#FeministFrequencies: Womanism Rising

*The National Women’s Studies Association*

*July 2024*
0:00:04.3 Kristian Contreras: Hello everyone, and welcome to another installment of Feminist Frequencies. My name is Kristian Contreras. My gender pronouns are she, her, hers, and I have the pleasure of serving as NWSA's interim Executive director. We call this time in NWSA's history or growing history. As our chrysalis season, we're mindful about pouring into our communities and honoring the many which ways that our field of women and gender and sexuality studies are constantly shape shifting and expanding to create more and more and more and more. And so I am joined and deeply excited to be in community with some of the most incredible writers and thinkers and ideators and interventionists and dreamers. We are joined to celebrate the upcoming release of Womanism Rising Womanist studies on its own, which is set for publication this fall from the University of Illinois Press. This collection of work is edited by Dr. Layli Maparyan.

0:01:04.7 KC: And I'm joined with amazing contributors. You're gonna hear me say amazing a lot of times, so if you're a betting person, I would just set aside a penny for every time you hear those words come out of my mouth. This series is edited by Dr. AnaLouise Keating, who is also generous in penning a Loving Forward for Womanism Rising. This series is called Transformations, womanist, feminist and Indigenous Studies. I'm gonna move into some short, abbreviated introductions for our contributors here. Everyone essentially has a resume that is longer than a CVS receipt, but I did my best to make sure that I was able to capture some of the incredible components of what they have offered in our field and beyond.

0:01:50.3 KC: Dr. Susanna Barlow is a writer, educator, quiet organizer, community outreach manager reckoning with white feminism. Her published work reckons with the legacies of white feminism and is passionate about putting research into practice and bridging the gaps between resources and people. Dr. Sara Haq is currently an independent scholar based in Lahore, Pakistan. She's working with a group of locally based students and scholars to establish an independent gender and sexuality studies Library and Humanity Center. The first of its kind in all of Pakistan. Dr. Osizwe Harwell received her PhD in African-American Studies at Temple University. She's a veteran educator, consultant and public scholar whose work examines contemporary black women’s activism, contemporary black fiction and Africana gender and sexuality studies.

0:02:44.2 KC: Last, but certainly not least is the series editor, or rather the collections editor, Dr. Layli Maparyan, who is the Catherine Stone Kaufman Executive Director of the Wellesley Centers for Women and Professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College. She is best known for her scholarship in the area of womanism and is the author of two groundbreaking texts in the field of Womanist studies, the Womanist Reader, which was published in 2006, and the Womanist Idea, which was published in 2012. So, as you can imagine, this group of folks are incredible, not only in their scholarship, but in the threading together of how there are different collective stories and introduction to womanism has given way to this new collection. And so first, to kind of allow us to dive deep in the sea of the dolphins of womanism, I'm interested in your story of arrival. And so for Dr. Maparyan, how would you describe how this third installment of what you referenced as the arc of Womanist Genesis came to be?

0:03:41.0 Layli Maparyan: Thank you for that question, Kristian. Actually I think that from the beginning when I started publishing on womanism, I was very aware of this intergenerational arc of the work because there had been women doing Womanist scholarship before me. And the first volume of the Womanist Reader, was an attempt to show that body of work as the beginning of a new subfield within women's studies or actually interdisciplinary studies. And after reading their
work and being so inspired by it and just being captivated by the Womanist Idea my takeaway was that everybody talks about womanism, but nobody defines it. And I liked that it wasn't really being defined, because when you define stuff, it pins it down. But at the same time, there was an organizing principle within it, and I wanted to speak to that, and I wanted to illuminate it more because I felt like it was very powerful, had a lot of healing energy for the world, and it needed to be named in a way that was more elaborate.

0:04:48.2 LM: So my second book, the Womanist Idea, was essentially my own monograph, my own contribution to the discourse by saying, here's what womanism looks like to me. Here's where I think it came from. Here's what I think it's trying to do, and here's what I hope it will do. And in the process of working on that book, of course, I was coming across many other people who were utilizing womanism in their work, particularly new emerging scholars. And I had a desire to show the influence of this idea and how it was evolving and spreading in a very organic way through the work of other people. So I said, let me curate a third volume that is really like a birthing project. It's like the project of saying, look at all these new ways in which womanism is being utilized or deployed or developed. And so I had already been working with or paying attention to a lot of my colleagues who are right here in the podcast with me. They, they did some very important seminal work around expanding the definitions and the reach and the understandings of womanism. And so I'm glad that we can all be here today. Honestly, the arc was about showing the foremothers and then bringing it forward to the younger generations of women as scholars.

0:06:07.8 KC: Thank you. Layli. I'm listening to you. And then I have my scribble scrabble hieroglyphics worth of notes to my right. And some of the terms that you're naming and the journey that you're describing. I'm like, I had hearts and stars and I'm like, for me a short component of the collection. I felt excited, I felt curious, and I also felt this emanating joy in your introduction of talking about not necessarily trying to capture the fullness because that would be impossible, of how womanism has iterated and shape shifted throughout time and it across so many different disciplines in genre. And I'm thinking again about the threading together of contributors like Susannah, Sara, and Osizwe. And so I asked this question to bring you all joyously into the conversation about what it was like to answer the call, to think about your own relationship to womanism and offer your own narrative and your own intimacies to what this collection can offer the field and beyond if the spirit moves you friend jump right in.

0:07:18.1 Dr. Osizwe Harwell: So yeah, answering the call I think it's really awesome because having the opportunity to see Dr. Maparyan's work evolve as a student and then young scholar at the time, I had the fortune of presenting at conferences with her and working for a bit of time at Georgia State University as the Womanist Idea was coming out. So we had the reader the concept was moved forward, it sharpened in the Womanist Idea. And so the coming forth I think for me was this opportunity in this edited volume to utilize and demonstrate its practice. And so again, I was probably fresh out of grad school when we started working on this and maybe not fresh out a couple years. And working on my first manuscript and thinking about what anti-sexist theories and liberatory theories look like, and just putting it in action so it's clear. So I'm very excited about this volume. I'm excited about my contribution and the ways that it demonstrates what womanist practice, what womanist scholarship looks like in concrete ways.

0:08:31.1 KC: And can I just add something? 'Cause I kind of wann tell how I knew each of you all and how it came into the volume. And I have to say that, Osizwe you were working on linking womanism to mental health and at the time, mental health wasn't a big social issue like it is now. It
was still a little bit, I don't wanna say in the shadows 'cause that's too strong of a word, but it wasn't linked to social justice in the same way that it is now. But I saw in your work something very prescient about linking mental health to social justice and looping wellbeing into our social justice and our transformational work. And womanism is all about the whole person. Womanism is all about body, mind, heart, soul, emotion, spirit, everything including physical wellbeing, everything. And you had that vision very early and that was one of the reasons that your chapter was positioned first in the book because it was a way of opening up this whole new approach to social transformation.

0:09:32.2 DH: Absolutely. Absolutely. And so I think she's referring to my first book, this Woman's Work, the Writing and Activism of Bebe Moore Campbell is an intellectual biography that talks about this author activist in her own journey as a mother and burgeoning public health activist. And she is also one of the subjects in my opening article or chapter who cares about black women. And so as I was telling this story of her activism, I was noticing a narrative about self-care that was not in the scope of this first work, but it was kind of a next direction. And so this volume has offered me the opportunity to unpack what it looks like to think about black women's activism from a womanist lens the holism, the spiritual grounding and how to draw from it, insight on what it means to care for ourselves and to navigate the burnout of activism towards a path of spiritualized, self-care. So that's kind of what the two works we're doing and how chapter one unfolds. So I'll stop there.

0:10:41.8 LM: It's also relevant now.

