#FeministFrequencies: A Presidential Fireside Chat with President Heidi R. Lewis

The National Women’s Studies Association
February 2024
0:00:00.0 Kristian Contreras: Hello and happy 2024. My name is Kristian Contreras. My pronouns are she/her/hers, and welcome to our first installment of Feminist Frequencies featuring myself and the Dr. Heidi R. Lewis, PhD, or as I lovingly call her, Madam President of NWSA. This is our first Fireside chat, except this time without the fire.

0:00:25.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: We the fire. We the fire.

0:00:27.5 Kristian Contreras: Spiritually and emotionally, intellectually, the fire is here.

0:00:29.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Go on... We just.

0:00:37.8 Kristian Contreras: We just couldn't figure out this very beautiful relic that would have kept us warm.

0:00:37.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:00:36.7 Kristian Contreras: But the purpose of Feminist Frequencies is to make sure that our membership and our association as a whole gets to know not only the folks behind the scenes, people emailing you incessantly about the annual conference and your membership dues, but also to help think about the vision and mission of how NWSA can meet the needs of what it means to be a women, gender and sexuality scholar, activist, educator, organizer, disruptor today.

0:01:00.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:01:01.3 Kristian Contreras: But enough about the fun introduction. Let's get down to business with my fancy iPad.

0:01:06.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Let's do it. Let's do it.

0:01:07.9 Kristian Contreras: Fancy iPad. Now Madam President/ Heidi.

0:01:10.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Please, just Heidi.

[laughter]

0:01:13.6 Kristian Contreras: It's hard to believe that we only met in person.

0:01:17.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I know.

0:01:18.7 Kristian Contreras: Three-ish months ago, but congratulations again.

0:01:20.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yeah. Thank you so much.

0:01:21.2 Kristian Contreras: On being elected our newest president. It's been, if my math is correct, because math is not my ministry, if I'm correct, we're 2.5 months into your two-year term.

0:01:33.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.
0:01:33.4 **Kristian Contreras:** So what have you been up to?

0:01:34.6 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** Oh my goodness. So immediately following the conference in Baltimore, where we met for the first time, it feels like six months ago, it was not that long. Immediately after we got back, I started having one-on-one meetings with every single member of the board and the office, except in the case of the women of color caucus co-chairs I met with together. Because it was really, really, really important for me to reconnect with the board as incoming president and to get a better understanding of their experiences with NWSA and on the board from this perspective. Because I've known some members of the board for years. Vice President Stephanie Troutman Robbins and I realized that we joined NWSA at the same time through the women of color leadership project in 2008. We didn't remember that. We just started lining it up like, wait, I was away, you was away.

0:02:40.6 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** So we don't remember each other from that, but we've known each other of each other for that long, but still it's different. Me being on the board as secretary was a totally different experience than I'm sure it'll be with me as president. So I just wanted to sort of ground myself in the experiences of the board now. So I did all of that, met with each and every one of them for anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour and a half.

0:03:08.8 **Kristian Contreras:** I feel like we met for...

0:03:11.1 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** Five hours.

0:03:11.9 **Kristian Contreras:** 17 hours, But...

0:03:13.2 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** Every week too.

0:03:13.9 **Kristian Contreras:** But it was, but a beautiful experience, I think.

0:03:17.1 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** No, it was because I learned history I didn't know, I was able to learn about how various board members see NWSA from a fresher perspective than those of us who've been around for as long as I have. And that was really helpful for me. And one of the reasons I did that was because I wanted to develop a strategic plan for my particular term, my two-year term, but I didn't want to do that on my own. Although of course I come into the presidency with experiences and knowledges and ideas and all of that. I didn't want to sort of tell the board and tell the membership this is what I think me alone and you all will get on board or get off. I at least wanted to have an opportunity to define that collectively with the board. So that was in addition to just sort of reacquainting myself with people that I served on the board with in a different capacity, meeting people that I did not really know or had heard of but didn't have a relationship with.

0:04:25.0 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** In addition to all of that, I wanted to learn from them in order to develop a plan. So really I asked everybody, including you, to come into the meeting with what three answers to I think three questions. What is your vision for the role that you play, whether it's member at large, treasurer, and then what's your vision or what ideas do you have for NWSA as a whole, and then what ideas do you have for me as president, right? So that was sort of what I asked them to think about in addition to sort of rereading the bylaws and understanding what that document has been and meant.
0:05:12.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And I actually had a lot of fun. Oh the other thing I wanted to mention too was that prior to those meetings, I sent everybody my CV and asked them to send me mine. Obviously, that wasn't meant to be evaluative, right? Evaluate and then what? Kick them off the board?

0:05:29.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: No, it was more so it gave me an opportunity to see people as professionals, as intellectuals, and to learn, our bios on the website are like that big, right? Depending on who we are, so that doesn't really tell me anything about the board, but seeing everybody's CVs and just being able to see what they've done, where they've been, what they're interested in was like, it was overwhelming, but it was so enlightening because what I wanted that to do was to give me an opportunity to think about the kinds of things that they could do as board members that would be purposeful and that would amplify their knowledges and talents and things of that nature.

0:06:15.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Because if nothing else, I want me, you, the board, and everybody, to feel as purposeful as possible and to feel and to be as seen and heard as possible. So that's really what I've been doing, put the strategic plan out to the board. We had the discussions about it, it's about to come out to the public soon. I'm so nervous, but excited at the same time. And then the CFP, so that's literally what these last two and a half or so months have entailed, is those things.

0:06:43.9 Kristian Contreras: I think what's really beautiful about the process is that post-conference back in Baltimore, the governing council would meet. I was there for short periods of time. I was dry heaving all around both of our sites. But the board met and talked about again, like what you're naming, like where are we going when it comes to anchoring the field, right? That's what NWSA is, we are the biggest and largest, biggest and largest, those are synonyms.

0:07:08.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: The biggest and largest and most gigantic.

0:07:10.5 Kristian Contreras: Most gigantic. But we're the biggest and the oldest association that focuses on women and gender and sexuality studies. And as you've wrote, written, either one works.

0:07:22.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Write, wrote.

0:07:23.0 Kristian Contreras: So as you named, how about that?

0:07:25.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes, yes.

0:07:25.4 Kristian Contreras: As you named in the CFP, which I'm very excited to go about.

0:07:28.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Me too.

0:07:29.1 Kristian Contreras: By the way, so I can no longer get those emails about when to come up.

0:07:33.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Please, it's coming.

0:07:34.1 Kristian Contreras: But back to my point.
0:07:36.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:07:36.5 Kristian Contreras: I do think what's so beautiful is that these conversations have happened with every iteration of the board. And I know firsthand how galvanized the board feels, how I feel supported as the interim director in anchoring the association, administratively really good the spreadsheets, but thinking about how we also see that include our constituency groups.

0:07:58.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:07:58.0 Kristian Contreras: Include folks all across the membership, it's not just the seasoned folks.

0:08:03.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Correct.

0:08:03.1 Kristian Contreras: It's who are wonderful and amazing shout out to you.

0:08:06.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Of course.

0:08:06.2 Kristian Contreras: But what excites me too is how the strategic plan involves the entirety of what it means to be connected in solidarity. This is the 25th anniversary of all about love, new vision for Bell Hooks, and not for her, but written by the OG Bell Hooks. And I think about how love is integrated from the very first paragraph all the way through how we're gonna be convening together in Detroit in November, you should register for that conference trip.

0:08:35.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I'm looking forward to that conference a lot. But to your point, the strategic plan is entitled, reconnect, repair and restore.

