Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Dr. Deanne Bell

Interviewed by Amanda Nkeramihigo
with Dr. Alexandra Rutherford & Aaron Peniston
Interview conducted remotely using Zoom platform
June 19th, 2025

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AN: Amanda Nkeramihigo, Interviewer
DB: Deanne Bell, Interview Participant
AR: Dr. Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer
AP: Aaron Peniston, Interviewer

AN: All right. Hello again, Deanne. Thank you very much for accepting to do this interview. Today is June 19, 2025. So, I'll start with a very simple question. For the record, could you please state your full name and date and place of birth?

DB: So, Deanne Bell. Kingston, Jamaica, October 22nd,1964.

AN: All right, great. And where do you currently live, work?

DB: Birmingham, UK.

AN: All right. Could you tell us about how you first began to relate to feminism, womanism, or other forms of gender or intersectional thought or theory, or whether you relate to them?

DB: So, I come to feminism, or my understanding of feminism, through liberation. So I studied liberation psychology, and I think before that, you know, sort of later way, it was actually my father who would have introduced me to - not feminism, but an approach, I think, to people, to people's full rights, regardless of any of the classifications that we think about, or any of the ways that we categorize people in modern time. And my father was a lawyer and a minister in a democratic socialism government in Jamaica in the 70s. Before that his father was a lawyer and one of the founders of the political party, the left political party in Jamaica. And so, that heritage has informed how I understand social relations and I think of feminism as a radical and very powerful way of relating, of social relations and correcting what's so pathological with social relations.

AN: Thank you. And how have you merged these feminist values or even this idea of this construct and social relation structure? How have you merged this with your work as a psychologist? **(02:43)**

DB: So, I don't separate my concerns and my questions to start with. So, I don't think of being a feminist or being concerned with things that affect women separately from the historic process of coloniality. So, I am concerned principally with dehumanization in modern time, how that has come to be and I approached that initially through a community psychology approach because that was part and parcel of my doctorate work in liberation psychology. But I don't see people through social identities in the way that we have been taught, and the way that our consciousness I think is controlled by seeing people through these different categories. I see people as human and then see the problems that human face through these categories that are social constructions, if that makes sense.

AN: It does, it does actually. I had actually a follow-up question that is specific to, well, your consciousness development in terms of race, which is another category, and how that comes into play when we talk about gender and this idea of feminism, for example, and how that might have influenced or how that, whether that came before or after, how that might have developed with your consciousness of gender and also these ideas of human rights with your background.

DB: So, you know, I'm not quite sure which came first, whether it was gender or race. I have a suspicion that it has been race and class, actually. And that's because in Jamaica, you would have to be blind, and I mean that metaphorically, to not see how race and class have produced some extraordinarily unhuman conditions for some people. And so, in Jamaica I'm privileged and in the UK and the US I am historically marginalized. So, I've lived two different social locations of modernity in that way. And I think it was first seeing how other people, people who are produced as poor and black in Jamaica had a distinctly different life from the one I did. The painting behind me is actually a piece called *Lock Up*, the lower rim of it are images of the iconic slave ship, you know, that traveled from Europe, from England, it would have been to Africa and then to Jamaica. And the upper room is of the soles of black men's feet protruding under a cell, a jail cell, 8 feet by 7 feet designed to hold two people, and 100 men, Jamaican men, poor black men were incarcerated on October 22nd , 1992. And after two days, three of them died from asphyxiation. That experience, that story would never be told by someone like me, never, in Jamaica. And that story could easily be told by me, I think, in the U.S. or the U.K. And so, it's hard for me to say what's gender, what's race, what's class, and segment these things when I think they're constantly in some kind of relationship through the human, you know, they have been placed overlaid over human beings. And so, I think we'd do a sort of skinny, superficial analysis if we attempt to separate these things that we live through.

AN: That makes a lot of sense. I think you do speak to, or you invoke the work of Sylvia Wynter in your own work and the over -representation of man. And this is what I'm hearing from what you're saying where there's humanity and there's the breakdown into these different pieces. So, yes. I want to move on to what attracted you to psychology then. How did you get into psychology? And also, a very interesting piece of your life is that you started as an investment banker. So how do you go from that to becoming

essentially a decolonialist or decolonial psychologist?
(08:17)

DB: So, I came to psychology… I used to play tennis for Jamaica and I used to practice really well and choke in tournaments. And so, and Jamaica didn't have a sports psychologist as amazing as we are, certainly in track and field and a few other sports. And so, in a midlife crisis, I decided to go back to university and study sports psychology. So that's what led me to psychology. And then I was encouraged to do counseling or clinical psychology. And then when I did that, and I was practicing that, I found that, sports psychology specifically, I found that people wanted more than they wanted to engage… If you start to ask yourself questions about your inner life, then invariably, you're going to be led to think about things other than your performance. And then I was introduced to existential humanistic psychology or psychotherapy as part of my counseling degree. And then that led me to an interest in depth [psychology], because I saw that people in therapy could bottom out when you think through cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a dominant mode of therapy in the West. So, then I went to Pacifica, this rare place that teaches depth psychology. And then I fell into this liberation psychology program, not by intent or design, but that was just how life unfolded in terms of psychological questions and a desire to understand inner life more.

AN: Yes, amazing. I'd never heard of depth psychology. Could you give us a quick, just kind of notes of what that is?