0:10:44.3 KC: Can I say, as an aside, no one asked me, but I wanna give my connection here. Is that one of my first conferences for NWSA when I was an administrator I was able to attend your session on Bebe Moore Campbell, your book. And so I was a little, little in terms of age, not in terms of height in my journey of understanding myself as a feminist. And I believe the discussant was, I think Dr. Takiyah Amin. And I was just sitting again, getting carpal tunnel taking notes so I could articulate my own relationship to mental health and naming that as a black woman and in my community. And so again, just excited to have sat in the audience and be in this conversation with you is a gift.

0:11:29.2 DH: Absolutely.

0:11:32.1 KC: And thank you for the work, but that's just me. We'll talk offline. But the threading together is yeah, fighting behind the scenes like everyone's story of arrival, but also the invitation to the call as you mentioned, Layli.

0:11:44.2 DH: Yeah. Synchronicity.

0:11:46.2 KC: So I'll stop yip, yapping and make space for our, for Sara, and Susannah.

0:11:54.2 Sara Haq: I'll go [laughter] I met Layli at a regional NWSA conference actually I think it was in Atlanta and it was probably 2011-ish. I was a masters student at the time, and I was just presenting my very first conference, paper, [laughter] and Layli approached me afterwards and was like, yeah, we need to talk. And so similar to Dr. Harwell story I was a baby, not even a, I wouldn't use the word scholar, I was a student. I was a baby grad student. And since then our relationship with mentor/mentee, a friendship has developed. And we have kept in touch ever since. I think I
submitted this chapter in 2015, if I remember correctly, when I was a PhD, early PhD student. So I'm so excited to finally see this come to fruition.

0:12:48.1 LM: Yeah. And I’m gonna say a word about that conference. I think it was actually in DC it might've been like George Mason University or something like that. But in any event, when I saw the conference program and I saw Sara, doing something at the intersection of Sufism and feminism or Sufism and sexuality studies, and I said, Sufism is a mystical point of view, and I was having such a hard time finding anybody else that was bringing mysticism into social change or feminism or any of that. And I was like... And so I was so excited to discover someone else, and I was worried that other people would tell her, don't keep going down this path. I wanted to make sure I was there to say, keep going down this path. And so I feel such great sense of gratitude and good luck that she did in fact carry that work forward and that we have continued to be in touch and that now the volume is graced with a chapter by her that really showcases that work.

0:13:50.0 Susanna Barlow: Yeah, I really appreciate knowing these stories because of course lately I know my connection with you and I have seen other people's names over the years related to the book and other spaces. And so it's beautiful to see how all the threads weave together. I think we first met when I was also a graduate student and I invited you to be a keynote speaker for a conference that I was organizing because I was looking for someone to speak to womanism. And I talk about this a little bit in the chapter also, but as a grad student who wanted to kind of figure out what was going on with white feminism before that conversation was in the place that it's in today I was really digging around and womanism was the things that I was discovering through Alice Walker and Toni Cade Bambara and Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde were things that were awakening me to both the realization of how like incomplete my education had been, and also to how much more work there was to do.

0:14:41.6 SB: And so just the opportunity to bring you there and connect with you at that stage when, I can't remember if The Womanist Reader was out or if it was like coming out but just the opportunity to connect with you at that stage was really powerful. And then just in terms of getting the call to the book, I believe it came around right at the time that I was fired for supporting a student mural of Assata Shakur. And so having... I was in a moment in my journey when I was trying to figure out what is my relationship to academia even at this point. Like, am I, 'cause I started working at a drop-in center for youth who were unhoused. Like I was just heading in different directions, but also still having the opportunity to be engaged in this project. And so having the space to connect with a project that was centered around womanism as something that is so important not only to my values and my scholarship, but also just to my own journey into becoming more whole I think was a really important... Was really important timing for me.

0:15:39.5 SB: And it always feels like an honor to be invited to be part of these conversations, and I just really appreciate being here.

0:15:46.1 LM: Yeah. And I just wanna say, I also remember that first conference where you invited me and I also remember hearing you present your own work, and you immediately struck me as a very courageous scholar who was willing to wrestle with big questions that made other people uncomfortable. And to be a white woman that was actively engaging womanism and saying, what does this do to inform my own work? You never took a co-opting posture because some people have taken a different approach to connecting womanism to white women's experience and their place of intellectual work within women's studies. But you always had such a collaborative curious
kind of very pragmatic spirit that actually has only shown up more. I mean, in terms of how you dealt with the whole Assata Shakur incident and the things you've done since then.

0:16:37.1 LM: It was more important than ever for me to include your work in the volume because you deserve to be part of that. And you show the contours of womanism as being very broad and embracing but also helping us answer some very challenging questions. So I'm really thankful. And in fact, I can say about each of you here, that you've done things inside and outside academia that really show what womanism tries to show about the way that academic and non-academic environments need to work together and co inform each other. This is not just a discourse that's sitting on a shelf. We're all out in the world doing things and we're not just doing things that other people have set up. We're blazing paths in terms of the ways that we're doing it. So that's another reason why I'm glad that all of you are in this conversation today.

0:17:27.0 DH: Thank you, Layli. Absolutely. This is kind of the outside of academia group.

[laughter]

0:17:34.2 LM: I mean, half the book is people outside academia. It's so interesting because when we started, we were all in our little scholarship things, but then we've all spun off in different directions and the work people have done has just been so amazing that I hope the people who read the book really stop and think, how do we get from point A to point B with each one of these contributors? And why is that important to what this text is about and to the kind of political work it's trying to do in the world. It's a very important part of the story.

0:18:03.8 DH: Yeah, I was gonna say, the work definitely belongs in the world. So that's definitely what this volume does, is it brings it into the world and it also kind of speaks to the mentorship, the network community and relationships that have been built around this. So even just the fact that we've all been at NWSA and even in these other sessions and just how that births community. And so Dr. Maparyan, I think that really speaks to like the community that you've created with this volume. I'm like so excited for like the release party or something.

0:18:38.5 LM: I know.

[overlapping conversation]

0:18:39.6 DH: In the same room with something.

0:18:40.8 LM: I can only imagine.

0:18:40.8 DH: Because it's pretty amazing what you have curated.

0:18:45.0 LM: Well, we've been together because there's no one person making community. We all have to network and we've done it and it's gonna keep going.

0:18:53.3 KC: So. Wow. And a really fun part about being a listener and later on the editor of this video recording. But the conversation in general is my mind is just connecting different phrases that I remember. And I was highlighting furiously with my color coded system. Because earlier, Susannah, you shared that this journey to becoming more whole is how you would describe what it
was like to put this piece out into the world. A continuation of your commitments to talking about
the fissures and challenges of white feminism. And then Sara, as I was doing my internet sleuthing,
trying to understand more about your staunch connection to protecting yourself and recovering from
the harms of the Academy. And then doing bold work to then bring what is possible through a
woman and gender and a feminist perspective to folks in Pakistan already doing the work, but
creating something new new to Pakistan that is. And then for Osizwe Wage I had underlined him.

0:20:01.8 KC: I might get this tattooed on one of my arms, but I'm afraid of pain. So maybe not so
maybe temporary, but ensuring our own survival was paramount to the way that you talk about
healthcare systems. The way they act upon us, the way that we, as women of color and all different
orientations of our social positions are thinking about a feminist future, or even just being alive in
this next generation of the world and different realities and realms. But what really sits with me is
how your works is in constant conversation with everyone else on my bookshelf. And I've shared
with you all a question around Gloria Anzaldúa mentioning of what writing means to us and what
this process looks like for you all. Now, Dr. Heidi R. Lewis, who is our 22nd president of the
National Women's Association is also a contributor to this amazing collection of work. She's not
able to be with us today because she is fighting for the rights of her students at Colorado College.
But in our conversations to prepare, we talked about how this was a years-long process. And I think
back to what you shared in the volume two, Dr. Maparyan, is that we don't always have to be in
constant motion.