0:08:50.4 Kristian Contreras: You love an alliteration moment.

0:08:51.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I'm so, such a fan. And then Colon a more thoughtful, transparent, and trustworthy NWSA. All of those things together are primarily how I understand love. I don't know what love is without connection, trust, transparency, accountability, all those kinds of things, and I know that the association has had to contend with a lot of tension and conflict, over the past couple years. I was on the board prior to serving as president as secretary. So I was there. I was up close. And one of the things that touched me is that I was looking back through all of the programs, and I started with '93 and '94 to see how things may have shifted when Vivien Ng became our very first president proceeding steering committees and coaches and things like that. And in her message to the membership in the program, the very first program that she led as president, one of the first things she wrote was essentially, we've been through a lot.

0:10:23.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And you could tell it was drama, and those of us who have become privy to the various NWSA stories know what was happening at that time. Women of color were fed up and walking away. Vivien becomes president and says right out, we've been through a lot, and I'm looking forward to leading us through a sort of, not a historical, but different iteration of NWSA. And when I read that, I was like, whoa, me too.

0:11:05.5 Kristian Contreras: You said, if you only could see this inbox...
0:11:08.1 Kristian Contreras: And then insert every other president.

0:11:10.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You know and this won't be the last time. So I appreciate you saying what you said about the plan, because that was the spirit in which I had all those meetings with all of y'all in order to write it, was to ground us to clarify things about us and my thinking and our shared vision and shared mission. And to move and to do so in collaboration to the extent possible with the membership, especially our myriad constituency groups. We have the committees, we have the task forces, we have the caucuses, we have the interest groups and all the different people in the association who lead those. We wanna be working with those members to do the work that, that we all came here to do. We really want this particular board wants to return NWSA to its roots as a membership driven association.

0:12:17.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But that doesn't mean that I won't act as president. I know what that means. I'm excited about what that means. And you and I, of course, will talk about some of the ways that I'm working to sort of recenter that role in a particular way. And add some new flavor to it, recover some things about it that I've learned, borrow some ideas from past presidents we've had, but make it my own. But love is all through it the way I understand it, yeah.

0:12:48.7 Kristian Contreras: I just seem like a little bit of reclaimed. I'm like, I really agree.

0:12:54.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I'm serious. No, but it's really exciting, 'cause I really can't even sort of like believe I'm sitting here. I mean, it's not to say I never thought there have been various times throughout my career where I've thought this was something I wanted, but, huh, I never really spent time to see that and think about. It's not like I set myself up to get here like, oh I want that. So I'm gonna do this, this, this, this, this. So to be here is like, woo, okay, I'm here now so I wanna do it in a way that makes sense and that's what makes sense to me, so I'm glad to hear that that's how you're understanding it.

0:13:33.2 Kristian Contreras: Yeah. And I think what you're, at least how I'm receiving it, like naming the fact that you have a vision and it's anchored in the collective. It's not just, this is what my interests are as a leader, this is my own definition. And I think, again, it invokes all that Bell wrote and all about love and so many other iterations of her work, which is how are we defining clarity around what love is and how are we also experiencing, manifesting it, facilitating other synonyms for create, curate.

0:14:01.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:14:02.2 Kristian Contreras: How are we doing love and community? 'Cause we need each other, right?

0:14:05.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Mm-Hmm.

0:14:06.5 Kristian Contreras: And I think for me, because I've read the strategic plan, I mean, I had to know it, had to live it.
0:14:10.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Thank you.

0:14:11.4 Kristian Contreras: Put it in my nighttime skincare routine.

0:14:13.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:14:15.5 Kristian Contreras: Tell everybody ad nauseum who's not an NWSA.

0:14:18.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:14:19.8 Kristian Contreras: But the point back to you is in terms of finally hitting send on that email to the board, what are you most excited about in terms of those elements of the strategic plan? Like what gives you the most enthusiasm and like, I need to get to November.

0:14:33.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:14:34.5 Kristian Contreras: And see these changes implemented and give life to them.

0:14:38.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes. One of the things that I'm most excited about, all it is... One of the things I'm most excited about the membership engagement initiatives. I'm really excited about that because I appreciate the conference, I've become who I am today because of that conference, I've gone almost every year since I joined in '08. And I mean, I started in '08 which is the last year. It was in the summertime. So like that far back, not as far as others, but far back from my generation, you know what I mean? And at the same time, I know that people, including me, are desiring more routine opportunities to engage, to be with each other, to talk to each other, to learn from each other, to strategize with each other and that makes a lot of sense given the times we're living in. We're under attack for real.

0:15:51.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You know, we're not imagining this. You and I just met with a colleague in Florida who shared with us that institutions down there are either threatening to, or are no longer reimbursing expenses for them to be in spaces like NWSA. When I was secretary, I organized the most recent NWSA chairs and directors meeting that featured that colleague and others in Florida who were sharing their experiences with us, strategizing with us. People want and need that more than just November. And so the membership engagement initiatives that I developed in collaboration with the board, because this kept coming up in the conversations with the board. I wish I'd counted how many members of the board said that they wanted to do more engagement with the membership year round.

0:17:00.4 Kristian Contreras: Come through assessment.

0:17:02.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You know what I mean?

0:17:04.8 Kristian Contreras: That's right. I was trying to lay a precedent.

0:17:04.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I could go back to the notes. I still have the notes. I bet it was every single one. If it wasn't every single one, it was everybody but maybe two people, right?

0:17:09.9 Kristian Contreras: Mm-Hmm.
Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But I wanna say it was every single member of the board and you as the representative of the office said the same thing.

Kristian Contreras: I sure did, just for the record.

Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: So we're all excited about that. So that's what makes me excited about that, in addition to knowing that it would be so beneficial to the members to have spaces, co-create spaces. And so the GC will be working with the office to do different kinds of membership engagement. So we will have short term engagement initiatives such as webinars, workshops, teachings that happen once a month, once every other month, just whenever it makes sense for the members of the board to do so in collaboration with the office, other members, constituency groups and so on. And then in line with our alliterating, I came up with these new NWSA communities, right? There's three.

Kristian Contreras: I'm ready.

Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Right? There are critical communities where you would do things like discuss books, films, movies, TV shows. They're creative communities where you would have, you know, scholarly writing groups, creative writing circles, things of that nature. And then there are care communities where facilitators are going to be mindful or be attentive to wellness and mindfulness in myriad ways. Meditations, libations to the ancestors, whatever facilitators decide they want to do. Facilitators will, of course, primarily be the GC because we have been elected to serve the association in a particular way. But we all are looking forward to doing so in collaboration with the office and members, especially our constituency groups. We have so many. I invite you if you haven't in a while, or if you never have to just go look at the website, click governance, and you'll see, look, I'm like, I'm seeing it. Click governance...

Kristian Contreras: Yeah. The website memorize at this point.

Kristian Contreras: I have the website memorized only for it to be about to change, right? But I'm excited about that too. [chuckle] But I'm really excited about that kind of membership engagement. Because most of it will be free. Sometimes we will ask for donations. Other times we will have a sliding scale fees that go back into the association. We have members who are in very precarious situations like what I just referenced. We wanna be able to support and help them. We have graduate students, we want to be able to support and help. And let me say this because in, I joined in '08 at that time. Okay. My son was born in 2004. He was 3. He wasn't yet 4. My daughter was born in 2006. She had turned 2. My husband was and remained self-employed. At the time I joined NWSA. We were on food stamps and getting daycare vouchers. We couldn't get housing vouchers. Oh, and we was on Medicaid too. And I was still taking our hard-earned money, the little we had, to pay membership and conference registration and to get to Cincinnati.

Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Thankfully, I was at Purdue University, so my homegirl, we just drove and I was able to stay with a friend. Shout out to Alia Ramon. I was able to stay with her and her partner at the time. I can't even remember where my other homegirl style. I think she stayed there too. [chuckle] But you see what I'm saying? So we wanna be able to support members who are doing what I was doing in '08. And I did get support from my department, shout out to American Studies at Purdue, the African American Studies and Research Center at Purdue and women's
gender and sexuality studies at Purdue. But it didn't cover everything. And I was going to ASA at the time too, and NCBS. I was going to National Council for Black Studies.

0:21:40.1 Kristian Contreras: You were on the circuit.

0:21:40.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And I was interdisciplinary for real.

0:21:43.4 Kristian Contreras: Well, is...

0:21:45.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Is.

0:21:45.4 Kristian Contreras: Was, and is. But you were on the circuit.

0:21:46.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I miss you ASA and NCBS but I can't be everywhere at all times. Now y'all please.

0:21:51.0 Kristian Contreras: And we're always like right up against each other.

0:21:52.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh, I think have to stop this.

0:21:55.1 Kristian Contreras: And I say, I can't do two weeks off.

0:21:56.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That's what I'm saying.

0:21:57.5 Kristian Contreras: Like, What are we doing the back to the...

0:21:57.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But Yeah. So those fees will go to those kinds of supports. Because I want people to think we're just asking...

0:22:05.4 Kristian Contreras: No, of course.

0:22:05.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: For donations or charging fees for these communities and engagement and this, it was just to line in our pockets. No, we wanna be able to support, but we need support to support.

0:22:19.1 Kristian Contreras: I think in the short time that I've been the interim director, I think this past Sunday was six months. My hairlines receded a little bit, but that's what castor oil is for. But back to the conversation, [chuckle] I do think about my experience coming into NWSA. I was an administrator and a mentor of mine was like, "You have to come to NWSA." And I roll up not knowing what to expect. It was my first academic conference as a practitioner. Prior, I had gone to my professional associations and I was overwhelmed in the most beautiful way about the different types of connections I was able to make, meet other graduate students, or at the time, I wasn't even in graduate school. And again, now fast forwarding up to now, in my short time, I've had wonderful, hard, challenging, but also grounding conversations with folks, our members who are reaching out to the office and asking like, how do I get funding to come?

0:23:17.7 Kristian Contreras: This is my only space. You've named so importantly that the field is under attack, always has been. But as the world evolves, as we are seeing the weaponization of
social justice language, the attacks on CRT, all the other elements that we can talk about at nauseum, right? Are impacting us in such ways that folks in Florida, Ohio, Texas, where I live. Currently, you can't get funding if something says DEI, gender studies. And so the the ways in which we're attacked are evolving. So we need each other now more than than ever. And not just financially, it's naming, how are we connecting folks in Florida to the rest of the membership? Ohio, Texas, every other place that has legislation that's either in existence or in the, what's that word? Lobby?

0:24:04.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:24:05.3 Kristian Contreras: The docket on the docket.

0:24:06.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: On the docket.

0:24:07.6 Kristian Contreras: To become legitimized. And those three communities. Beautiful alliteration by the way.

0:24:12.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You know, critical creative and care.

0:24:15.9 Kristian Contreras: Speak to the extent of it.

0:24:16.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But yeah. Really because, and it's, I in conversation with you and the board decided that that was going to be one of the primary ways that we committed to a different kind of accessibility. Everybody can't make it to that conference.

0:24:35.9 Kristian Contreras: Correct.

0:24:36.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Everybody's not gonna go broke to get there. So you're not gonna have to wait until November to see me or to talk to me. One of the other things I'm excited about are my president's blog that I'll be publishing routinely followed by a talk back on IG Live or some other space or... And some other space. Stay tuned. The office [chuckle] But shout out to Courtney though. I'm No, no. Shout out to Courtney, the office.

0:25:08.1 Kristian Contreras: The operations manager who really held us down, continues to hold us down.

0:25:12.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: For real, for real.

0:25:13.4 Kristian Contreras: Courtney, you're much appreciated.

0:25:15.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You are. And I can just say now, that all of the announcements that you'll be receiving, invitations that you'll be receiving come from two people, Courtney and Kristian. Courtney and Kristian. And that's really important for us to remember. We have a two person office staff. There have been times when there have been, what, three, four. We don't have that now. So we're trying to re-stabilize and rebuild. And I think that that starts in large part with this kind of engagement that I'm talking about. So the president's blogs will be lit. I'm looking forward to seeing faces and hearing voices at the conference. I keep saying there will be no VIP rooms, hashtag lobby lit. I'll be in the lobby. Yeah. I'll be in the lobby in a particular way, though.
So yeah if you, what they say, if you scared, go to church, if you scared, go to bed, because we gonna be down there playing spades and dominoes and listening to music. And I just want to be in fellowship with people more often than once a year. And I think a lot of people want that. So the blogs will help with that, the membership engagement. So those are some of the things that I'm most excited about coming out of the strategic plan. Just like I said, the first word in the strategic plan is reconnect, repair, restore, right? Reconnect. That's really important to me.

0:26:44.3 Kristian Contreras: No, I appreciate that. And again, it feels like it's been 17 years, but it's only been 2.5 months.

0:26:50.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: 2.5 months.

0:26:52.6 Kristian Contreras: We're about to close out January which feels so wild to even consider. But again, I think we've been moving at a very particular pace. One where the national office, again, Courtney and myself, are working to stabilize. We've had a lot of change in transition over the last five and a half years or so. And so me coming into the role, I've inherited a great privilege to be able to be a part of an association in this specific way that I love, that have that I would say held me in my academic journey, my professional journey, my regular person journey, whatever holistic type of approach I'm trying to get out of here. But we've been moving at a particular pace, which I think leads us beautifully because I set it up that way, [chuckle] beautifully into talking about the upcoming call for proposals.

0:27:39.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh.

0:27:39.8 Kristian Contreras: Now, in theory, when we post this video, our first episode...

0:27:45.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Is that right?

0:27:46.1 Kristian Contreras: The CFP will be out. And I think the folks want to know, and I know this because y'all have been emailing me understandably and reasonably as you should 'cause you're committed members, and you're trying to amplify the work. But talk to me a little bit, or a lot a bit about the call for proposals for our 2024 conference. We are very privileged to partner with the city of Detroit, which has such rich cultural history, activist history. And I'm excited to be in two sites. They're connected or nearby, whatever word I'm thinking of here. But we are situated along the Underground Railroad.

0:28:26.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:28:26.8 Kristian Contreras: So that was my personal, like what in the world? Excitement when I did a site visit back in November. But I'm talking about me. I wanna talk about you Madam President.

0:28:35.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh my goodness.

0:28:36.7 Kristian Contreras: And your vision for the 2024 conference.

0:28:40.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes. So, as you can see. [laughter]
0:28:44.3 Kristian Contreras: With the power of...

0:28:45.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I have to go get my tablet. [laughter]

0:28:46.5 Kristian Contreras: [0:28:47.1] ____ Madam President.

0:28:49.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Listen.

0:28:50.0 Kristian Contreras: Recovered her tablet.

0:28:51.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Listen. And the reason, because I had to get the tablet because understand, this was sent to the board, shout out to the whole board. This was sent to the board what? Monday, I think. I can't remember.