DB: It is literally, I think, as the Brits say, say *what's on the tin*, meaning that it is concerned with things that are below the surface so below what we typically or what we have been taught to think is psychological life which tends to be in this period and you are just referencing Sylvia Wynter and that lineage of thought and you know if you think about the cart and Cartesian thinking and the enlightenment, and all of that history has meant that we have moved away from thinking of human beings as souled and ensouled people and who are capable of having not only rational thought, but, but thoughts in a life that may not be rational on the surface of things. And depth psychology takes the soul seriously and says, what are ways for us to engage in things that are not, that we are not consciously aware of right away?

AN: Okay.

DB: So, repression and suppression. I should have just answered you quickly and said repression and suppression in psychological life, forgive me Amanda! (laughs)

AN: No, this is great. This is great. We do like going in depth a bit more to understand how you come to your thinking as well. So, thank you for that. So now I want to move on to decolonial perspective. Is there such a thing as *decolonial feminist psychology*? And what does that mean to you? You kind of hinted to that perhaps a little bit, but is that a thing that you think about? Is that a thing that you connect with? And if so, what is decolonial feminist psychology?

DB: So, there is a thing, and there are scholars working in that area, doing very good work. I want to ask, you asked me a direct question, I want to answer you in a direct way,

but I have to (11:56)
segway once more. So, it takes a lot of effort for me to say I'm a psychologist. And what I mean by that is that I think there's real harm when we, and I'm thinking of Lewis R. Gordon, born in Jamaica, an American philosopher who does decolonial work in an extraordinary way. And he talks about *disciplinary decadence.* And he says that it's a decadent move to separate these different areas of study and keep them separate. So, for example, you know, you're in an extraordinary program where you can bring history and you can bring critical theory, and you can bring psychology together. That's a way to teach, that's a way to learn is in a way that says, we live in an interdisciplinary way. We don't live historically only or critically only. All these things come together. So, for me, I don't know that I could answer your question and say that I think of myself as a decolonial feminist, I don't think I do. I think of somebody who uses psychology and I use philosophy and I use decolonial… I use these things as tools to try to answer questions. I don't think of them as being an identity per se.

AN: Very interesting, thank you. In your, one of your work, but in your work in general, so I'm thinking about Race versus the Human, as well as a Black Archipelago, you examined this entitlement between psychology, colonialism, and the category of men. Could you expand a little bit on how you came to this question and what they mean for psychology today.

DB: How did I come to these questions? You know, I think it's two things. I think it's a work that I have done with communities in the past. And then it's my interrogation of what I experience in coloniality myself. And it's trying to make sense of… there's a concept that I developed in, I think it's in the *Race Versus a Human* paper on the coloniality of consciousness. And I think what I saw doing community work is that people, invariably we can describe our lived experience even when it's traumatic and that's… I've done a fair bit of work with communities who have experienced horrific state violence. But, so people can describe some features, some elements of their lives, but then they hit a wall, and I know from other ways that they understand how race, how class, how gender, how ethnicity, et cetera, is producing real suffering in their lives. But for some reason, many people can't cross over into talking about their lived experience in ideological terms. And that's not the only thing that I see, but I use the concept *coloniality of consciousness* because something is blocking people's consciousness of reality. And so, you asked, you know, how did I come to be concerned with psychology and coloniality and man? It's because of the destruction of the human. It's trying to understand what has happened historically to the human and the only way, and in that paper, I think I talked about, I think I developed a method for analyzing dehumanization because there isn't one to my knowledge in psychology. And part of the method actually follows Sylvia Wynter's guidance, which is that we have to learn to how to separate categories, how to separate the institutions that we are in from, I think, the human. So, you know, you have to be able to pry race apart from the human. You have to be able to pry this modern life that we are apart from the human. If we can't do that kind of prying, then we can't actually see what this stuff is doing to human beings. So long -winded way to say that I think psychology needs resources that the **(16:58)**

Western concept of psychology does not contain. And therefore, we have to bring critical theory into it. And the critical theory, I lean on most is anti-colonial thinking from the Black Archipelago from the Caribbean, and I do that because the Caribbean was a place that coloniality really cemented its project of modernity. So having brought free African people to this enslavement, this archipelago of enslavement, what then has happened to us, you know, to our consciousness. And to try to follow that as best as we can through Glissant, you know, through René Depestre, through both Aimé Césaire and Suzanne Césaire, to try and understand what's happening. So not really trying to speak to psychologists, not trying to speak to critical theorists, not trying to speak to decolonialists, I'm just trying to speak as a human being, trying to make sense of something that I haven't seen made sense of.

AN: Yes, thank you very much for that. I have a question then about, if I remember correctly, the invocation of imagination, and you also talk about surrealism, of course, here, I think, of Suzanne Cézair as well. So, and that doesn't necessarily come up a lot in psychology, what is the use of imagination and ideas such as surrealism for psychology?