0:21:13.6 KC: And for the listeners or perhaps the folks in this virtual space, you might be saying,
Kristian, that's a lot. Where are we going with this? Well, friend, let's bring it back to this
relationship to writing and creating. I think again, as a student of womanism, that has been the most
generative component for myself, that there is always more to create and reclaim. And my question
to you is how the process of shaping your work over many moons, many months, many Zoom
rooms and phone conversations and Word documents you might've lost and renamed, how has this
writing process shaped you in turn? The way that Gloria Anzaldúa writes, because the world I
create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing, I put orde

0:22:09.5 LM: That's a great question, but I want my fellow contributors to jump in first.

0:22:14.5 DH: You asked like some very like layered profiling questions.

[overlapping conversation]

0:22:24.5 DH: So I'm gonna do like a three tier, like, so I'm gonna just, so personally, when I
started this I think after a month after I turned in the manuscript I got pregnant, I was doing at home
insemination as a lesbian mom, single lesbian woman. And so I was in this creative process and I
tried like four or five times and the... Like weeks after I submitted and press send, all kinds of weird
things happen. Like one, I got racially profiled and arrested, never happened in my life. I have a
whole piece that I need to write about that. The fifth and final, like attempt to conceive at home
worked. And I was just in career transition outside of academia. And I think just simply being on
the journey of motherhood is its own conversation about activism, burnout and self care that I didn't
know I needed. And also I ended up in the Time since it's first writing being a two-time breast
cancer survivor. So I'm currently like wrapping up treatment now, my hair's growing back and
things like that. And so it became like living the work, like you're writing about how you do
spiritualized self care.

0:23:54.8 DH: And I think womanism gave me clarity. I think on the professional side to have the tools and the structure to analyze and discuss living longer and doing the work or setting boundaries. Like now that boundaries is popular saying no, is popular talking about mental health and wellness is popular, but it was not at the time. And so I was able to talk about it. With womanism, because I think what I learned about myself academically is it's not about a label that you have on your identity and your politics. It's more about what tools work for the project you're on. And so there may be tools where queer theory or black queer theory work for what I'm discussing. There may be conversations where progressive black masculinity provides some language about what I wanna discuss. But womanism and womanist theory gave me the conversation to talk about the intersections of my spiritual, social, political, and physical wellbeing. And so that was beautiful. And so since then I've been able to deliver consulting and workshops to communities and organizations like national domestic workers talking about caregiver burnout and wellbeing.

0:25:09.2 DH: And I've been able to use this work motherhood and burnout, grief during the pandemic. And so this really opened up something that I couldn't have envisioned. And I think to connect to Gloria Anzaldúa, like it helped me to articulate something that I could only imagine, which is a way to take back our wellness without putting down our activism entirely. So it was just wonderful to do that multi-layered transformation over the course of five, 10 years. I won't say how long my son's seven, so a long time. I didn't know I needed it though, but I needed what I wrote as much as I needed to share it.

0:25:47.0 KC: It sounds like it brought out your inner priestess.

0:25:53.5 DH: Well, I think I became a licensed spiritual practitioner in that time. So that also happened. So yeah, and in fact, I had no, no interest in like spiritual leadership. And now I work in several communities as a spiritual leader.

0:26:09.0 KC: So, I mean, it's all about this holistic healing that the world doesn't even know it needs, but it needs. How can each of us show up with what we have to do that healing with the world as we also do it on ourselves?

0:26:21.7 SB: Yes.

0:26:22.5 SH: And there's something to be said about those nine years. I think the number nine as an odd number has significance in Sufi metaphysics, as well as in thinking about numerology, Islamic numerology. There's something about odd numbers, seven, threes, nines.

0:26:45.5 SH: And I don't think that's a coincidence that we're coming around this nine years later. I'll just leave that out there. I know it has nothing to do with your question.

0:26:50.9 DH: No, it's profound. Now I'm gonna be reading about it.

0:26:58.8 KC: I'm very womanist for you to bring that up. See, that's odd.

[overlapping conversation]
0:27:00.9 KC: To bring that up.

0:27:04.3 SB: It does feel so connected to me. I'm sorry. Sara I don't mean to cut you off.

0:27:04.4 SH: No, no, please go ahead.

0:27:07.6 SB: It feels so connected to me because what I've been reflecting on is that I also that 2015 was such a turning point year for me, a really close friend of my life had breast cancer also at that time and is well now and thankfully has been doing great. And I'm really glad to hear that you are also well. And through the course of writing this, I was starting to do somatic abolition work, although at the time it wasn't called that I was emailing everybody. I knew saying, do you know any therapists who do like body trauma healing work around racism? 'Cause I feel like I have some shit to work out, but I don't know where to go to or what to do about it. And so this chapter was really just a part of that for me. And I think one of the things that it did was it helped me take this thing that I called in the chapter, toxic white femininity and take it out of my body and look at it and just own that that was a thing that I felt like I needed to name and then maybe not even feel that way anymore.

0:28:05.6 SB: And now I've actually, I've seen that phrase circulate around, right? And so there's like this tension of you wanna name something 'cause you feel like it's important, but then there's this little voice of capitalism in the back of your head that says, who's the first person to name it? Am I even relevant anymore? And so I think just having to work through all of the healing that needed to happen at that time for me, at the same time that I'm working on this chapter has allowed me to like release it. And one of the big things that I think it got me into is that now I'm part of a collective of women who does this popular education work that is very centered around the personal work is necessary for us to get into doing the politics.

0:28:12.0 SB: And so the workshop that we do together is not just about let's give you some content or let's have you read a bunch of take downs of white feminism, but it's also like, let's do this spiritual healing work in a collective space because we know we cannot do this on our own and we have to be accountable to each other. So I know that... I feel like that was maybe a little all over the place, but it's like to me, it's so, it's so connected to the journey of writing the chapter itself was also kind of a parallel to the journey that I was on that actually enabled me to help find this community and this collective that is also a part of this other womanist space that I have been a part of. So it's a beautiful thing.

0:29:27.2 KC: I wanna say something. Oh, go ahead.

0:29:29.0 SH: I just wanted to add that one of the things that attracted me about Dr. Keating's call for her series was that she wanted accessible writing. I think we're all just exhausted with academic writing. And one of the reasons I think many of us leave academia or think about leaving academia is because we're sick of writing in this very convoluted way that's inaccessible to our students, to our friends, to our families. So I'm really excited about hopefully this entire text is in an accessible writing. The other thing I'll say is thinking again about my own work. Thinking past text as just that which is written. If we're talking about the body as the text, we cannot leave womanist thought in books, right? That's where Dr. Maparyan started the conversation. It has to be embodied. The body as the text cannot be just the thing that you just read and then there's a complete disconnect. You
have to embody that which you study. So to me, womanist philosophy is something that's completely and utterly useless unless and until we embody it. So to me, embodied praxis is the crux of this work. And then back to Anzaldúa, writing as a sensual act. I'm hoping that those of us who left or are leaving or are sort of in and out, one foot in, one foot out of the academy are thinking of writing as a sensual act the way Anzaldua talked about that we can find some joy in it again.

0:31:05.7 SH: We can find some sensuality in it again. And it's not just this robotic thing that we do as part of our careers.

0:31:06.2 LM: It's all right then. And I think one of the things Anzaldúa really demonstrated, really embodied to use that word is the fact that sometimes you have to really struggle to say the thing you're trying to say that all the other books don't say or that your language doesn't say that you know, but the words aren't there. You've got to create the language. You have to create the sentences. You have to... It's a certain kind of work that's not easy. And I do really appreciate how each of you have worked on or referenced embodiment or the body in your own work, both in this chapter and in the other work that you do.

0:31:11.9 LM: And in particular, your story, Susanna, made me think about something I read back when I was reading some books by Carlos Castaneda. And one of the things that he talked about was this thing called the foreign installation, which is like the alien dark spirit thing that wants to eat you, gets in you, takes over you, but you have to kind of fight it and get it out.

0:32:18.3 SB: Yes.