0:29:05.5 Kristian Contreras: In the recent past.

0:29:06.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: In the recent past. And so up until today, the board, Stephanie Troutman Robbins, Karma Chávez, Erica Williams, Kristina Gupta, Jessica Pabón, Latoya Lee, Dominique, Valerie Taylor...

0:29:24.8 Kristian Contreras: Dominique C. Hill, thank you.

0:29:25.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh, Dominique C. Hill. I ain't say her name a lot. [laughter] Dominique Sea Hill.

0:29:29.2 Kristian Contreras: I got her up here.

0:29:30.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Valerie Taylor, Lisa Covington, comments, feedback, comments, feedback. And so it's very, very fresh. It's very, very fresh. And, but what I will say is I started working on it as soon as I saw that ballot didn't have nobody else's name on it. I was like, "Oh, I gotta go. I gotta go."

0:29:48.4 Kristian Contreras: Well, I think it's important to celebrate because people don't always get their flowers until dire circumstances, or they're no longer with us. But we had such incredible outreach to the office where folks were saying, thank you for my nomination, but I would like to support Heidi.

0:30:05.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh my goodness. And you know what? Okay. Now it might be the one time I actually believe it since you saying it on feminist frequencies 'cause they've been telling me that, and I've been like, Mm I don't know about all that. [laughter] Shout out to the support whoever you are.

0:30:20.3 Kristian Contreras: It would be unethical to be like, look at these, these emails.

0:30:22.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Look at these.

0:30:22.7 Kristian Contreras: But just believe me, in my heart and soul, that I...
0:30:25.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yeah. 'Cause whoever you were, I appreciate that and...

0:30:26.9 Kristian Contreras: I move with integrity. [chuckle]

0:30:29.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yeah. No, they would never tell me who, and I didn't even ask, actually. I was just like, Oh. But as soon as I saw that I was running unopposed, that was like one of the first things I did was think about Detroit and Puerto Rico, because I knew from being on the board that the content leadership of the conference was in the purview of the president. And I wanted to think, you know what, and that's another thing I'm excited about with the strategic plan and the conference is that, so you all know that there has typically been an opening keynote, well, for what I believe is the first time there'll be a presidential address. The presidents have gotten up to welcome membership Thursday night and introduce the keynote. And I thought about how people would think it's ego, right?

0:31:29.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And I have an ego who don't in the academy who spends all that time going to school with no ego. [chuckle] But for me, as much as it was about like getting up there behind, on the stage, behind the podium, behind the mic, it was about taking seriously what I believe is the responsibility of the president to lead the membership through the conference in the year. And I think that's particularly important given the ways that attacks on our field are so pronounced. And I wanted to offer myself in that way, for better or worse. So we'll see how it goes. We'll see what happens. But in addition to that, y'all know we have two plenaries and then there are presidential sessions. Anywhere from four to eight who, you know, that's really up to the president and other people who are involved in that. I am so excited that almost every member of the board will be on one of those main stages to facilitate a plenary or a presidential session. That means a lot to me because the board should be seen, the board should be heard, and the board should be uplifted. And I'm not even gonna lie, I had already had these ideas for what the presidential sessions and plenaries will be. And then when I started to look carefully at the boards CVs, even the ones I knew well, it was like, "Oh. They fit."

0:33:01.6 Kristian Contreras: And those CVs are longer than a CVS receipt...

0:33:04.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh God.

0:33:04.5 Kristian Contreras: Believe you me. But it's not just about the accolades and like the things that were accomplished in a more professionalized sense. It was the consistent activism and organizing, the orientations of the work and how we were gonna be in community with each other. Now, I wanna kind of take control of the car and like reverse a little bit. Or maybe to...

0:33:23.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: To the back to the actual CFP...

0:33:25.5 Kristian Contreras: Like per chance, Madam President, let's talk about what the theme is.

0:33:30.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Let's do it. [chuckle] So the theme, thank you for asking. The journey, not only the arrival critical connections, not only critical mass rethinking feminist movements. It is intentionally long because that length is meant to invite us to sit with the kinds of complexities that I think are particularly important right now in this moment. And one of the people that taught me that is Grace Lee Boggs. And given the fact that Grace Lee Boggs called Detroit
home for over 60 years, I thought there's no way that I could be president of NWSA and lead us through a conference that didn't honor that as much as possible, starting with the theme itself. So the theme itself comes from two of my favorite Grace Lee Boggs quotes, and I'm gonna read them. So in the next American Revolution, sustainable activism for the 21st century, she wrote essentially what the theme says. Activism can be the journey rather than the arrival, and that movements are born of critical connections rather than critical mass. That hit heavy to me, especially because of the, rather than I didn't even, rather than, I didn't even have, I would say the courage to, rather than [laughter] I was like, oh, I'm gonna lead that to the ancestor.

0:35:21.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: So that's why I used not only but I think it's important for us to know that what she actually wrote was rather than think about that, the journey rather than the arrival. So like how we get to a world that's free of xenophobia rather than the xenophobia itself. The world in which xenophobia no longer exists. And then the critical connections rather than critical mass.

0:35:54.5 Kristian Contreras: And we're back because the battery died. [chuckle] Well, we're back fully charged and ready to jump back in.

0:36:03.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Ready to jump in.

0:36:04.1 Kristian Contreras: Now, Madam P you were talking so beautifully about Grace Lee Boggs inspiration for the conference theme. And I feel like we were about to dive deep with the dolphins around these themes and sub-themes and different points of inspiration and grounding.

0:36:21.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yeah. I make a point in the plan when I identify the two quotes that inspire the theme. I make a point even though we may be certain about our many intended destinations, I'm inviting us to nurture curiosity about our journeys and connections with one another as much as... That is the lesson from Grace Lee Boggs that most often resonates with me. And so I'm inviting us to uplift that, to honor that. And at the same time, Detroit is home to many elders and ancestors and contemporary comrades. Ruth Ellis, Helen Zia, Dorothy Haener, abolitionist, the list goes on and on and on. Please, if you can take a moment to look at those sections of the CFP Google folks, look them up on social media. I was overwhelmed diving deep into the resistance happening in Detroit for the purpose of better understanding that city in this role.

0:37:48.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Like I know what I know about Detroit, but I'm like, okay, no, the, [chuckle] I can't come into leading us through a conference in Detroit with that knowledge. I needed to go deep. The SASHA Center, Detroit will breathe, LGBT, Detroit. Detroit is doing everything. Everything. And so I'm asking, a lot of us come to the conference to get nourished. I always have. And I have. I'm asking us to do that and to also name uplift, be in community with, and nourish our comrades there who are doing the work year round. And this includes our colleagues at Wayne State and nearby Michigan State. Shout out to Lydia Kelow-Bennett. So I'm really looking forward to uplifting Boggs alongside our ancestors, elders and contemporaries. Because that is congruent with something else that I name in the strategic plan, which is my commitment to always uplifting the multi-vocality and multi-directionality of our field, which I guess all those years of teaching introduction to feminist and gender studies and feminist theory paid off. [chuckle]

0:39:14.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: My colleague, Rushaan Kumar, said that to me. He said, "Man." 'Cause I've literally taught those two courses almost every single year since I got to Colorado.
College in 2010. So it's because of that in large part that I'm aware of the multi-vocality and multi-directionality of our field. And that's why when we look at the plenaries and presidential sessions, we see that we'll have a plenary addressing the state of the field in conjunction with the 45th anniversary of the NWSA conference. First conference was in 1979. We're gonna do another plenary focused on the occupation of Palestine and then we have six presidential sessions. So of course we will have one that is examining the US presidential election regardless of the winner, right? Regardless. So we're going to gonna think critically about that. And then we have so many... Oh. Real quick. Well, I'll come back to that. So let's... So how we do this?