DB: But I wish we, I wish we would, you know, study those two questions that you just posed for a couple of years, I think we could do with that. The imagination again is that realm of psychological life that I think through Cartesianism has been subordinated to cognition and to rationale. And so, you know, when has freedom, when has liberation, when has emancipation come about, historically? It's actually when people have imagined it. It's actually through design imagination that people have then been able to plot their way out of enslavement and entrapment. And so, imagination to me is a precursor to social justice movements, to freedom movements, all of that. If we think back a hundred years ago when women in many places couldn't vote, for example, what allowed women to then agitate for and to pay the price to be able for all of us to now vote? It was their imagination, they didn't have the experience. They first knew within themselves that they had a right as human beings to have a voice in democracy or however you want to imagine the vote and therefore, through that imagination, they went forth .That you know, they created strategies and they went forth. On the question of surrealism… Surrealism to me is a psychological philosophy of freedom. So it belongs in psychology, and if we think of …you know, it's mostly attributed to white, European, middle-class people, many of whom were artists in the inter-war period, and coming out of the Dada movement, and what they saw was how their lack of freedom through fascism, et cetera, their lack of freedom was also tied up with other people's struggles for freedom. And they articulated it through Western thought. When Andre Breton met Aimé Césaire, Aimé Césaire said basically, I'm not quoting him now, but basically *we didn't know that what we were doing was surrealism, but you telling us, giving us that framework allows us to move faster because that's what we've been doing*. We have been articulating what we are not really supposed to see, what counters the dominant discourse, but we're going to do it anyway. It's our consciousness. **(21:31)**

AN: Brilliant. I want to pause here just to see if maybe Dr. Rutherford or Aaron have any question you want to jump in and ask?

AR: I have a question, and this may be something Amanda that you're going to get to but when you were speaking with us just a moment ago you mentioned doing community work especially with communities who have been and ravaged by state violence. And I wonder if you could speak a bit more about that work specifically and how that has influenced you.

DB: So, I'm remembering, this is before I left Jamaica to do what I thought would then be just a two-year sports psychology degree, which has turned into 20 something years now. I remember that it was in April 1999 that the government introduced or increased the tax on gasoline in Jamaica, and poor black people took to the streets and they shut down Kingston. They lit tires on the road, they burned tires, stopped the city for a couple of days. And out of that, a group of middle class people, of which I was one, we started to meet at a Catholic church, a hall, I think it was on a Thursday evening once a week, to listen to people from communities that we wouldn't often interact with, but who came forward – they were exhausted by the conditions that they're living in, and a lot had to do with poverty and that's what's linked to this uprising: people couldn't take the tax. And what we started to hear, and what was interesting, and we're talking about feminism, is that it was mostly mothers, aunts, grandmothers, sisters. And they were talking about the loss of sons, grandsons, nephews, and brothers to state violence. And you would get, occasionally, you would see in the paper that the police had shot and killed X, Y, and Z. But you wouldn't understand the loss to the community. You wouldn't understand the circumstances under which that happened and it's very connected with this piece of artwork that I was speaking to before called Lock Up. And so, I became a member of Jamaicans for Justice, and I jumped on the response team and on the response team, we would go on Wednesday afternoons, and we would literally take down people's narratives. And we'd hand over those recorded accounts to pro bono lawyers. And that's how Jamaicans for Justice works. That's how Jamaicans for Justice then took up cases. And in some instances, have been able to push back legally and produce some sense of justice. But I don't for a minute want to suggest that the Jamaican legal system and justice system is an equitable one, because it isn't. And then from there, and as I travel through these different stages of studying different kinds of psychology, I graduated with my PhD in 2011, I believe, and in 2010 in Jamaica, in May, one of the most horrific human rights atrocities occurred, which is that the government of Jamaica moved in on a community called Tivoli Gardens, which is in downtown, Kingston. And it's what we call a garrison community. So, it votes on block for one political party. And there is a leader. And in this case, and this is because of the politics coming out of the Cold War, this community has access to, it has a lot of firepower. So, internally, it has its own justice system, one could say legal system, it is a very self -contained community. And the US wanted the head of this community, who was a known drug lord, to be extradited to the US. But the prime minister of Jamaica said no, and that's because it was his community. And for eight months it was tension **(26:46)**

and eventually, who is Jamaica to hold off against the US? And so, under the guidance of the US with helicopters, overhead, et cetera, the Jamaican government had to move in against a community like this. And for four days, it invaded the community. And public

records say 76 community members died, community say over 250 members of the community were murdered by the state. So, I remember being back in Jamaica in 2012 and a human rights activist friend of mine said, did I know that some of the children in the community were so disturbed that the minister of education set up a hotline for them, said no. She went on to say except that the hotline was flooded by calls from the adults. And I understood that as a form of collective trauma. And so, I created our project with an anthropologist at University of Pennsylvania and a cultural worker. And we worked with the community for a period of years and the community said that, we witnessed some of what they've been through and the community asked that a film be made for their story to be told internationally, because that's the only way they felt they would get any justice from their own government. So that is one of the, I think, most significant pieces of community work that I've done, and actually had I not done my liberation psychology degree, I don't think some of the approaches that we used in that project would have been, I would have been conscious of them.

AN: Wow, thank you very much for that. I'm reminded that you've also actually worked across different modes of expression, so including visual media. So, for example, the film "four days in May", as well as art installations. And what you're telling me about is bringing this up, because I wonder if you could speak to your interest in using media and art and their role in psychology as a form of expression, but also, how would you inform psychology and vice versa?

DB: So, I wouldn't have been able to do my doctorate, I think, unless I had bought this piece [pointing to the art piece behind her], probably a good 10 years before I did my doctorate. So, art is extremely important to me. I live with a lot of visual art, but I also listen to jazz, probably almost every day, which is a freedom of expression, as you know. And so, I think that to understand the world more deeply, artists can help those of us who aren't artists to make connections. And I think that's because artists, good art, I think tends to put relationships that exist in alienated ways. I think good art tends to bring things that exist together, oftentimes. And so, in the same way that Charles literally brought a historic event into relationship with a current event. That's kind of what I'm talking about, you know? So, to me, art is a very efficient way. Rudolf Arnheim, who I think is a visual psychologist of note, several decades ago did a lot of work on the significance of visual art and psychology. And so, I don't think it's easy for us to see, to analyze reality without art.