0:32:22.3 LM: You talked about being able to look at toxic white femininity, see that it was in you and get it out and look at it. It reminded me of that spiritual process. And the fact that womanism allows us to talk about a spiritual process and say, okay, you know whether figuratively or literally, there are entities, beings, whatever, trying to eat our energy. But the womanists are saying our innate divinity is who we really are.

0:32:51.2 LM: Get the foreign installation off of that so that the real innate divinity can shine and we can collectively evolve in a good direction, the direction we've been aspiring towards. That's why this analysis and this embodied work that we're doing is so important, 'cause we're helping the whole collective to identify and remove these very foreign installtions from our light so that it can shine.

0:33:10.7 SB: Yes.

0:33:16.2 KC: And I think part of what you're naming, Sara and Susannah, if I could backtrack and jump over onto a different block of the conversation, everything that you share does make sense. And it feels almost like a third voice. I don't know who the other two are, but a third voice reminding me that whatever we have to say matters just as it is. And having to unlearn that in this essay, I will, or to fight the urge to be the first to publish like knowledge as property and validity.

0:33:41.3 KC: And again, in reading in the short time that I scheduled for myself, to sit with your work gave me such pause because it was accessible and it was so inviting. And there are, again, a lot of hieroglyphic scribbles and hearts and just questions for myself. And I think to your point, Sara, about being embodied and sitting with it is also the ways that I learned in this two volumes
that exist as currently in the other ways, blogs, YouTubes, TikToks, conversations in hallways at NWSA, sitting through conferences and scribbling notes and being nervous as I am now to go up to the presenter and ask, can we be connected? What reference points can I learn from?

0:34:21 KC: It's really conversation and connection, which is why I think it's so beautiful and joyous to see that those emotions jump through the pages in the honoring of how womanism as a discipline, as a feeling, as an orientation, as the eye and not a contained thing is expansive for readers. And especially as we're looking at attacks on women in gender studies, anything that would qualify as diversity, equity and inclusion, texts like this, invitations, programs, conversations, ideas, questions that fall under what womanism can lead us to are all the more necessary. And I think, too, it's very easy to be critical. I think that's what I took away the most from my training, both as a scholar and then as an administrator in higher education. What are the critical points? What's the SWOT analysis? It's not often that we are feeling that gentle tap on the shoulder that says, take a moment, sit with the work and what else can there be?

0:35:42.2 KC: And that is what I felt, as you can see, I'm fangirling, felt through reading and thinking about how to curate this conversation. It makes me, again, sit and take pause about what it means to widen the interstices rather than be critical of how womanism needs to be contained as it has been lovingly shaped, craft named by Black women across the diaspora to make space across that proverbial kitchen table for more stories that allow us to sit, as Sara said, in our bodies, in what the universe offers us in terms of spirituality, strength and just hope. And so I'm curious as contributors and, of course, as the editor who helped shape the collection, what that process of opening up those spaces for collaboration and thought has done in your own journey as writers and creatives and every other term that we can use on your long CVS CDs.

0:36:38.1 LM: Another deep question I think for me, my basic orientation in life is to really create an inclusive world. And I'm always looking for points of connection with people. But in the process of doing that, it's very important to me to make sure that our distinctiveness and our forms of diversity are not overwritten, because there's this kind of a process that we critique, which is the kind of the colonial process. It's always eating difference and turning it into itself, but or turning it around and doing violence with it. But there's another process in which we carefully preserve the many rich world views that exist that show up in different forms of identity and are spoken through different forms of identity. And we preserve them at the same time as we are discovering a process in which we can be inclusive with them and perpetually enlarge the tent or the space under the umbrella or the circle or the kitchen table or whatever. And so for me, that's always been the intention is like, how do we keep what we know is precious and even what we know is under attack, but don't make it either or in terms of inclusiveness, make it both and inclusive and preservation and evolution and transformation, all of the above. So that's what it's been about for me.

0:38:21.5 DH: So Kristian, can you say the question again? I think I heard it, but I just need to hear it.

0:38:30.5 KC: That's a beautiful invitation for me to recall what I said to you, and if we were to just press pause and go backwards in my memory. I was asking, I believe, 'cause I'm active in... I'm like this is the best.

0:38:44.3 DH: It's okay. I think it was the one about...
0:38:48.1 KC: About widening the interstices in terms of being critical about containing and keeping that barrier that we would think...

0:38:55.4 DH: Yes, that wasn't on the list, but... Okay. So I'm ready and so I think Layli, we were talking about embodiment. Layli is talking about the connections, and so I really love the idea that being biographer for somebody who hasn't been written about in that way with Bebe Moore Campbell, and so she said... One of the things she said was, I write about what I know. So she was a mom who's adult child was experiencing bipolar disorder for the first time and finding her way, and she turned it into something powerful and communal. Informing the National Alliance of Mental Illness's urban LA chapter in terms of teaching classes to families, to medical professionals, to law enforcement officers, art classes for actual consumers and people experiencing mental illness, and so she knew it and she was learning it.

0:39:51.9 DH: And so she decided to not to go within, but to release it as Dr. Maparyan said, like not letting that alien live inside, right? That pain that you might be feeling. But I think for me, she also passed away, in my opinion, early, and I imagine that there's a level of grief that she may have experienced. In my own experience, having a very close loved one who battles with untreated mental illness, it's a pain that I could only imagine amplified by being a mom. And so it made me curious about it, and so it also inspired me to just write what I know. And so after this work, my work evolved to black lesbian motherhood, 'cause that's what I was doing.

0:40:39.8 DH: And I think that's what we do as black women writers and writers of color and activists, is start with what you know. I've done a series of public health rituals, public healing rituals, healing childhood wounds, working through seasonal depression, and just come for free and let's try to work through and heal and release together. Healing through movement, let's get some dance experts, not me, and talk about how you heal and release to the body, because the body will communicate. So for me, my work is what I'm living, and it's a way of healing trauma, and I think what it has evolved to now, which is so exciting, is that I think I need a part two to this who cares about black women, and particularly black women and girls are devalued in our society and mistreated and abused, and so my narrative then was like, who cares? We're not important to anybody but ourselves, and so now I'm raising a boy, a black son and I think there was a bit of resentment about the ways that people don't always show up to care for women or caregivers or gender non-conforming men, right?

0:41:57.8 DH: So now there's another piece that I have to write that teaches my son how to show up and care for others, how to be a caregiver and challenge patriarchy. So it'll come someday, we'll talk about a Dr. Maparyan, but I really was like, this piece was really powerful then, and it's powerful now, but it's not complete because I'm now living a life of listening to my body, tuning in, paying attention to what my family needs and what I need, and what we need is a solution and a vision for how to not only affirm and own our own self-care and our kinships with other women and queer people, but how do we call into allyship those who are in our families and in our communities that don't take good care of us. So I write what I know, and I think that's worked pretty good so far.

0:42:56.0 LM: Yeah, I love what you said because it's reminding me, my own dedication that I put in Womanism Rising, it was three people, one of whom was my own son who actually turns 40 this year, and as I described in the dedication that he's basically a womanist's dream of a man in the sense how he grew up. He grew up like a man that a woman had raised and he's showing the fruit of
that relationship in his adult life. And so I wanted to recognize him, in all my other books, I've recognized other family members, and in this time it's him. So when you mentioned your son and that relationship and what that's like, it made me think about that.

0:43:55.4 SH: I'll just... I might... I'm also a little bit unclear on the question, but I'll just add to what Dr. Harwell just said. I think in order to write what we want ever write, we also have to create space for ourselves to write it. And one of the things, I know this is hosted by NWSA, but brace yourselves. One of the things that was the final straw for me that really just turned me off from a lot of academic spaces was an NWSA conference in San Francisco some years ago, and we paid maybe $2000 to spend a weekend listening to people give papers and we stepped out of the hotel to find human feces on the sidewalk, and to me, that was the final straw.

