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Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington

Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, University of Washington
Seattle, WA

Chandan Reddy

Interviewed by
Lauren Graves

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Recorded from Zoom

Narrator: Chandan Reddy is an Associate Professor in the Gender/Women/Sexuality Studies (GWSS) and in the Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) departments at the University of Washington. His classes have focused on a variety of subjects relating to race, sexuality and the state. Reddy uses a comparative lens when examining events and groups throughout history and his classes reflect this way of thinking. He has classes comparing the Covid-19 Pandemic to the HIV/AIDS crisis, as well as ones analyzing protests in places like Ferguson to our own campus. Everything Chandan Reddy does emphasizes that movements are distinct identities connected by existing structures of power and thinking. He received his undergraduate degree in Literature from the University of California and his graduate degrees in Comparative Literature at Columbia University.

Interviewer: Lauren Graves is a Psychology major and GWSS minor at the University of Washington. She is a bisexual activist and feminist focusing on the intersections between sexuality, poverty, race and mental health. They became involved in the Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington through the GWSS 490: Oral History Research Methodology class taught by Professor Priti Ramamurthy of the GWSS Department. Students of the class were asked to conduct an interview with a faculty member of the GWSS department as part of the fulfillment of the course requirements.

Abstract: In this oral history, Chandan Reddy details his life story growing up between India and the United States during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the protests of the Rodney King to his activism in New York and his time as a Professor at the University of Washington in the GWSS and CHID departments.
He compares his time in college during the HIV/AIDS epidemic to his existence as an academic during the Covid-19 crisis. In addition to this, he voices his thoughts on the importance of a radical student body for the creation of change and the shift to teachers accepting and even encouraging independent study to foster growth within and outside university.

Files

Transcription- 22 pages

Transcribed by Lauren Graves, April 2021

Transcript reviewed and edited by Chandan Reddy, April 2021.

[0:00:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:

Hi Lauren!

Lauren Graves:

Hi, how are you?

Chandan C. Reddy:

I'm good, how are you? How's your Sunday going?

Lauren Graves:

I'm doing amazing! Are you feeling better?

Chandan C. Reddy:

Yes, much better than I was earlier in the week, but whatever allergies I have are just ongoing and kicking my butt a little. But the price we pay for beautiful nature is worth it, I guess.

Lauren Graves:

Yeah, I feel that. I have really bad allergies during the spring too, so I definitely understand.

Chandan C. Reddy:

Yeah exactly, when they go away then nature stays so it really is worth it.

Lauren Graves:

Uh huh.

Chandan C. Reddy:

That's great. You're doing really well, why is that? I like to hear that.

Lauren Graves:

Yeah, I just got a lot of school work done this morning and it's a really pretty day today so I'm just happy to be here.

Chandan C. Reddy:

That's so great, I love hearing things like that. That was wonderful.

[00:57:00]

Lauren Graves:

So did you get a chance to look at the interview questions?

Chandan C. Reddy:

Yeah, they're fantastic by the way, they're really moving. How did you choose those questions? Is everybody in the oral history class sort of coming up with their own questions that they're using to ask faculty? Because they're so distinct to our conversation.

Lauren Graves:

Yeah so they gave us a general guide that I looked at, and then I looked at some previous interviews you did with Yale. I also drew from the class that we took about pandemics and I realized that I was really interested in how you drew comparisons to things and I thought that your life early in college and your life now would be really interesting to compare. And, yeah that's basically how I crafted it.

Chandan C. Reddy:

I love the questions, I thought they were fascinating. They got me all a light with memory and thoughts, so very much an oral historian you are.

Lauren Graves:
Thank you! So, I don't want to take up more time than I have to-

Chandan C. Reddy:
No worries.

[02:07:00]

Lauren Graves:
So let's get started, and we can start with the first set of questions. Can you tell me a little bit about your early life and your personal history that led up to your college experience?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Sure um so my early life was...

Chandan C. Reddy:
My father's a doctor. My mom, she finished high school and was a stay-at-home mom although she ended up joining the workforce later after being in the US. I grew up in Los Angeles, California in the early 80s. I joined my parents in the United States after being separated from them, I have an older brother who lived with my parents, but I was in India where I was born, and so I joined them later, and then I returned to India for schooling. In elementary school in fifth and sixth grade and seventh grade, and then I came back to the US for high school and all of it was in the same spot in LA so I kind of went back and forth for a while. And then, you know where I grew up in LA kind of changed overnight.

Chandan C. Reddy:
When my parents first moved there they moved to Covina, California, which is just about 15 miles

outside of downtown LA to the east, and it was a, I would say, primarily white working-class, middle-class suburb surrounded by Latinos and some Asians and by the time I moved back in the 80s, '87 to be exact.There was a massive immigration bill, the 1986 immigration reform act that had really changed the face of the community that my parents lived in overnight. So it went from having few Asian professionals and Asian nurses, you know Asian restaurant workers merchants, you know supply distribution folks and so on to just becoming a almost 50% Latino/Asian city, and a declining white population. And that's where I went to high school until I went to college.