AN: Interesting. I think that that connects also to perhaps the methodology that you had talked about before. This kind of methodology that analyses dehumanization and it sounds like or I wonder if then you know art might be one of the ways that are not usually used in an empirical kind of science or an empirically based science. Is that also part of the methodology? I'm curious generally about the methodologies that you have found to be useful in your work, including the ones that you just talked about**. (31:53)**

DB: So, I don't think of myself as an artist. So even though I co -produced *Four Days in May*, the film, the documentary, and bearing witness to the installation that was mounted at University of Pennsylvania, I don't think of myself as an artist in that way. I think of

myself as a cultural worker responding to a situation and then guided by people in the community who say, we think a film will best tell our story than doing the work for that to happen. I think of myself more as a theorist and a person who conceptualizes phenomena or conceptualizes ways to understand phenomena, perhaps that's more accurate. But as I say, I think much of my understanding of the world is facilitated through art, through poetic forms, much more so than through literal forms. If that makes sense.

AN: It does, absolutely. Could you talk to us a little bit about, so you've worked and experienced and developed through travel as well. I think so, Jamaica, the UK, the US. And I wonder how that, so the notion of place, has shaped your orientation to psychology and social justice. And perhaps as a follow-up, you know, how you understand the relationship between colonial legacies and contemporary issues in Jamaica and above, but perhaps speaking about how these travels have shaped your orientation to psychology and social justice.

DB: So never thought about that before. You know, I think psychology, the word, is often conflated with western psychology. And when I lived in Jamaica, often the discourses, if you're talking about psychology, you're really talking about pathology, psychological pathology. And I didn't appreciate, or took for granted rather, that psychological life is constantly happening for us 24 /7. I didn't appreciate the significance of thinking about problems that we have with our psychological life until I was a tennis player and was blocked by the fact that I would freeze, by, you know, which is a psychological process. And so, it wasn't until, I think the events in 1999 in Jamaica that I was talking about before when people shut down the city and I became a member of Jamaicans for justice, there was something I couldn't articulate in the meetings that we'd have on Thursday evenings and that is the psychological dimension which was so obvious in state violence, but nobody was talking about it. Nobody was talking about the collective trauma of it, et cetera. And so, it wasn't until I did my doctorate, which was pivotal, that degree under Mary Watkins, that I learned theories, and I learned concepts that then helped me to understand my past and also my present. So, I don't think I would be… if I were an American or a British person, I wouldn't be leaning on the Black anti-colonial archipelago, I don't think. I now work with that because I'm Jamaican and because of my reading of Wynter, Fanon, Cesaire, etc. They seem to speak to what I continue to see in Jamaica, in the US, and in the UK. So, place to me is extremely important. Because if you can hear the language of where you're from, the rhythms of speech, the rhythms of thought, if you can access literature that captures that, then oftentimes it's easier for you to make sense of the world. And, because I have questions, and have for a while on modernity and, the destruction of the human being in modernity, it almost feels like coming full circle, going back to Jamaica, going back to the Caribbean, even though I'm not physically there, but I'm there intellectually, and I'm there with similar commitments to **(37:27)**

the people who I engage with, if that makes sense. So, especially I'm aware that I'm not there, but I am there through the lineage of thinking through what has been done to us.

AN: Yes, please Dr. Rutherford and I thank you for that response.

AR: I just have a question that I think is directly an outgrowth of Amanda's question, the way you've answered. And that was so taken earlier in our conversation when you said that you had the personal experience of being produced as privileged, produced as black, depending on where you are, right? And I wonder if you could unpack that for us, if there have been experiential things, where you have felt that production happening in you, where you have felt being produced as black when you've been in the US or the UK, for example, in a way that you did not experience that when you lived in Jamaica, or something along those lines.

DB: So, in Jamaica, I believe it's still true. If I, in Jamaica said that I am black, People would laugh because historically, and this goes back to 1834, I believe, I could have that date wrong, when Jamaica became so-called free from…or slavery was no longer permitted. And the first thing that happened from that event was that slave masters, and I'm using the language of the time, it's horrific and I think it's important to use it for that reason, their are concubines, often times black women who they raped, their offspring called *mulattoes* which I think really means donkeys, etc., just to give you the flavor of this… Their offspring had privileges that no longer enslaved did not have. And those privileges meant access to income, access to wealth, access to education, access to legal systems, access to everything that society offered. So, there was a social hierarchy immediately created from race and that continued. There have been – and this I witnessed in the 1980s in Jamaica, I think it was 89, I could have that wrong – where the economy changed somewhat and opportunities opened up. And so, you have people who are considered black in Jamaica to have greater access, so there's a larger black middle class, et cetera. But the status of being mixed remains. And, so I, for example, when I was starting a business in Jamaica, it was very possible for me to pick up the phone and to make things happen. And that's because of the privilege that I have. In the US and the UK, I don't have that. And I go through the system, and the system for someone who looks like me and produced…so in Jamaica I'm produced as brown, and here and in the US I am produced as black. And so, here and in the US you go through the system, there's no one for you to pick up the phone to, and the system of course is designed so that someone like me doesn't have many doors open. I give an example. I think in the UK today, the figures bounce around for some reason, but some accounts are that there are 35 black female professors in the UK. That's of four nations.