0:44:50.5 SH: I was like, What are we doing? This is ridiculous. And this is supposed to be the National Women Studies Association. We're sitting in there doing land acknowledgements before talks, and we're waking up early to have two people in the audience, and we're paying ridiculous amounts to this ridiculous organization that ultimately it has no connection to what's happening in the real world. While I do believe that we need to create spaces for intellectual conversations, for developing theory, I'm all for that, I just don't think that the institutionalization and the out of touch sort of academic capitalism that's taking over is going to get us anywhere.

0:45:42.3 SH: So, in order us to... For myself to create that space, I had to leave that space. I literally had to get out of all the NWSA emails, I have to think twice about participating today. So unfortunately, that is just... It doesn't make sense to me if we're talking about people's everyday lives, we're talking about feminism and the every day, we're talking about womanism as that which happens around kitchen tables and which happens around food, which happens around everyday people in accessible language. We're talking about bringing divine light back into people's lives. Then I don't see that in a white-led institution that's just out to make money.

0:46:27.7 DH: That's really profound. And I think I haven't been in a long time either kinda for different reasons, but I've been in some of those places. I think I brought my son twice, which was really awesome, but once I left academia, I've been diagnosed, different things like that, health issues. I have not had the privilege of attending. And so I think there is a place around privilege, and it was very wonderful and affirming to connect in those spaces. It was challenging if your session has low attendance or your work is not anchored by an institution that's gonna promote it, so it wasn't a place where I necessarily could flourish my work outside of those really beautiful connections that I might make at the end of a panel.

0:47:07.5 DH: I remember in Atlanta, always thinking about, because that's my hometown now, I'm born in Buffalo, New York, but Atlanta is the second hometown, is like all of the black and brown workers and staff that are serving us and making sure that they weren't invisible to me, and
that I was present with them as a group of women and feminists and activists and people of color coming to convene, how do we honor and recognize our space? So I haven't been in probably equally as long, and so it is an important conversation. I do feel really hopeful and curious with someone like Heidi at the helm now, and who's not here 'cause she's with her students, but I do think it did afford this opportunity to see each other and to like... Yeah, I think it had an alternative impact, if that makes sense.

0:48:51.7 DH: So I'm curious, but I definitely agree, like we have to figure out how to challenge the capitalism and the insular nature of how we gather as scholars and around anti-sexism and liberatory work.

[overlapping conversation]

0:49:12.7 KC: Oh go ahead, Susannah.

0:49:13.3 SB: Sorry, go ahead.

0:49:14.8 KC: No, I'm locked in.

0:49:19.3 SB: One thing that really stands out to me, I really appreciate what you both have shared about this, 'cause I always think back to... So I was listening to Heidi, to Dr. Lewis' podcast, the first podcast that she did, Kristian, and one of the things that she notes is that she started in 2008, that's the year I started going. So I was like, Oh, we were at the same conference for a while, and we kind of, we circled each other, we knew each other, but I remember my first experience at that 2008 Conference, I was hearing a lot of people say this is a revolutionary space, this is a revolutionary space. And I was like, We're at the Sheraton. Like, yes. Yes/and.

[overlapping conversation]

0:50:01.2 DH: Yes/and. Multiple things can be true and...

0:50:04.6 SB: Everybody needs a venue. It's like it's no shade on the Sheraton or on anyone in NWSA at that time and all the many years forward, but it just was... To me, it was an important part of having a critical consciousness about what it was like to be in this space, 'cause I was also... It was my first year as a women center director, figuring out what this practices meant, and I was fresh out of all of these wonderful conversations with you, Layli, of all of this wonderful... I was finishing up my dissertation, trying to figure out how to do that and have a job and be a human, and so for me, that has always been the tension with NWSA and with academic and intellectual work in general.

0:50:41.8 SB: And so one of the things that's beautiful about this collaboration, we have talked about feelings, we've talked about bodies, we have shared personal information about our lives. I love that there is absolutely no attempt to veil the fact that we are these full whole people, and I think that's more available in NWSA, than maybe it is in other intellectual spaces, but/and it also has been very clearly for a long time, a space where there's a lot of prioritizing of theoretical and sort of high academic work. And Sara like you, I'm much more interested in, for years after I left academia, I was a social worker without a social work degree.
0:51:20.1 SB: I was a project manager working with community organizers, now I do community outreach for a cancer clinical trials network, that's my day job, and I do this feminist organizing on the side. And so to me, I wanna go to a space where I can have intellectual conversations about that, and it's like it's just a long way into co-signing everything that you all have said, and also just offering it, like to me one of the things that womanism does is that it gives voice, or provides the space, especially this text, for so many of us who are trying to find our way through in those... Kristian, you've said a few times, interstices or those middle spaces, those collaborative spaces where we know that we are ready and care for this intellectual work, but to us that work is about us as people, it's about channeling whatever we might be in connection with, it's about unlearning our own stuff. And so I am really excited about Dr. Lewis' leadership and your leadership Kristian, and at the same time, just thank you Sara for saying all those things so directly, because we need to have that conversation too if we're gonna be real about...

0:52:22.6 DH: Yes, authenticity.

0:52:23.3 SB: Being part of a womanist collection.

0:52:27.3 DH: I love it.

0:52:27.4 SB: Yeah.

0:52:27.5 LM: I wanna just affirm it by saying I had the very same feeling that Sara had at various points in my career, including right around the time I was writing the Womanist Idea, because the way my own life was playing out, it was almost like it was two different lives I was living. One life in the academia and one life outside, whether it was my life in the activism sphere or whatever, or my life at home as a family person. The things were not integrated, and I wanted them to be integrated, so I finally made them click, and that's why I was able to write that book, but I was also getting fed up with my job at that time because I felt like people were in a different place with that, and when I reflect on it, as a developmental psychologist I'll just say that, I think about the lifespan, whether it's the life span of a person or the life span of an organization, or even the lifespan of a society, that different things are necessary at different points.

0:53:08.8 LM: So for example, like the kind of content we teach in women's studies or any of the critical disciplines, there's a point in people's lives when that content is very valuable, particularly if you're raised in a society where that content is not being broadcast, it's not in the mainstream, because that content can change your life. So somebody's gotta figure it out, write it down, teach it, make sure you've got some space to explore it, but once you have it, there's a multiplicity of directions you can go in, and so one path is to stay in academia and keep doing that, another path is to go in the community and do some things, another path is to be home with your people and do things, or another path is do all of that.

0:54:16.7 LM: So wanting to just know that I would never want a world in which we didn't have the academic setting, because we need a space that is dedicated to thought, but we also can't be navel-gazers, we can't be people that think that's all there is, and women studies in particular began as a community-centered enterprise to free women from some shackles.

0:54:44.5 SB: That's right.
0:54:45.5 LM: And they said, Okay, we're gonna start by freeing the women in academia and connecting them with our friends out in the neighborhood.

0:54:54.7 SB: Yes.

0:54:54.8 LM: But then when they kept going with it, they started getting more and more all this theory term business. And they got disconnected somehow. And I think, Sara, what you were referring to was like the moment of its greatest, to use the lunar term apogee, the furthest away from the thing. And so, womanism for me reigns it back in, it's like look, you all just need to fix this thing, just stop with the madness and fix it, and so it gives you the space to just kind of show up as a regular person and say this is crazy, and let's do some different thing. And so, yeah, I'll just stop there.

0:55:38.2 DH: No, I think that evolution is really great. I think the last time I was at NWSA, one of the cool things was being in a session where, a couple of sessions, but one where participants saying like, How do we talk about the commodification of self-care? Self-care is not just going to get your nails done, or what kind of resources do you have to have, what privilege exists in self-care. I needed to get that to evolve my work, but I also got to sit with people who were presenting as practitioners in public education settings working with special ed students, and I was able to partner with them or just dialogue in a way that allowed them to return and shift their practice and expand their practice, and it was just this reflective space, but also I've been a part of many communities and settings, and there's just seasons where, as Dr. Maparyan said there's a season where its needed. I also have like a million and one ideas about whether through an organization or elsewhere, we collectively find ways to return the work to the streets or to the community. So with Sara's example, like what would it look like if we met with... And I know this has happened sometimes at some conference, but what if we met with city leaders or activists about their homelessness problem? Or what if we just sat and had lunch with people who are unhoused instead of in the banquet hall?