0:40:20.5 Kristian Contreras: We'll put it in the parking lot.

0:40:21.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: We edit that out.

0:40:22.5 Kristian Contreras: Come back [chuckle]

0:40:24.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: So, we'll... So [laughter] Well, because what I want to wanna say is, vice President Stephanie Troutman Robbins will be facilitating the plenary on NWSA and in the state of the field. Erica Williams is facilitating the plenary on the occupation of Palestine. And Latoya Lee is facilitating the one... The presidential session on the election. So our work on activism and grassroots organizing, I thought was really, really lent itself to that space. And that session is also going to do that work with imperialism, war and occupation in mind. So we're not going to gonna simply be either celebrating or freaking out given... Depending on who wins. We're going to gonna be thinking about imperialism and war and occupation as it relates to that election, no matter the winner. So I'm excited about that. So then we have these other presidential sessions that are going to gonna celebrate these other anniversaries that I'm so excited about, which, because of the ways that they dovetail with my commitment that we share to the multi-vocality of the field.

0:41:43.6 Kristian Contreras: Shout out to that history.

0:41:48.5 Kristian Contreras: Come back [chuckle]

0:41:53.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: So, we have the 45th anniversary of Audrey's. The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house. And since it dovetails with the 40th anniversary of her first trip to Berlin, I'm going to gonna facilitate that one. And I'm fingers crossed, prayers up, toes crossed, all that, that I can get some of my... Yeah. All that. That some of my comrades from Berlin can join us for that. And it also would be her 90th birthday this year. So we have a birthday party for Audre Lorde, and it's also the 45th anniversary of the founding of Third Women Press. So Jessica Pabon is gonna facilitate a celebration of that. And then we have some 50th anniversaries. I'm an anniversary kind of girl. I just love a good anniversary. We have the 50th anniversary of Lorelei DeCora Means founding Women of All Red Nations. Kristina Gupta is going to facilitate a presidential session that uplifts that. We have the founding of Salsa Soul Sisters that Dominique is going to gonna help us celebrate. And what I'm so excited about, so Salsa Soul Sisters, it's one of the oldest Black and women of color, lesbian womanist organizations in this country. But what a lot of people don't know is that the Salsa Soul Sisters, which has been renamed, was reconfigured from NWSA's Black Lesbian Caucus.

0:43:14.8 Kristian Contreras: Shout out to that history.

0:43:18.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: So, yeah. That blew me when I was just digging in the crates, trying to just see what's been going on.

0:43:27.6 Kristian Contreras: Going through the archives.
0:43:28.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Just going through the archives, digging in the crates. I was like, "Yo, what?" The Lords Jackson collaborated with NWSA members who were like Black Lesbian Caucus co-chairs to create this.

0:43:41.1 Kristian Contreras: And I think that speaks to the importance of those three Rs. The repair, the restore. What's the third... I'm lost. Restore...

0:43:49.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Reconnect, repair, restore.

[overlapping conversation]

0:43:50.6 Kristian Contreras: Reconnect. See the first one...

0:43:51.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: [0:43:51.7] it's too late and I think we should have some more tea.

0:43:52.9 Kristian Contreras: I was living in the last two. But I think it speaks to...

0:43:56.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Me too. Me too.

0:44:25.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Correct.

0:44:26.8 Kristian Contreras: That's always the case.

0:44:29.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Always the case.

0:44:29.3 Kristian Contreras: We're in a particular field, but look at those beautiful threads that we have no reason to forget, anniversary or not, right?

0:44:36.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes. Oh. And then there's one more.

0:44:38.0 Kristian Contreras: Talk to me.

0:44:40.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: The Farah strike, Chicana-led. 50th anniversary of the end of that Karma Chávez. But that's why I use the word restore because I don't want it to ever... I don't want anyone to think that I'm all about this sort of progress and innovation in a particular way where in order for me to do this presidency the way I want to wanna do it, I have to do everything brand new. And so it's like, some of this is about restoration...

0:45:24.4 Kristian Contreras: And that...
0:45:25.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Recovery. I could've put recovery in there too.

0:45:28.8 Kristian Contreras: Restoration, recovery of memory. And I think most folks probably aren't aware of, or have not visited our archives that live at the University of Maryland. We are chartered in the state of Maryland and so thinking about what memory looks like, it's not just celebrations, it's not just the most famous folks, it's the work. And the work has always been done in the collective. Starting from revisiting everyone's introduction, like what's our story of arrival as governing board members. That's not including me, but thinking about that, right?

0:45:57.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I think it does though. But I get why you're...

0:46:00.9 Kristian Contreras: I'm there and I'm taking the notes. I'm making the reports. But thinking about all those different threads and how we're connected through our love of a particular scholar, love of work, and I think all those anniversaries, which I know you'll talk about, they seed also into how there is breadth and depth within those sub-themes.

0:46:18.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Absolutely. Absolutely.

0:46:19.5 Kristian Contreras: What are they by the way?

0:46:21.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: The sub-themes, I don't know. We don't have any. No. I'm kidding [chuckle] I'm excited about the sub-themes. Thank you for asking because they are thematically congruent with the plenaries and the presidential sessions, as well as the overall theme. So state of the field, imperialism, war and occupation, transnational feminisms, decolonial theory and praxis, and work labor and class. And like I said, they're thematically congruent with the plenaries and presidential sessions, which do all of the things that we said. They emphasize the multi-vocality and multi-directionality of our field, they impress upon us the importance of our history. Knowing it, naming it, uplifting it, celebrating it...

0:47:14.5 Kristian Contreras: Iterating through it.

0:47:17.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Even as we do so under siege to varying degrees because I always try to make it clear like I'm a tenured faculty member. I'm a Black woman for sure. I go through racist, sexism at my job every time I show up. And I'm also comfortable in ways that hardly anybody in my family has ever been. So that's what I mean by the multi-vocality and the multi-directionality. That's what I mean about the complexity. That's what I'm inviting us to do, is to get real about that with each other so that when we develop and build these relationships, we're doing so from a place of transparency, thoughtfulness. These are the kinds of celebrating these moments, I think give us opportunities to do that right. So, yeah.

0:48:16.2 Kristian Contreras: I think it's like that's the kindle to the fire that we couldn't light here literally but it's the impetus for why we gathered.


0:48:27.1 Kristian Contreras: Coming to a conference in this particular way, is it's not just about presenting work. It's the connections, it's the learning, it's the excitement. I'm such a nerd. I was just
telling Heidi earlier, I'm like, I'm watching the qualitative workshops out at Ohio...

0:48:40.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Shout out to Ohio State.

0:48:42.1 Kristian Contreras: Ohio State because I just find it so nourishing to be like, how are we telling stories? But that's a whole conversation for another day. But...

0:48:50.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But that's what that is.

0:48:51.2 Kristian Contreras: But I thinking about the conference is an act of love. And I think accountability and transparency, they go hand in hand. But I think feedback is a love language. I think that all the folks who, again, in my short time of being in this specific role as interim director who've reached out as members or past, present, future interested GC members have constantly provided their own stories, their own experiences. How can we make this better? This is what I wish I saw. And we've had longstanding requests for more thoughtful, meaningful ways that we show up around accessibility, going above accommodations like reasonable accommodations, thinking about gender, how we celebrate it, and not only in relation to oppression.

