. They know what's most important.

CTM: And there's a lot of things they know that we don't. Even the way life is organized nowadays.

LEC: So when you have a pedagogical practice that allows for that, to emerge and enter that space – you learn from them, they learn from you – then you are shaping them for a new tomorrow.

SG: Because then it becomes about the project and the community, you're organizing around it, and not the 'self'. I think we see too much, especially in the academy, promotion of the 'self'. And then for them, they have to do stuff in a collective, some for the first time ever. But they get through it, they survive. [*Laughs*.]

CTM: Wonderful. Sandy, thank you.

LEC: This was great. Thank you so much.

SG: It's so nice to be here.

CTM: There's so much work to do, no? [*Laughs*.]

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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.