AN: Thank you very much. If you go a little bit in the UK now, in your article, for example, Occupy the Classroom Radically, I wonder when you show up as you are in the UK and given what you talk to us about, the importance of place and what you have learned, but also how you talk about the human, etc. A lot of your work does speak to decolonializing the classroom and you do speak about the classroom being a contested place. So, with everything that you had just **(42:45)**

told us, how do you bring that into the classroom? What does it mean that the classroom is a contested space? And how does that connect to your broader project? Let's say of anti -colonial, transformation in knowledge production.

DB: So I want to use Mary -Louise Pratt's term "contact zones" to respond to that, at least initially. And she develops this term to account for, or to recognize that when people come from different social locations and they come into a space, I'm using it in the classroom, I don't recall that she used it necessarily for the classroom, I think she used it more generally and that's my flawed memory… But the point is that when people come into contact with each other from different histories, different cultures, different circumstances, we need to be cognizant of that, and we need to take care of that. And I think the classroom can become a divisive place and some people are shut down, some people are silenced, if we don't pay attention to power differentials, if we don't pay attention to class, if we don't pay attention to race, if they're different, if people who are categorized along different racial lines. And so, and also, you know, straight ahead from decolonial theory is the absolute power or overpowering of Western knowledge. So when we have, when I'm teaching to a classroom and it's not all folks from a European background or a Euro-American background, we have to be attentive to what the damage that's being done to people in the room if what they're being fed is the constant drip of Western thought and all that that does to someone who is not Western, actually all that it does to someone who is Western as well. So, the classroom is a contact zone in a positive and negative way, or those are the potentials of it doesn't have to be negative it can be gloriously positive, and people can learn to understand themselves and culture through that contact zone of the classroom. But I think it requires a lot of attention and care to create conditions so that people can come together and not muffle their differences, not muffle their anger, not muffle the pain, and certainly work through, to use a Freudian term, to literally work through social relations in the room itself, so that we're not only studying theory, we're actually grappling with it.

AN: Amazing, thank you. And so, I wonder if you can expand a little bit more in the experiential side of that. How do you, as Dr. and Professor Bell, how do you do that in a classroom? Do you have some examples that you can maybe share?

DB: It takes enormous work behind the scenes. So I begin with the standard things that any other educator would, what are the learning outcomes of this space, this time that we have together? And then I think from there, I think backwards. So well, what do I need to introduce students to in order for us to get to this endpoint? And I don't start off with assignments first and all of that stuff. I start off with, what are we going to study together? There's enormous power in theory. There's enormous power in concepts. There's enormous power in learning methodology. And so, what I want students to leave with is an experience of learning ideas and learning people with whom they can continue to read and think with for the rest of their lives. So, when I have had the opportunity, the freedom to design modules or courses that I've wanted to, and I've done the work of seeing what should this learning opportunity, this pedagogical opportunity, what should it offer? I then pay the most attention to the materials that we'll learn. **(47:42)**

And then in the UK, the banking model of education where you come in and your lecture is still the norm. In the US, where I taught at Antioch College, the opposite was true. Students would laugh you out of the room if you attempted to lecture at them, because they were very serious about studying, and so they wanted to engage in dialogue. So,

there it was much easier. Here it is a lot of work to create the conditions for dialogue. So, I have to do some amount of lecturing, but I have to do it in a way, I call it *interactive lecturing*. So, I can't quite articulate what I do in the sessions where I have to lecture, but somehow the introduction of the theories and the concepts, I flip them into questions so that students understand that I'm inviting them to question what I've introduced to them. I'm not assuming that they're going to take the materials at face value and don't want them to.

AN: Understood. So, it sounds like, you know, when you introduce all these theories and also theories and ideas, it is not so much as in, you know, memorize these people, memorize these theories, but rather being conversations with them.

DB: And to link it to their reality.

AN: And link it to their reality.

DB: If not, it's pointless.

AN: Right, right. Do you have a sense as to why it's in the US, it was easier, or students are much more ready and asking for it as opposed to in the UK?

DB: So, the college I taught at in the US full -time, Antioch College is a rare and precious place. It's an old liberal arts college, a hundred and odd years old actually. Social justice mission from the beginning, probably had one of the first women on its board of trustees. And so it was built on the premise that their social injustice and education can do something about that and that gave it permission, and we also used a community governance model. And so, students participated in the governance of the institution, not with the same level of power, but the voices were heard and considered. And they came there because of the mission of the university whereas here my experience has been that people have come here in order to get a degree to go out and participate in political economy. They haven't come here to disrupt, they haven't come here to transform, whereas at Antioch students there were already dissatisfied with the world and wanted to learn how they could transform it or participate

AN: Got it. Perfect. Unless there's any other question on that from Aaron or Dr. Rutherford? Yes, please go ahead.

AR: I think this is on the same kind of theme, so I'll jump in. And I know, Deanne, that one of the roles that you took on at Nottingham Trent, your previous institution, was to take the lead on decolonizing their curriculum. And I wonder if you could tell us a bit about that experience, especially from the point of view of lessons learned for people who may be trying to do **(51:32)**

similar things in their own institutions. So, challenges as well as maybe inroads. Anyway, I'll leave it there.