0:49:34.9 Kristian Contreras: And that goes with every, what is it? Sociopolitical location. But I think the sub-themes also inform how we're moving towards the conference, right? Not all speed is movement. So planning is going through a very particular process of intention. And I'm excited in the administrative kind of side of it to revamp and breathe life back into the ways we tap our constituency group leaders and members as a whole. You don't have to be a part of a constituency group like leadership level, but do you want to be a part of the local committee? Help us think about who we partner with because you live there or you have knowledge of Detroit and Michigan as a whole.

0:50:12.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:50:14.8 Kristian Contreras: We're making sure that our partnerships are ethical. We are proudly standing with our BDS policy. So we are not signing contracts, not giving a coin.

0:50:24.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Not a damn one.

0:50:25.8 Kristian Contreras: Not one. But again, thinking about what it means to see ourselves beyond categories of identity, right? So political alignments, but also time for fun, time for dancing, time for giving one another flowers, asking for help and so many different iterations of what those care communities will look like. So I think what's really exciting from my standpoint about the CFP, and again, the strategic plan is it invites more. And I refer to the time that has no end date, I feel, is that we're in chrysalis season. We are taking the feedback from the previous conference and all else to think about how we can emerge better. How we can come into a vision that feels realistic, that feels grounded because not all speed is movement to echo...

0:51:19.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: It is not.

0:51:20.6 Kristian Contreras: The team.

0:51:21.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: It is not. And the work of repairing is difficult, it's long, arduous but
it's one of the most important aspects of the work to me. The work of being held accountable and holding someone accountable is just really, really important to me but it's harder when there's no relationship. I'm quick because I can cut you off easy if I don't know you. Not as NWSA president 'cause I know what my responsibility is, but you know what I mean? Just like in my regular life, if I don't know you and you do harm to me, I'm like bye. And I'm not even saying that's right or wrong, I'm just saying it's easier.

0:52:19.4 Kristian Contreras: Of course.

0:52:20.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: So what I'm asking us to do is to dive into one another so that that work becomes a priority 'cause it's easy to deprioritize, I think it's like, "Oh. I just know her or I just know them. I just know him." It's like critical connections, not only critical mass. That's where I want to wanna live forever. And I'm just inviting us to sit there in a pronounced way, leading up to and during Detroit. And hopefully all of the work we do to get us there will encourage people to continue to try to leave live that out after Detroit. Because that, how can we do reconnect, repair, restore on a superficial level [chuckle] That's just...

0:53:11.3 Kristian Contreras: Yeah. If we only get together and engage these principals or rather these tenants just the one time during the conference...

0:53:18.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: For a few days amongst at least 1500 people. That's a lot of people to be trying to reconnect and repair and restore. I mean...

[chuckle]

0:53:27.6 Kristian Contreras: I mean, we had, I think, it was 18...

0:53:29.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: It was definitely, I think 1800.

0:53:30.5 Kristian Contreras: 1,889.

0:53:33.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Correct.

0:53:34.0 Kristian Contreras: From when we did the evaluations and cross-reference.

0:53:38.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Come on now.

0:53:39.7 Kristian Contreras: But again, remember, Math is not my ministry. It doesn't mean I can't do it. It's just that it takes me a little bit longer. This is where Courtney as our operations manager, her Virgo brain just.

0:53:47.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Listen.

0:53:48.2 Kristian Contreras: Gives way to accuracy.

0:53:49.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Shout out to every Virgo. Shout out to only child Virgos too. Me too.
0:53:54.3 Kristian Contreras: Back to this. So we're talking [chuckle]

0:53:55.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Okay. Well, I'm just saying it's a part of the restore because...

0:54:00.5 Kristian Contreras: Story.

0:54:00.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Right.

0:54:00.6 Kristian Contreras: But I think...

0:54:04.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You need a good Virgo to organize the process of restoration [chuckle]

0:54:09.3 Kristian Contreras: And that's why you the president. That's why you were elected among many other beautiful things. But I think...

0:54:09.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But yes.

0:54:10.1 Kristian Contreras: I think the conversation continuously informs not just "work," but how we're sitting in a thinking confronting and it's hard. I think your specific, particular intentional naming of transparency, of repairing is also our relationship as a whole to the membership.

0:54:32.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Absolutely.

0:54:34.5 Kristian Contreras: It's not just with these collaborations, it's not just with the places we go to and how we choose different types of connections. It's really how we show up for each other. Hierarchy does exist. I mean, we can't get around that. And so who are the visionaries? Who are the executors? That sounds... I don't like that word. Who are the facilitators?

0:55:00.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Of the logistics.

0:55:01.3 Kristian Contreras: As soon as you said, I was like...

0:55:03.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: But I got it.

0:55:03.5 Kristian Contreras: Folks who take those ideas and bring them to life. And they're informed by a collective. Collective is the membership, the board, the president. It all comes into one. What I'm excited about with Detroit is to gather. It'll be our first conference together. Technically my first conference.

0:55:20.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: No. Really? Technically both of ours.

0:55:23.1 Kristian Contreras: As interim director. Yeah. I rolled in. I rolled in in August. Ready to do...
0:55:27.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You know what I mean?

0:55:27.8 Kristian Contreras: Do I have to do with this...

0:55:27.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I hate to say first because I don't want to wanna diminish what you did in Baltimore, but at the same time in this particular role, like from start to finish.

0:55:36.3 Kristian Contreras: No. Exactly. I'm excited about putting into fruition all the things that folks have asked beyond last conference in Baltimore, which is how are we making the conference accessible? How are we highlighting whose work gets celebrated? What types of new and also former ways of connecting can we make more dynamic? And to your point, how are we celebrating, and not just celebrating like thanks for coming, but supporting and the investments that you made as a grad student myself and so many others for our current cohort of graduate students our contingent faculty, and every other caucus like Women of Color caucus, who for decades have held us down with will clip, such an importance. I'm an alum. You are an alum. Shout out to all alum of Will Club.

0:56:24.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Stephanie Troutman Robbins is an alum.

0:56:26.5 Kristian Contreras: Yes.

0:56:27.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I mean...

0:56:29.1 Kristian Contreras: And again, different partnerships. So I think repair, reconnect, restore, that's not the order, but taking those three tenets...

0:56:35.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That's the order.

0:56:36.2 Kristian Contreras: Isn't it reconnect, repair... You wrote it. I'm going to gonna defer to you.

0:56:38.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Reconnect, repair, restore.

0:56:41.6 Kristian Contreras: Good job.

0:56:42.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I put restore... Okay.

[laughter]

0:56:44.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: See the order is the way it is because [chuckle]

0:56:47.5 Kristian Contreras: 'Cause Because I can see it in my mind's eye on the computer's screen and I'm like, "I have read it." But this is not important for you.

0:56:54.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: No, no, no. Please. I'm teasing. I'm teasing.

0:56:54.3 Kristian Contreras: But just thinking about those tenets tenants is not just something
that lived in your noggin. It was informed by...

0:57:00.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Absolutely.

0:57:01.0 Kristian Contreras: Being in the audience.

0:57:01.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Absolutely.

0:57:02.2 Kristian Contreras: Connecting your computer to the HDMI to present your work at a session and all those hallway conversations, the dinners, meeting up at the... All those other elements. And so you know how people pick a word for their year. Like, "This is the word that I'm going to embody. I'm going to gonna carry it."

0:57:23.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You're right.

0:57:24.4 Kristian Contreras: What word do you think just comes to mind when you think about 2024 Detroit?