0:57:07.4 DH: Like I think celebrations and connections can be activism too. So anyway, we probably so off topic, but this is like, I love it, I love it. This is...

0:57:17.7 KC: I don't think that we are...  

0:57:18.7 DH: What women is supposed to do.

0:57:20.5 KC: I don't think we're off topic by any means, and I have yet to hear a falsity, I have yet to hear a dramatization. I did not pay dues for many a moon before being able to have the funds to then pay the dues and get a name tag at the conference. And then moving into this role, I think I'm like seven months in, feels like seven decades. But it's just more of an emotional thing I'll unpack with my therapist, shout out to you, Erica. But everything that you all are naming is exactly why we have to just sit with the mess, and sit with the way that we're uncomfortable and sit with the way that we're enraged. Because to pay X amount of money to come to a conference and only feel validated when you see your name in a program because you presented. And to privilege scholarship that is in particular journals where we have women's centers, directors, administrators, graduate students, undergraduate students.

0:58:17.0 KC: And volunteers and every other term I can use who make women's studies delicious, irresistible, right? My introduction to feminist work was not in a formal program, it was sitting on a
carpet, carpeted living room listening. And when I am struggling and I feel like I no longer have the words and I have to force myself to sit with myself and listen to my first language, which is my body. I don't turn to a textbook, I turn to poetry, I turn to artwork, I turn to my mom's voice on the phone where she tells me I'm too stressed and to go take a walk. But that's just Shereen's way, but it's kinship and relationship, it's the side eye, it's the hug. When I think about NWSA and I think about my introduction to the books, it was because someone gifted them to me. It was because we had a conversation and I didn't know. I'm actually goofed right now, Susannah, 'cause I think you said interstices.

0:59:12.3 KC: I've been saying... I don't know what you said, I've been saying interstices this whole time. So now I'm gonna Google and do the...

0:59:19.0 SB: Oh, I don't know how to say it. Is it interstices?

0:59:21.5 KC: I don't know and we're gonna go together on the journey.

0:59:24.0 DH: I don't know either. It's okay.

0:59:25.0 SB: Yes.

0:59:25.8 LM: The beauty of it is we don't...

0:59:26.5 SB: Let's help each other.

0:59:27.5 LM: We all know what we're talking about, so we're gonna say...

0:59:30.7 KC: But I think too, like, Sara, the trepidation of doing this conversation through the platform of NWSA is a weighty and necessary one. I can recall my heart palpitations and I was picking off this eyebrow. This is penciled interest, don't look too close, but I was picking off this eyebrow when I was first invited to apply for the position. And I was like, "Kristian do you wanna have joy?" I had just defended and graduated and I was like, this is my summer to be outside and step and safely. But thinking about productivity and what the role is. So I say all that to say that everything is accurate and that we are fortunate enough to be honest and do reparative and restorative work to own the missteps instead of sweep them under the rug. And I spent the last week, not that you asked, but I spent the last week sitting in a storage unit in Chicago sorting through all of our archives that have been pretty much untouched for five years.

1:00:29.7 SH: Oh, wow.

1:00:31.0 KC: Got to see the evolution of the association, the many EEO violations, the lawsuits, but the beautiful postcards and the thank yous from McNair Scholars and international students who received funding. So I share that not to say, like, it's gonna be great, we have new leadership, we do have new leadership, but to Layli's point, I think it's feeling our way through and not just in that abstraction. Sitting with the tightness in my chest and thinking about the compromises we have to make to really say that we do feminist work when fees may preclude folks from coming or childcare isn't as accessible. Or I'm excited that through prayer and my winning personality, we were able to for the first time, secure AV in every single room.
1:01:20.4 LM: Oh.

1:01:20.7 KC: For coming to Detroit, because accessibility is easy to say, you want accommodations, but to put it into practice. But to bring us on back, I think your answer is speak exactly to my layered, convoluted and verbose question, which is when we talk about critique, it's easy to just give it instead of sit with it and to make space for what we don't know or not as familiar with. For Susanna to bring in this critique of white feminism and lay claim to the word womanist for yourself and in your work, and then Sara to interweave so beautifully faith, Sufism and mysticism, but also poetry. And then to bring it back to the rest of the book that I have not read 'cause I don't have access to it, but artwork and artistry. And I'm thinking about, again, my memories, my feelings of learning about what it means to be a womanist from elders and kin and peers and YouTube and TikTok.

1:02:16.0 KC: I watch a lot of y'all's lectures when I put on my makeup to get me right in the morning. But I think about this invitation as a compass for true restoration. And especially we can talk about these critiques till the cows come home and I'm ready to do it. But we have human rights as a value, so I wanna make sure you have an evening with bathroom breaks and meals and rest on this gorgeous Friday. But I'm thinking about something that you’ve named in different conversations 'cause again, I'm locked in lately, I watched the lectures. That womanism is a healing methodology. And everyone who is in this space has named in different iterations about how lightness and love as a painful praxis, I believe that's Sara's work, a source of pain, but also generative space and ideation. And to preserve the body and the self as black women and also to give away the weight of what was unnamed for Susanna.

1:03:17.0 KC: Womanism to me is just a constant invitation and that was so beautifully iterated in what I was able to hold on my iPad, as I was highlighting and making the notes. And so I share all that to say that there's one thing that really excited me, not one thing, but was a description of womanism where Layli you share that womanists make good midwives. And even in this conversation that is critical necessarily so of NWSA and every other academic institution, I think about our continuous conversations about birthing feminist futures and birthing new realities. And sometimes I have to challenge myself because sometimes new really means recovered, and sometimes it means rediscovered and repaired. And I'm interested in the sense that this has been a journey of many years and many relationships and shifts in your personal lives, challenges, but also wins.

1:04:20.4 KC: And I'm curious about how this process has also helped you see different ways of birthing possibility. How womanism has been your vehicle, perhaps, but the destination was always liberation. And so to parse it down.

1:04:37.0 LM: Well, [1:04:37.1] let me shut my blinds there, hold on.

1:04:41.0 SB: Go do that.

1:04:41.3 DH: I had the moment too, like it's like sunsetting, but birthing, we always talk about birthing. Birthing has so many literal and metaphorical possibilities. I think just in general, Bebe Moore Campbell's work helped me think about what it means to do the work and be well. Even as the chapter takes shape around two examples of women who articulated and were building some awareness around self-care, but not necessarily to their own benefit in terms of Bebe Moore
Campbell would not only write and speak, she would work with a group of parents to get up at any hour in the middle of the night to go find someone's missing child. To meet them at a courthouse to advocate that they… If arrested that they are placed in a mental health holding space and not in general population. She said there was a time when they would just like sleep in their sweats because those parents would get up and support each other.

1:05:44.0 DH: But then she said after they would have these days and these times and these late nights, they would go to the spa ’cause they were middle class black women who could afford it. And they would go to the spa but just commit to this act of relaxing and re-setting. And so I think that for me, that book came out, my book about Bebe Moore Campbell came out at the same time that my son was born. So he was born in June, the book came out later in June or in July as Bebe Moore Campbell of National Minority Mental Health Month. And so I was birthing literally and figuratively. And so I think what inspires me is the synchronicity, the spiritual alignment of life that this work, not only was I writing about what I know, I was writing about what I was gonna know that I didn't know yet. And so I literally can come back to this one article and I've other work.