DB: So, some of the challenges with doing institutional decolonial work and there are many, one of them is bad faith. So, institutions are not serious about decolonizing themselves. But in the moment of the murder of George Floyd, so we're talking May

2020, if my memory serves me correctly, public institutions were forced to perform care, and warmth, and concern and move away from their indifference. And I think that's what created a response because in the past, I think, when #RhodesMustFall, which of course, happened prior to George Floyd's murder, but I think for years I could have that date wrong, but I think it was 2016, when Rhodes Must Fall, happened and students, you know, said *we don't want to participate in this, this is not how we want to learn*, there was some response, but it didn't gain as much traction, I think, or certainly in the UK until White people were forced to see how easily George Floyd's life was taken. And so, then EDI was used to subsume curricular decolonization. And I did try to do a lot of work to show their differences and to separate them out. And then what I proposed was education, was the fact that we needed to learn together as academics. First of all, what needed to be colonized, decolonized, because I think people heard the term decolonize a curriculum and they instantly wanted a toolkit. And that's what most universities in the UK have produced a set of behaviors. So, it's a behavioral project. It's not an ontological project. It's not an ethical project. It's quickly and dirtily *let's just get our reading list bolt up with difference, and then let's move forward*. Or you know what, *, instead of just having a single essay assessment, let's now have a PowerPoint presentation*. So, it's diversifying within the system. I mean, to use Nelson & Prilleltensky, the community psychologists, they distinguish between social change and social transformation, and the westernized university has gone the root of social change, change within the system. And Nelson & Prilleltensky are saying, no, social transformation is you change the terms and conditions, the assumptions of the system. They won't do… that is the hardest thing, that's why I started off by saying bad faith. They're not interested. They choose not to understand decoloniality as something that is the totality of our history, 500 year history has set the terms and conditions for humanity's history, and more than humanity, the earth is involved, and other animals are involved, not just human animals. So, the first thing is, we've been met with bad faith on the decolonizing the curriculum. And we have also been met by, and I'm leaning now on Albert Memmi concept in *The colonizer and the colonized,* he came up with this concept: The third type of colonizer is a colonizer who refuses. And what that colonizer refuses is to join the struggle. And most academics, their part in the bad faith project, is to refuse to join the struggle to decolonize. So, they'll come to workshops, they'll come to meetings but they're not going to put their jobs on the line. They're not going to speak truth to power in the institution and lose their job over decolonizing the curriculum. You also asked, though, about, I think, not only the challenges but perhaps possibilities are where we may have made minor breakthroughs. I think for some students, it's been meaningful. And that's because they've experienced a dehumanization. They want the institution to change. And when the institution doesn't transform, **(56:40)**

they end up bulking up the numbers of what's called the attainment or the progression or the awarding gap that lots of students, I think, leave because they can't take it.

AR: Thank you so much. So much of this, of course, resonates with a local experience, too, so but I wanted to check back in with Amanda. How are you doing over there?

AN: Sorry, I dropped off again and decided to use my phone. And we'll see how that goes. But that means I also missed a little bit. I'm grateful that there's a recording that Dr. Rutherford you have on your end, so I can listen to this. But I did get the tail end. I can perhaps ask a question that was going to come a little later, but since I caught this part of what you just said, Dr. Bell. I wonder then if you can tell us what advice you would give to incoming students who are decolonially minded and feminist minded and all of these different orientation instead of identity perhaps what would be… with everything that you've learned what would be your advice?

DB: So, I'm not sure I'd give advice…Yeah, I'm not sure I'd give advice. I think when students have said *I'm serious about studying decolonial thought*, I think some of the things I talk with them about is if, you go this route, for example, if you do your doctorate and you use this framework and you're doing your doctorate to get a job, if that's the reason, it'll probably mean that you have very few places to get a job. So that kind of reality. But for folks who are doing a doctorate because they want to contribute to part of the struggle for decoloniality, which I think is a separate thing from thinking that you can maybe do the struggle work inside the university. then we have a different conversation. And one of the things that, in that conversation, you know, I'm reminded by your question, Robin D .G. Kelly published a piece, I think it was in the Boston Review, something along the lines of *Black study, Black struggle*…And I think—I hope I'm not damaging the thrust of his argument — I think what he was saying is, when you come into the university, see it as an opportunity for you to study radical thought and to commune with others who are committed to the transformation of the world. Don't do it as a space that is going to soothe your soul, to see you, to witness you, to address the trauma of your community. I think he's arguing that that's unrealistic and it's not built for that, and that's a cruel reality. I think he's right. At first, every time I read that piece I'd bristle with it and be arguing in my head with him and I think, and maybe this is age. I think I've come to see that I think he's mostly right. Or all right. I'm not quite sure. So, I'd have a series of reality check meetings along the way to say, if you want to do this work, I think it's going to help, there are huge positives to it. But I also think we have to be realistic about the political economy that we operate in.

AN: Thank you, that makes a lot of sense. And I do hear from that also reconnecting to this idea that the difference between change and transformation, then there might be two different students at that point, depending on the direction. We just have a few more questions. I know we're getting tight for time, and I want to respect your time as well. I wonder if you could go a little bit more into your own experience, not just academically, but speaking to the reality, basically, of the weight that the kind of work that you do can take, the kind of barriers that will come, but
(01:01:57)
also I would imagine resistance in different ways that come up, but also I'd imagine that it is emotionally taxing. And so, I wonder, one, how do you, well, how do you deal with that? What is, what have been some method that you use, if any, or is this something that you need to struggle with? Yes, what is your experience with that?