0:57:38.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Connection, really. If I had to pick one, because the way I understand it, there would be all kinds of adjectives that are floating around it. Purposeful.

0:57:57.5 Kristian Contreras: You can just pick one. You had to do a word bubble, and you said.

0:58:00.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You better believe it.

0:58:00.3 Kristian Contreras: Connection.

0:58:01.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You think, you can't tell me what to do? You don't tell me. I tell you, look, [laughter], this is literally my phrase in my household. Ask my husband and kids, you don't tell me, I tell you. [chuckle] So, but I did abide because the word is connection. It's just that the way I understand connection in that capacity would be attentive to purposeful, meaningful. [laughter] Right?

0:58:33.4 Kristian Contreras: Restorative, reparative.

0:58:36.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Family wise too. Friends wise too. I just wanna be in community. Like I've been on the phone a lot lately. Because I don't live close to a lot of people that I love and that love me back. So I've just been on the phone, phone, phone, phone, phone. Then my son came, I was like, with my son, son, son. My family, family, family I just wanna be in that space of like, and all energy is not good energy, whatever that means. I don't care. Like, I wanna be in spaces where that comes into the room and I'm like, woo. Like I don't, you know what I mean? I'm not just, I'm not particularly romantic and I'm certainly not naive. [laughter] You know what I mean? There are people that I'm gonna see at NWSA who I'm positive does not like me. Maybe vice versa. I still wanna be in a room with that person too. I want to give something else to that person. I wanna give, like, I'm happy to see you even if we don't really get along. That's what I'm on.

0:59:28.0 Kristian Contreras: I think what you're describing, like in my mind, the way I compute it into my little brain diary is putting the relationship before the task, Right? We had great meeting a
couple weeks ago. Actually. No, it wasn't like the last week, in the recent past...

0:59:43.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That was it yesterday? [laughter]

0:59:46.3 Kristian Contreras: Well, we were talking about reparative relationships, with some of our caucus groups.

0:59:50.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

0:59:51.4 Kristian Contreras: Especially thinking about how the association addresses issues of power and harm. How we inadvertently or purposefully, or any other words in between those two binaries feed into or are complicit. And I think that's what we're looking for.

1:00:08.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You're right?

1:00:08.4 Kristian Contreras: Complicit in harm. Namely thinking about our past conference the most recent in Baltimore, like how are we speaking to not just injustice in Palestine, but Congo, Sudan, Myanmar, Tigris. So many other places where...

1:00:24.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Kashmir.

1:00:25.5 Kristian Contreras: Kashmir dispossession of peoples and disposability peoples. So thinking about our relationship to one another has to come before the task so that when the task comes into fruition, the connections is what grounds us. It's...

1:00:39.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That is Grace Lee Boggs.

1:00:43.3 Kristian Contreras: Correct.

1:00:44.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That's for real.

1:00:44.4 Kristian Contreras: Correct. Correct.

1:00:48.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Man, I mean that and I'm telling you yes.

1:00:49.7 Kristian Contreras: Yeah. We have to be in community meaningfully with ethics and integrity at the core learn...

1:00:55.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Or, I don't know what we're doing.

1:00:58.3 Kristian Contreras: And restore our memory and how we are celebrating both the good, the bad, and the in-between, around all the anniversaries, what they mean to us.

1:01:06.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And maybe I'm romantic then.

1:01:08.2 Kristian Contreras: So that when we get to the task, it means something.

1:01:11.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I agree.
1:01:12.4 **Kristian Contreras:** So that when we're convening in Detroit, whether at a reception or a hot fire session, an amazing keynote presidential session, insert other event here that we move away from that space galvanized. So for me, my word is nourished. I want to be able to leave the conference and feel fed.

1:01:30.5 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** You will.

1:01:31.9 **Kristian Contreras:** I will, literally.

1:01:32.8 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** That's a promise.

1:01:33.2 **Kristian Contreras:** I will literally. So.

1:01:33.3 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** I mean it.

1:01:36.2 **Kristian Contreras:** And also emotionally and ethically and like intellectually, spiritually.

1:01:39.4 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** I'm so glad you shared. I don't even have to, I love that you just know. Please put yours because I'm so overwhelmed. No, listen. Yes. Nourish. I love that you said that because I think that's also like a space. If I had another word, which I'm like, Heidi, don't do this, but I just have to say what your word, what I appreciate about your word is that it's an example of another thing that I'm interested in more than ever right now, which is reciprocity. So that goes, it goes more than even both ways. Like, there aren't even just two ways, like nourishing being nourished...

1:02:22.0 **Kristian Contreras:** Like a multiverse nourished.

1:02:24.2 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** You know what I mean? That's why I like that.

1:02:27.2 **Kristian Contreras:** Spider-Verse. I'm trying, I keep thinking about.

1:02:27.7 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** Multiverse, Spider-Verse.

1:02:29.4 **Kristian Contreras:** I'm thinking about Spider-Verse. [laughter] Shout out to you Miles Morales.

1:02:31.9 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** I will start watch it after this. Start watch it after this.

1:02:33.7 **Kristian Contreras:** It's just... Did you?

1:02:34.6 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** But yeah. That word is so...

1:02:38.1 **Kristian Contreras:** Yeah. And I think too, what makes me excited is even on the days that I'm overwhelmed and balding 'cause it's a lot of spreadsheets. [laughter] That's a lot.

1:02:47.1 **Dr. Heidi R. Lewis:** Say spreadsheet. One more time.
1:02:48.7 Kristian Contreras: It's a lot of contracts.

1:02:50.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: We gonna make a TikTok about these spreadsheet.

1:02:52.8 Kristian Contreras: But even when I'm overwhelmed, I'm grounded in a very particular, very nerdy love to be entrenched in feminist work, to be able to speak the same language and be understood. I was telling my spouse, it's like taking your bra off at the end of the day for the folks who wear bras.

1:03:13.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yeah. Not me. No mouth too much but...

1:03:15.3 Kristian Contreras: I love that you're liberated.

1:03:17.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yeah, please.

1:03:18.3 Kristian Contreras: I'm not there yet, but...

1:03:20.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Lift [laughter] I'mma do.

1:03:20.7 Kristian Contreras: Oh. You know, like just shedding...

1:03:23.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: 'Cause that is like a relief. Yeah.

1:03:25.6 Kristian Contreras: Yeah. Like the relief. It's like I don't have to overexplain myself. And so I think what I hold onto in my first conferences, and even now it's, I go to NWSA and I feel understood. I feel curious and I leave it always.

1:03:40.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That, that, that.

1:03:41.9 Kristian Contreras: Feeling fed. Because if I'm not able to get it in my community, like you're saying, like being disconnected from people we love, but disconnected from resources. I moved to Texas from Atlanta, which is a very different place. I'm on the border, border, border, border.

1:04:00.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Very different from Atlanta.

1:04:00.7 Kristian Contreras: But thinking about like what community looks like for me when I can literally see the border and like in... And so many other things. But the point I'm trying to make is that being nourished isn't just an intellectual activity. It's not transactional. It's about being able to make connections with people. And I'm excited because the change is an invitation. Like there's more to come. And this chrysalis season with, by the way I borrow, I cite my sources from Brittany Brathwaite.

1:04:31.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: All the time.

1:04:31.3 Kristian Contreras: And Mickey Ferrara, who are the founders of Homegirl Box, are now formerly, no, now it's called Homegirl HQ. I'm giving you that history, the history...
1:04:41.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Right. Right. Right. Yes.