1:06:42.0 DH: But this one article I could come back to a hundred times, right? And so my most... The thing that most inspires me is my son and me, right? Because he mirrors my challenges and shortcomings and the best parts of me. He is free thinking, questioning, but also really open-hearted and unconditionally loving. And I have that part of myself, but because of like personal trauma, you don't always move in the world as openly and safely. I think our family, our small family of two, surviving two breast cancer diagnoses is really traumatic and inspiring, but we're like, we're here to live, we're here to create joy, we're here to create life, we're here to give back to other people. And so I think that the literal birthing of the child in this trajectory of work that Dr. Maparyan said, hey, you gotta write a little bit more about this where you started, there's another part. I didn't know, she told me there was another part.

1:07:50.0 DH: And then I realized about a year ago that there was then another part. And so I think I'm inspired by just the will to survive, I think that's Bell Hooks, the will to survive, the will to live, the indestructibility of the spirit as I see manifest in my own child and in the life around us and the community that shows up as we find our way in life. And so it's really beautiful because I can conceptualize it, envision it and imagine and then I could write about it. What a wonderful thing, or I could teach about it. What a wonderful thing.

1:08:35.0 SH: I think we all play the role of midwives in the classroom or with our students. I find that, I love that metaphor. And I find it very closely related to Nepantla, like the being that in between person, someone who plays the middle role. And I think Keating uses threshold theorizing and continuing Anzaldúa's work. So I think all of us are kind of doing threshold theorizing and practice, right? We are trying to put into practice that which we continuously are threshold theorizing. So I think playing the role of a midwife, I think if we took that to heart, we would have a completely different pedagogical approach in the academy. I think if more people took that to heart, if thinking... To me, womanist pedagogy is this role of playing the midwife in the classroom. Whether it's with ideas that my students are playing with or if they're trying to get into grad school or if there's certain things they're dealing with their own identities and making peace with themselves.

1:09:44.3 SH: All of these are things that I feel like I end up in inadvertently, please, sometimes playing the midwife role for. So yeah, I love that metaphor. Thank you for sharing that.
1:10:00.7 SB: Yeah, I agree. It's a beautiful metaphor. It's one that I have a little trouble connecting to. And I don't know if it's because I don't have children and I will not probably at this point in my life have children. And I don't know what it is, and I love it so much and I love what it generates for us and I think I also relate just a little more to being an auntie. Where like, I have five deaf youths, some of them are bio family and some of them are chosen family and three of them are black boys. And so for me, a big part of this work is not only the really important piece that is about my own life, it's also about my family, my very immediate family and the stakes that are there. And so I think I relate to being an auntie because it's like, is someone gives birth and then just give me the baby and you go take a nap.

1:10:51.5 DH: Absolutely.

1:10:51.8 SB: And I think that it's like an important to... I don't know, that's how I think about... When I think about birthing and children and generations, that's one of the things that I connect with, I think a little bit more. And I think that's one of the things I love about doing the popular education spaces that I'm in now, where I am for the most part, even if it's often, it's almost always intergenerational folks who are in these workshops or who are like seeking out the connections, but just being able to connect intergenerationally and all kind of share the stewardship or the birthing of whatever the process is that we're in over these five weeks. 'Cause every time we facilitate something we learn from other folks, right? Like if we're holding that space, we are giving birth not... Or we are supporting people to give birth, not only to their own growth and learning, but also to our own, every time we engage that relationship.

1:11:42.7 SB: And so those are just some of the ways that I think about what we're doing with that metaphor and also how being amounted to you for me relates to that metaphor is that everyone... Is that it is a kinship village connection birthing process. And we created such an isolated way of thinking about giving birth or having children, at least in the US at this moment in time. And so I think to think about midwifery and auntiehood and whoever it is who's making food while these things are going on, I think is a much more... Is a metaphor that I do really relate to when it comes to doing this work.

1:12:23.0 DH: Yeah, Susanna, I think like, I love it, I think that I was an auntie like 10 years before I was a mom. My niece is like... My oldest niece is like still my best friend in my mind. It's such a joyful space you can pour in, you can support, you can give parents naps, you can send them back. And there's this way that like I hear midwifery as not necessarily the person who physically births but who also clears the way and provides care. And so I think that hearing you speak brings forth the concept of other mothering. And I think even your early sharing of what you sacrifice for your students to be able to do their mural, right? It's absolutely clearing the way and midwifery if you look at it that way, because you stand in the gaps for another and it de-centers the self and the ego. Not to our own detriment or to our own expense, self-care, but to make sure that something new can come forth.

1:13:28.0 DH: And I agree with Sara, like as teachers we do it, but I just in hearing some of the things you shared, I really love the auntie narrative, the other mothering that I hear in the broad ways that we can be midwives.

1:13:41.0 SB: I love that idea of clearing space. Thank you so much for bringing that forward.
1:13:44.8 DH: You're in the way.

1:13:46.7 KC: Thank you for one of the things. Oh, no, go, sorry go ahead.

1:13:50.0 SH: I just wanted to add to Dr. Barlow that the idea of mothering extricated from a biological context. This is something that I loved that Dr. Maparyan wrote about, I think maybe in the last book. I read it somewhere, Dr. Maparyan wrote about it. So and I have fallen in love with that idea and I kind of ran with it for this chapter as well. How do we think about mothering beyond gender? How do we think about mothering beyond the biological? And so I think that's really critical when we, in our approaches to pedagogy, in our approaches to our relationship, our everyday relationships, to our friendships and all forms of relationships beyond just a mother-child biological relationship.

1:14:35.0 LM: No, absolutely. And I'm glad you brought that up, Sara, because it is important at least, I think within the womanist frame, to think about mothering as a social transformation activity or methodology and to think about midwifery in a similar vein. These are social transformation methodologies, not just social, they're transformative of whatever, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual. But what you are doing is you are bringing something new into being and you are nurturing something into a supported existence. And you're doing that with love and you're doing that with an understanding of the journey that the thing has to go through. And so being that support to that is kind of what it's about.

1:15:26.0 LM: But with womanism, we're also doing it collectively. It's like having a self-conscious collective that we know we're all doing it, and even though we're all in our different sectors of life, in our different days doing it, there's something collective about what we're doing. We're trying to help the world birth another world, and we're trying to help people birth their innate divinity. And not that they have to birth it, 'cause it's eternal, but it's very occluded. It is very clouded by a lot of dirt in the world. It's too much foreign installation, too much... We are peeling it back so that the person can emerge as their highest and best self, but then also so that communities can do that, and societies can do that, and ecosystems can do that. We're all about that process everywhere, and we're doing it as a group.

1:16:19.1 SB: Yes, I so appreciate you saying that. Sorry, Sara, I'll be quick. [chuckle] Because I... One of the things that I was gonna say, Kristian, when I got to your questions earlier, and I was like, "Oh, how am I gonna answer that last one about hope? 'Cause I don't have a lot of hope right now. It's just like sheer determination." But for me, if I do, it's in community, and it's in the collective that I'm part of that I've mentioned. It's in... Reconnecting with you all is amazing, and just knowing that this is my community again, always. And I think being able to find hope in that is an important part of how I still feel connected with the Womanist Idea, with the womanist awakenings that I had when I was in my mid-20s. I wouldn't ever necessarily claim the term as an "I am," 'cause that doesn't feel appropriate for me. But I think just to know that I can engage and be open and be accountable in this framework because it is bigger than me, it's bigger than a collective, it's bigger than any one individual, we're giving birth to this shared and shaped experience together so that it can be transformational. So yeah, thank you for that.