DB: So there's a side there in the literature, and I think it comes out of public health by a White woman, a U.S. researcher who looked at disparities in the U.S. between black woman and White woman in particular, I'm not sure if she looked at Brown and Beige women too, but she questioned why there are these health disparities. So, she looked at differences, and what she saw is that, and she coined this term *weathering*, and she saw that black women experiences are those of being weathered. And it's this accumulation and, here, maybe we're back to talking about race and gender for example, and class. But what she saw is that it's all of these things happening at once that you are living through. And, a friend of mine introduced me to this work. And looking at it, I realized now that the toll, the physical toll, the psychic toll of doing this work inside an institution like the Westernized University, weathering captures what I experience. I feel weathered, not in a good way. And, I think we should be able to talk about it more. And there are instances of bullying, there are instances of harassment, there are instances of silencing. There for many instances that I can think of along the way. And I think you also asked about methods for, I would say overcoming it, transcending it, transcending it momentarily, et cetera. Those have to do with the pleasures of life. I mean, jazz to me is just an enormous way to connect with the sound of people who understood the beauty of the struggle, wanting to participate in it non -violently and in ways that are beyond hyper rational. So jazz is an enormous source of buoyancy and, and positive energy. So, reading, not only poetry, but actually I take enormous pleasure to reading theory. I'm one of those people who, the more I can read a sentence and be so blown away because it truly helps to understand life. And understanding life, I find, mitigates against reality. The more you understand about reality, the more you realize the work that needs to be done. And hopefully the more you see perhaps a place for you in that work. And that gives your life purpose. And I think living a life with purpose pushes back against how I understand depression and anxiety and, you know, the growth, the pandemic, if you will, the epidemic of these states that we get into in this life, I think a lot of them are in response to our living through this feeling very alienated from each other and also feeling sometimes that we don't quite understand and therefore we turn it back on ourselves rather than seeing that our depression and our anxiety, etc, is actually a response to the social world, but it's an individualized and it's an extraordinarily painful internal response.

AN: Thank you for that, Deanne. I've actually read, I think you're in good company of doing some work as well in looking at the experiences of black women in academia. These kind of things also have come up where other black women have said, well, when something like that happens or you get weathered, that term hasn't come up, it's actually very useful, that they return to other Black women's work and they find community there. And so, I find that very **(01:07:21)**

interesting and something to think about for maybe a piece of advice also that we can carry with us. Perhaps then could you tell us about the importance of mentorship in your life in terms of have you had mentors that have supported you in this kind of work in your work generally and your development and are you a mentor is that something that you also kind of kind of do as part of your experience in your development.

DB: So, for me, my chosen language on this would be: I've had many guides, I've had many Sherpas who have led me through how to read critical theory, not assuming that you can just pick up critical theory from a traditional Western education and know how to handle it. So, I've had people guide me with that. Of course, in my doctoral work, which was pivotal for my movement toward this way of thinking and being. Mary Watkins, who was my dissertation chair, was and continues to be an enormous guide in my life. And of course, there are other people along the way. Sometimes you will publish a piece of work and somebody or people will reach out to you about the piece of work, and then you learn from them. And then they give you so much from that experience that they become a guide and they trigger new questions in the way that you think etc, etc. In the classroom and it's probably, for some people it would be politically correct to say, this but literally there are some questions that students ask in the classroom or you know walking from the classroom kind of thing that blow your mind, you know, because you introduced a theory or a concept and then they connect that to something else and something that you didn't see before now comes into view. And so, not only have they taught you something in that moment, but they've also taught you something about your pedagogy, which helps you for your own way of developing yourself as well as for others. And so, but guides and Sherpas exists in other forms too. You know, the old adage of a book being an output of someone who you will never meet, probably, because you rarely meet the author of a text. and then the other guides on sharpers come back to this painting behind me. That painting, I live with this by choice and it's a guide, because that's been true for the past 500 years. I could continue to try to work through this painting for as long as I live, because it's a metaphor. It carries meaning. So, you know, there's one of the most extraordinary British sculptors is a woman, Barbara Hepworth, I don't know if you know of her work. Just the most stunning three-dimensional pieces, articulations in space that you see, and I study her work, not for a direct impact on my own, but because there is a spiritual quality of her work, she gets the essence of often sometimes relationship, she has a theme, for example, and that's I think of decoloniality and modernity because of her images, I think of them now very clearly as two opposing forms of life, and I'm sure I'm going to use that in my work if you see what I mean. So, I'm guided and sharpened by my own thinking and work that I do by a lot that's around me and that I'm in relationship with.

AN: Great, that's fascinating. I love how art and music keep coming back as guides and as method even and as theory. That's really fascinating. So, I have maybe a couple more questions and I'll ask one more time if there's maybe Dr. Rutherford and Aaron, a question that comes up before we close out. **(01:12:43)**

AP: I had one question actually, because I noticed from your CV that you had studied Ecopsychology. And I just sort of wanted to know how that informed like your work with decolonialism as well as your work, like just generally within psychology as well as like your teaching, especially your work with like rehumanizing with decolonialism.