1:04:43.1 Kristian Contreras: But when I first saw them talk about being chrysalis season, I was like, that's where we are as NWSA.

1:04:46.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I loved it.

1:04:48.4 Kristian Contreras: And so we might emerge a really beautiful butterfly. We might emerge another insect, perhaps a moth. I don't know any others behind those two [chuckle] that do cocooning.

1:04:58.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Listen. And we're not, and the thing it is and the thing and in that, what I appreciate about that is your attention to the journey, not just the arrival.

1:05:11.8 Kristian Contreras: Not the arrival.

1:05:14.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: [laughter] You know what I mean? That's beautiful and perfection... My colleague Natalie Passus always says, there are no finish lines here. Not in this work. What is it then? And how come other people didn't reach it. So, the kinds of questions I'm asking of us in the CFP and that I'll ask again in the presidential address. I'm just asking to give a little bit of our time to it. That's all, you know what I mean? That's all. I'm just trying to galvanize us around some questions, some ideas. And what I know to be true is that we're all in one way or several others doing that already. We just may not have had the occasion to frame it that way. So many of us, just comments, comments, comments, comments. I talk a lot. Those who know me are like, but what about questions, questions, questions, questions. Are we not those people anymore? Curiosity should never die in people like us. So I'm lit. [laughter]

1:06:34.0 Kristian Contreras: The lobby's lit, you're lit...

1:06:36.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh, the lobby lit. Hashtag lobby lit. Y'all better hashtag it if y'all don't hashtag it. I'm quit.

1:06:41.1 Kristian Contreras: CP is lit.

1:06:41.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I ain't coming back no more. No.

1:06:43.3 Kristian Contreras: But I think beyond these different like moving parts that we're talking about like the two words connect and nourish, just also highlight that the work as it's reflected or presented rather in the CFP in the strategic plan is not just about putting out documents. It's about making sure we have a roadmap. The destination, we don't know where it is because it's the journey out the arrival.

1:07:08.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And even if we do, come on.

1:07:10.4 Kristian Contreras: See how I did that?

1:07:11.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Come on. See how I do that. Ah.
1:07:13.4 Kristian Contreras: I know. But to kind of wrap it up, 'cause this feminist frequency's been 91 hours. We done lost the battery.

1:07:18.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: We done lost the battery. We done lost the tablet.

1:07:21.5 Kristian Contreras: It's a lot of things that have been happening, but we're here grounded in the conversation.

1:07:26.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

1:07:26.6 Kristian Contreras: Right? And I just wanna say thank you, not because it's one of those like, thank you for coming to my show because it really was NWSA space for conversation.

1:07:35.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Ours.

1:07:36.5 Kristian Contreras: Our, I think again like...

1:07:38.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Yes.

1:07:39.8 Kristian Contreras: We're in such a beautiful time of transition and feminist frequencies. This presidential fireside chat...

1:07:45.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That Kristian named it that.

1:07:46.8 Kristian Contreras: I did today. But this presidential fireside chat with the symbolic fire with...

1:07:52.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: The living fires.

1:07:53.1 Kristian Contreras: The living fire words of fire.

1:07:56.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Oh, not words of... Yes.

1:07:57.4 Kristian Contreras: Shoutout to you. One Dr. Beverly got...

1:08:01.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Big Bev.

1:08:02.0 Kristian Contreras: Hashtag not hashtag hyphen [1:08:03.9] _____. But this is one of our examples of trying to make sure that the communications we share with the membership and just any person who's interested on what NWSA offers, what does it mean to be part of the association? What kind of support and connections can we build yearlong? This is one of our creative ways with our production team of 1.5. [laughter] And we're greatful...

1:08:34.7 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That's all right.

1:08:34.8 Kristian Contreras: And we're grateful, I think too, to try to bridge what it means to write, teach, think a feminist life, and then how we live it. And that congruency, whether we're
talking about those sub-themes, the celebrations, how we're honoring Grace Lee Boggs' lesson and her legacy, all of it is interwoven into how we're showing up, whether it's our relationship the collective, but most importantly the membership. And so this was 19 hours and I hope that you enjoyed watching and probably critiquing, also affirming and other symptoms.

1:09:11.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Right now. Please, no, I'm, [laughter] If we don't know, what did Robin Kelly say? If all we know is what the knock down, what we gonna build when we get over there or whatever Robin Kelly said.

1:09:24.6 Kristian Contreras: Oh. So what I see what you're doing invoking a abolitionist perspective.

1:09:29.5 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: If all we know Yeah. It's in freedom Dreams.

1:09:34.8 Kristian Contreras: It sure is. What page? I don't know.

1:09:36.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: You better.

1:09:38.6 Kristian Contreras: I'm outta my memorization stage.,

1:09:39.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: I just know, I love that quote.

1:09:42.2 Kristian Contreras: Shout out to you Bev. Okay.

1:09:43.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Because you're gonna knock me all over the place you build, we gonna build too.

1:09:45.9 Kristian Contreras: And what a perfect way to close out, friend 'cause we're building, we're reconnecting, we're repairing, and we're restoring.

1:09:52.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That's right. Thank you so much. Please keep tuning in and share. And you can listen to this when you are in the shower, when you are in the car, you don't have to just sat on it, teach it, sign it, [chuckle] on your syllabus. And then when you put it on your syllabus, invite me to speak to your class. Just imagine if you tell your class we're gonna have the president of NWSA here today, or the interim director, they'll be so excited that you, they see, they will appreciate that more than you do. [chuckle] When you get older you'll be like, your students will be like, oh my God. So bring us in so we can get get back out here. And reconnect, repair, restore.

1:10:34.7 Kristian Contreras: And the board.

1:10:35.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And the board. Oh, don't play with my board...

1:10:38.4 Kristian Contreras: And with interim NWSA leaders and other folks who are doing the work because...

1:10:43.2 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Your board.
1:10:43.3 Kristian Contreras: Work. Because we're hoping to just leverage.

1:10:43.4 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: That's right.

1:10:43.6 Kristian Contreras: Why we exists because we're not reinventing the wheel. We're inviting more folks to build different modes of transportation because we're getting...

1:10:50.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And if you... Oh, sorry.

1:10:51.8 Kristian Contreras: Somewhere. [laughter]

1:10:52.6 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: And if you, this is what I was gonna ask.

1:10:54.8 Kristian Contreras: This is the longest close.

1:10:54.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Ever [laughter] And let me ask, to tell you if you or anyone you know has served on the NWSA board, would you please send an email and tell us what you served as what years? Because we can't find that information. We need it. We trying to get an archive developed and I don't know who was the treasurer in 2008 and I should be able to know that now.

1:11:19.7 Kristian Contreras: But we'll figure it out.

1:11:20.8 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Because y'all gonna help us send it in.

1:11:22.1 Kristian Contreras: We'll figure it out. We'll figure it out. You can email president@nwsa.org.

1:11:27.9 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: [laughter] interimdirector@nwsa.org.

1:11:30.4 Kristian Contreras: Or president@nwsa.org. [laughter]

1:11:31.0 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Don't email me, and the administrative anchor of the association. That's what she always says to watch your mouth. Watch your mouth.

1:11:38.1 Kristian Contreras: And this is how she uses her own words against me.

1:11:40.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Thank y'all for coming. Y'all the greatest.

1:11:43.3 Kristian Contreras: Thank you so much. And we're excited to see you...

1:11:44.3 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Bye.

1:11:47.1 Kristian Contreras: In November. Now you can say goodbye.

1:11:47.1 Dr. Heidi R. Lewis: Bye.