Lauren Graves:
That's so interesting! And so what were some of the really big social issues that you witnessed during your teenage years before you went to college?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Yeah you know...

Chandan C. Reddy:
It was really when I returned to the US after studying in India, so this is '87, and then my high school years. So my high school years were from '86 to '90, or '87 to '90.

[05:20:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
What I noticed was the way that the public schooling system, that was really created for a white middle-class suburban-like community, was being awakened to and challenged by immigrant communities and working-class Latinx communities and working-class Asian immigrant communities and what I saw was very striking for me. The reprehensible double racial standard. So, we had college counselors who told all of the working class Latinx people they shouldn't even take college bound courses. And this is the time where the UCs and the Cal State system we're very much open and available for admissions so it was a deliberate function of these college counselors to prevent people from accessing that public education pipeline. I remember very markedly the high school becoming policed.

Chandan C. Reddy:

Police kind of instituting policing measures and hyper-criminalizing students under the language of countering gang activity in Los Angeles. And so gates went up overnight, they locked us in public schools, so you couldn't get in or out after a certain hour. They tried to lock out working-class young people of color, particularly Latinx kids in our neighborhood from, for example, taking standardized testing that would in their opinion, reduce the caliber of the public school. These were tests that didn't give individual scores, they gave a score for the entire school.

[07:25:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:

They actually sent notices saying "don't come to testing this testing day." And students actually came with their gangs, quite literally. Their community of friends, armed, demanding just to be able to come into a testing room. That happened in one of my classes. And so that level of inequality really stuck with me.

Chandan C. Reddy:

The other thing that really struck with me at the time, so it was sort of the racial inequality. The class character of US public schools that, even though they're all public schools, you can really tell that certain public schools were really meant for upward mobility and certain schools were really meant for downward mobility and when people try to get into upward mobile schools, they police them out of those tracks. All under the veneer of public education. I also was already experiencing the brutality of how people were treating the emergent HIV/AIDS crisis. So even in my own household, when I started volunteering at the local hospital my father forbade me from participating and volunteering on the HIV ward. And this is a person who's a medical specialist, who knows that HIV can't be transmitted through contact that way. For example, you know PPE, if you have good PPE, you shouldn't be able to catch Covid-19 in wards. But it's not even that contagious, and this was well known already by 1986, and my father was so deeply homophobic. And deeply… Unable to have any conversations with me about it that he just forbade me.

[09:21:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:

And so I just felt those issues, particularly the sort of the racism of suburban flight culture as people of color were trying to get into public goods and the brutal homophobia that was coming out of family form and in my own community.

Lauren Graves:

That sounds really stressful and... all that sounds really scary to deal with. Especially being policed in your own school. How do you think that led you to becoming an activist and working in social justice?

Chandan C. Reddy:

You know I think I was always...in high school, because it was a majority white campus public school, that was changing overnight into a majority people of color school, all the teachers and all of the administrators had a...inability to offer any real political analysis of what was going on and also probably didn't want to. I mean they wanted to manage this change and keep the reputation of the school going. Not to teach us- the kids- that information and the knowledge is that we needed. So it wasn't until I got to college, and you know immediately my very first quarter of college, I took an anthropology course that was taught by a butch anthropologist named Jenny…I'm forgetting Jenny's last name right now, but she teaches at the University of Michigan now. She left UCSD anthropology to go to the University of Michigan. She was an anthropologist of modern Japan working on an all female theatre revue called the Takarazuka Revue which is like Kabuki but where all the roles are played by a single gender (so women played masculine and feminine roles).And she really you know, confronted my curiosity about her work and said, "this is about you, your curiosity is actually about you and you need to go and deal with it". And that just woke me up. So once I realized that my own existence was at stake in the social justice issues that I cared about, that the acute homophobia that my father was expressing, really actually was this homophobia towards me... that I realized, I had to join social justice movements, they were what were going to make my life better. So it was really out of my own sense of self determination -I don't even like that word as much- but like a sense of... I had a stake in social justice, it will make life possible for me and I don't know any other life outside of social

justice, because the other life would be one of complete self denial, suppression, closure of my mind, you know you can't shut down something you wake up.

[13:04:00]

Lauren Graves:

So when you were in college, you talked about how you really started opening up to the social issues and you let them affect you, and you started working with them instead of against yourself and hiding them. So when you were in college,the world was in the middle of this major HIV/AIDS epidemic, how did that specifically impact you personally, and how did the influence of seeing such a major epidemic in your college years impact what you decided to do for your education in the future?

Chandan C. Reddy:

I think that… I was not a working class student of color, I was very much a privileged middle class student of color. And I think that one of the things that being so deeply affected by the HIV epidemic, where you really don't know how to live your life. No one is telling you what the epidemic is and what is and isn't safe, there's no regular updates. All there is are university RA programs that talk about sexual health and condom distribution, but there was no actual specifics about how to have intimacy in the middle of an HIV, AIDS epidemic, I mean the ones that want to actually talk about queer intimacy at all.