DB: So, I understand ecopsychology as a study of mental life that has to do with more than the human world, so coming outside of ourselves. And I remember teaching an ecopsychology course at Antioch College, and we read Gay Bradshaw's work, but we

also read the philosopher Kelly Oliver's work, tackling *witnessing*. And, after we've done a bit of working with theories and concepts, we headed out to the Columbus Zoo. And the Columbus Zoo has, probably still has ,some of the most extraordinarily beautiful elephants you have ever met. And just like in the painting behind me, they are confined also in a concrete environment, a trap. And I don't know if any of the elephants could take 10 full steps in any direction. That's the confinement that they're in. And when you think about, we stay there for a day, we didn't talk a lot to each other. You should have seen the work that those students produced after that experience. And it connects, studying ecopsychology is not only about studying the other, it's studying your relationship to the other. So, you are learning about the other and you are learning about yourself so it's an ethical praxis. And it's decolonial if whilst you're in that tussle, that learning about yourself in terms of the other, and also learning about the confinement and the oppression of the other, it then means that the word "eco" shouldn't really be there in the same way that these qualifiers shouldn't really be there because none of us are…none of us exist except for relationships. So ecopsychology, the field, in its own right, you know, would probably say it's about more than the human world but to me it's about, because we humans are studying it it's about the world that humans live in, the whole the totality of the world that humans live in, rather than thinking about ourselves, rather than being egocentric, and rather than participating in normalizing a different kind of violence, you know, ecocide for example, accounts for the kinds of balance I'm thinking of. So, yeah, I mean I wish that we wouldn't qualify all of these different kinds of psychology, because really we should consider that there is so much to learn about psychological life that it's redundant to qualify these things. We should just be open to the reality that their psychological life to be understood. And we're going to look at the different dimensions of it that we're drawn to.

AN: Yes, thank you for that question Aaron and for your answer, Dr. Bell. Speaking of qualifiers, I'm about to qualify something. Please problematize all the questions as you need, but what do you see as the future of feminist psychology? And in your opinion, yes, what are the next steps?

DB: So last year, for some reason, I was invited by the British Psychological Society's Woman and Equalities section. Not quite sure, except for some other rabble rousers why I got invited, but I wsa invited to deliver keynote at their conference. And I delivered one on the psychology of voice. And I did that because I felt that in though – and I don't know the body of work fully **(1:17:54)**

called *feminist psychology*. But my sense of...part of it, is that it's not it's intent seems to be to account for women's experiences, in a meaningful way, and that's important work. But I believe that it's women's liberation that is the *raison d 'être* for feminist psychology. And that's just because we live in a historic moment, long moment, where women have been unfree. So, let's cut to the chase, and let's go for freedom. Let's go for liberation. And so, when I think for about the reality of being a woman is that we don't have the same muscularity, we don't have the same physical power that other genders do. But we have voice and here when I say voice, what I mean is we have consciousness and we have the ability, psychology of voice for me is a way to say that there is a mental

approach, there is a psychological approach to the development of voice. And that's one of the frontiers, if you will, that I think we need to push more, and that's in recognition of our bodies vis -a -vis other genders and also a non-violent approach to social transformation and the fact that through consciousness, through the development, the greater development, the further development of our consciousness, we can bring something to the world that can absolutely help to transform this. And we've seen this through history.

AN: Then would you see it as a tool or would you see it more as we have to transcend it? Is it one of the many pieces? I mean, feminist psychology, or is there, yes, do you think it should be transcended? Do you think it's a useful tool? Feminist psychology itself, or the quality of feminist psychology?

DB: For as long as women are oppressed, anything that labels a recognition of a problem is useful. So feminist psychology to me brings together people who see that we're not treated equally, and that there are conditions that woman experience that need to be understood and dealt with, and that there's a psychological implication to being a woman. So, to me, I give credit to feminist psychology in that way, that yes, there are all of these dimensions that are absolutely crucial to human existence for almost 50 % of those of us walking around the planet. So, it's crucial. So, its themes and its concerns and its commitments are very important, and absolutely not outdated. I just believe that an orientation that is more muscular on us attaining freedom from modernity is often overlooked.

AN: Thank you. I have one last question. And then after that, if somebody is like, you should have asked this other one, please…but what of your accomplishments, your many accomplishments, do you value most?

DB: So, I think the paper "Race versus the Human" that's being published this autumn is my hardest, boldest thinking to date. And it took me a couple of years to write that piece. I felt at one point I should have written a book. But, and I still may, but it's… I felt like I became an author through that. I was authoring a break with even how some decolonialists think about race. And I'm not sure it's going to be well received at all. I think, oftentimes, when people see that sort of work, they flinch with a kind of oh that's a colorblind move and nothing could be further from the truth, but I suspect I'll get a lot of critique for it… but I think it's the thing that I'm most proud of. **(1:23:44)**

AN: Fantastic. I very much enjoyed that piece but also feel like I have to re-read it four more times before I fully get everything that you have there. So, if you decide to write a book, please do. I think there are some very interesting things there. That's my opinion. Well, Dr. Bell, or Deanne, is there anything that you want to share that perhaps haven't been asked that you want to add to the conversation?

DB: I want to thank the three of you for the work that you're doing. You know, I was familiar with this project for a number of years but it was when you reached out to me and you shared with me how you approach this that the significance of the project became even more clear to me. And it's a unique project I know you know this, but it

remains unique. And for us to put meat on the bones of decolonizing knowledge, this kind of work is crucial, and the oral dimension of it, I think, is very important. And part of that is because I think, you know, for those of us who are sensitive, people's intonation, the pacing of their voice, all of that communicates a meaning in a more direct and alive way than, you know, a journal article or a book. And so the oral part of the project to me is particularly impactful. And your questions, and your comments, and your feedback make me think about, clearly what's of interest to you, and also how they nurture my own questions and my own commitments. So yeah, I want to thank you for the opportunity. It's been really, really wonderful from the moment that you emailed me and invited me into this. So, thank you.

AN: That's wonderful. Thank you very much. We are very happy that you're going to be part of this archive. Yes, I think we're all excited about that. Dr. Rutherford, Aaron, do you want to add anything else before we close up?

AR: Thank you again for these wonderful, wonderful conversation and insights. Thank you so much.

AP: Thank you. **(1:27:09)**