1:17:26.0 LM: And I've emphasized time and again that anybody who figures it out can show up for this process. We need more people getting what it is we're trying to do for our societies, for our
earth, for ourselves, for our friends, family, loved ones, and neighbors and strangers, and even our
enemies, whatever. It is a way. Like I said, this is not a theory, this is a way. It's a way. It's a walk.
It's practice. It is not a theory. So that's an important aspect. And getting to the question of hope, I
can certainly understand holding intention, both hope and hopelessness, 'cause I feel like that at
times as well, but I think the thing that keeps me anchored is my sense of this eternal innate divinity
that that's our true self, and that that's indestructible, and that exists whether the earth exists or not,
whether our bodies exist or not. That part of us is indestructible. So I maintain hope and that with a
great deal of curiosity about what's going on in the world and a great deal of experimentation with
how we can try to make it go well.

1:18:44.8 DH: Yeah, I think...

1:18:45.1 SH: I think...

1:18:46.3 DH: Oh, go ahead. You first.

1:18:48.8 SH: I was just gonna add to the birth of a new world. I was thinking of our own rebirths
as well. We're constant rebirthing ourselves as well as we grow, as we change, as we learn. I think
I'm an amateur, interested in astrology, and the last time I got the death card, I freaked out, and my
friend said, "No, that just means rebirth."

1:19:11.6 SB: Good. That's rebirth.

[laughter]

1:19:13.9 SH: So apparently, you need the death card in order to have rebirth. So, [laughter] to me,
hope and hopelessness goes hand in hand, death and life goes hand in hand, death and rebirth. So I
just wanted to...

1:19:26.9 DH: I like that. I think we all find hope in the unseen, it seems like to me, or the broader
understandings of the universe in the body. And so I think for me, hope is on the unseen. I can't
conceive of it. I cannot conceive of the solution, but I do know it exists. I think my core belief is
that the solution already exists, and it may manifest and express in other generations and other
divine inspiration and encouragement, and I don't have to control it, I don't have to be attached to it,
and I might not see it in this particular lifetime, but I do believe that there's an unseen power that
helps a solution to some of our most difficult problems, personally and broadly. I think you all
talked about the body repeatedly this evening, and I think I've also seen in my own healing journey
the regenerative nature of the body, and it's so powerful, and I pay homage to the way a body not
only endures but communicates, and so now I'm relearning what my spiritual truths are and what
my emotional truths are by

1:20:50.2 DH: I know when I haven't had enough water, I know when I haven't had enough sleep, I
know when I'm angry. I'm impressed by still being able to be strong and walk and do impressive
things despite the very intent surgeries I've been through. I really love this body and what she's been
doing in my life. But I do think that we also have to practice the patience of hope and that it won't...
Transformation does not manifest swiftly all the time, and so it could be centuries before a
particular problem like violence resolves itself. But it will come. My faith in the unseen says that it
will come in its own way in some way. So I'm still hopeful, [chuckle] and it is hard when the seen
tells you something different. But I've learned that there is a thing that we can't see that makes things come together even with pain and joy or life and death, that's how I see it.

1:22:04.7 SB: Yeah, I like that. I hope that maybe someone else here knows it or someone who watches it later, can we put it in the comments? But I like the idea that hope is a practice, which is not my idea that hope is a practice. It's a discipline. I don't get to not have hope. I just wanna be real when I know that it's hard, [chuckle] and try to think about, "What are the things... What are my body practices? What are the communities I can connect with? What are the quotes that I need to keep over my monitor to keep me on track?" Because it is a discipline.

1:22:42.7 KC: I feel like the question that I posed is always a trick question around inviting our folks who are in conversation to provide neat and really polished answers that hope looks like this, or this particular book or this particular practice will solve everything. And with looking at academia as a competitive battle ground around trying to... As you said earlier, Suzanna, trying to be the first to name something, publish and fall to the machine of publishing and productivity and becoming one of the luminaries. But as I'm ruminating on the fullness of this conversation, I'm always reminded that we love people when they're no longer with us. That we tend to uplift the folks on the shirts. It'll say everyone's names, the black t-shirt, the white font. I have five of them. [chuckle] I made one for my defense. My mom's online, but she's live. Mom, love you. But thinking about what it means to live up here in abstraction, but then feel our way through to new possibilities, I'm reminded of Octavia Butler's, "There are no new suns." Oh no, "There's nothing new under the sun, but there are new suns." And as perhaps cheesy as it is, that's how I felt reading the collection that I was so fortunate enough to read, the question of how can this innate goodness or innate divinity as our compass give us hope, help us find new ways of doing or reclaim ways of being is a trick question because...

1:24:23.1 KC: Well, maybe not a trick question. Let me back track for a moment. I think I would, in the past, have picked up this book happily, given my credit card when it was published. And fever, she looked for answers. Looked for a 10-step process on what to do, or find the beautiful quote that I would be able to reset from memory so I could feel like a scholar. And there is no invitation to do such a thing, and it is to sit in what the universe can offer us. Universe, different realms, but also our spiritual practice of just being gracious in our bodies, whatever body that we're able to have, and that hope is a practice, but also a collaboration.

1:25:06.6 KC: And I think about our restorative work that we're doing in light of all the challenges that we've named lightly here, [chuckle] with the association, but the need for us to put the principle before the task, which allows us to nurture and see bloom relationships so that when we witness what we are currently across the globe or thinking about multiple genocides, insights of occupation and apartheid, what it means to be here in the US and witness and experience and navigate and perhaps give new names to systems that we have been fighting. I think it gives me the most hope to sit and talk, to be able to share this language and not feel a desire to have it all figured out. And so for me, in curating the question, it was really an invitation for us to name vulnerably that we don't always have the answer of this collection and any collection of scholarship that we love and hold dear and will be our feminist manifesto, if you will, is always an invitation to pause.

1:26:11.1 KC: And as I close, I thought about Alexis Pauline Gumbs', "The Shape of My Impact," which my dear friend, Dr. Montiniquë McEachern, who was on our board, she's returned after Mania Muli, as a Lesbian Caucus Chair. She sent it to me when I was long, long gone. We were in
the same university, and she reminded me, and I'll read you the line, because I think each of you have touched on this, but also have invited us to think about what the universe means, which is, the university does not know how to love me, the university, in fact, does not love me, but the universe does. And as I sit through your responses to this question and marinate in it, excitedly, all I can think about is how the universe looks like this. Looks like your home place, your sights of insurgent practices, and all the way kinship has changed and grown in the journey of producing this gorgeous and exciting work. I'm so grateful. As you can see.

1:27:11.7 KC: Started out real nervous, but I was like, "Let's go for another two hours. Let's talk about more." [chuckle] But I'm just so deeply moved to be able to grow through the short introduction and how womanism rising might be the third offering. But I'm so excited for years to come and see what other iterations and all the different ways that womanism lives, and multitudes might help us shift what it looks like to build new worlds. All I can say is thank you.

1:27:45.2 SB: Thank you.

1:27:46.3 DH: Thank you too. Your layer questioning was also gorgeous and just joyful and inspiring on its own, so it's fun. This has been fun.

1:27:55.1 KC: Oh, Siz, why not us being best friends? [laughter]

1:28:00.3 LM: And thank you for ending on love and the universe, because love and the universe are really the inspirations behind womanism. That's really the heart and the carnal of womanism. So thank you for leading us to that conclusion of today's conversation.

1:28:13.9 KC: Oh, I am receiving and so appreciative for the folks listening, me and you audience, Womanism Rising, womanist studies on its own is set for publication this fall, 2024, who knows? You might pick up a copy, or two, one for the department, one for you. Maybe you wanna gift one to a student or a loved one at the Detroit Annual Conference. If you don't come, I'll still support you. But this collection of work is offered through the University of Illinois Press. And we, again, at NWSA are so grateful, excited and humbled to have these conversations through feminist frequencies, and to also interrupt the idea that the way we learn, grow and connect can only happen through publication through the written word. And so I'll end here, that we won't move into the... In this podcast, we will and invite you to think about how love can be a practice towards healing and joy. And remember that the universe can offer so much more than the institutions that we work through, live through, fight against can offer. So thank you so much, everyone. Subscribe. Tune in. I'm grateful, and so should you.


1:29:23.0 SB: Thank you.