Chandan C. Reddy:

What that experience was like… and seeing people you know get sick and then later die or just disappearing, you know, someone who worked on the school staff who didn't show up and they never showed up again. The fear that people had to touch you if you were gay, physically when you went to student health services, because very few people disclosed at that time that they were gay. So what it did do is for someone like me who otherwise had a very privileged and middle-class experience as a student of color, it connected me with a little bit of the experience that working-class first-generation students of color experience probably every day on campus, which is a double reality. Everybody's going about their lives like everything is normal, and they are managing all kinds of crises, histories, matters and issues that no one is discussing.

[16:04:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
And they have to find one another to help find solidarity and support for each other to make themselves feel like they're not crazy for living a reality totally different than the reality around them. And for finding the knowledge and the resources needed that are not being taught by the institution or by anyone around them. To know that there is a story of their entrance into university that they can learn about.

Chandan C. Reddy:
A story of liberation movements or freedom movements that will help them make sense of their experience at campus, and I think that's what HIV did for me. It made me realize that I was living a reality that nobody around me was willing to talk about our lives. And I was really fortunate, I went to a school that was founded by people like Angela Davis and other students, called Third college, and so there was an activist staff, and it was made up of people of color and many of them had lost loved ones in the epidemic, so I could at least at that point, know that there were some people I could talk to.

Chandan C. Reddy:
But all of our peers, all of our student peers around us were unable to talk about that. So I had to go find other queer people who are struggling with these questions and create a community together. And we would try to teach each other and learn what we could and couldn't do in an epidemic and then got really rageful that the University was hiding all of this. And just demanded that our presence be part of the story of the university, and so we started organizing as queer people of color in that way, so I think I think HIV really significantly impacted my entrance into student organizing and into social justice.

[18:10:00]

Lauren Graves:
And it sounds like it also influenced your entrance into teaching as well, that's so interesting! So now you are a teacher, you're a professor and you're in another global crisis, you're dealing with Covid-19. But you have a different role than you did when you were a student, you actually have some sort of

position of power that you may not have had before. How has this experience during Covid-19 differed from your time as a student and how have your responsibilities to social justice and towards education changed because of this?

Chandan C. Reddy:
You know at UCSD...

Chandan C. Reddy:
Interestingly enough, as you said about how it impacted my experience of becoming a teacher in schooling, when I was a student, there was no Department of Gender Studies at UCSD. There were some in the country and UW was one of them, but it didn't exist at UCSD. There was no LGBT studies and there was no queer studies. The students got together, five of us, and we went looking around departments for a teacher who would be even willing to put their name to an independent study that was just about reading lesbian feminists Monique Wittig and other kinds of you know, Adrian Rich and some emerging LGBT and queer studies and so that's always shaped me, that my role as a teacher is to enable students to become autonomous learners.

Chandan C. Reddy:
It's great that we have departments that didn't exist when I was a student. That's what we fought for as a student, but if that immobilizes independent student collectivity and collectivities of learning and knowledge and the kinds of ways they want to reorganize our knowledge to better express the collectivity that they are a part of and becoming then we've done wrong. So I try to spend a lot of my time actually supporting independent student activism and organizing.

[20:37:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
So, for example, working with the Black Student Union these last couple of years, during the pandemic to talk about the racially differentiating experience at the pandemic has definitely come out of my past history. But it also tells me that universities change more when students organize and constitute the

demands and do the engagement, then when individual faculty try to do this on their own, or try to keep this as an element in their classrooms alone. So, what I would say is that you know...

Chandan C. Reddy:
No two moments in history are alike, and yet the overlap between my time as a student and the pandemic now is quite remarkable, the multiple issues that organized my time as a student were the US Imperial Wars in the Middle East, the Rodney King beatings by the LAPD, and the emergent uprising, the abandonment of Asian shopkeepers through the uprising by the police, and the pitting of Asians and Blacks against each other to justify that abandonment, and the HIV, AIDS crisis and so now, you know 30 years later, what we see is we're in a really similar moment where the question is police violence and police abandonment of communities of color.

Chandan C. Reddy:
They attempt to pit communities of color against one another to prevent police accountability and to reimagine the end of policing. The rise of a pandemic that is constantly being managed: in terms of how we understand the loss of life, our relationship of the kind of society we created to make that loss happen, or to support it, if not to make it the mechanisms by which that loss move through society.

[22:49:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
And, we still have a really active regime of empire. The Biden Administration is using covert vaccine intellectual property, vaccine raw material distribution, and other vaccine hoarding practices to try to assert imperial ambitions on the planet right now, especially in relation to the utter crisis that's happening in India right now. So for me it's almost shocking how much of an ECHO with the questions that we asked 30 years ago, which tells us that the movements that developed 30 years ago that saw these connections and demanded that these connections be addressed and how the University has failed to actually create knowledge that can fully and adequately explain these connections have got us to the

moment that we're in again. And so I really think that my goal is to promote student activism. In taking up this effort of transformation of these linked conditions.

Lauren Graves:
So you talked a lot about how many things from your life in college is very similar to how it is today. How do you think that we as a society and specifically students can work towards actually changing it so we don't constantly have to worry about the same issues over and over again?

Chandan C. Reddy:
I unfortunately think that students are going to have to organize as students, and a lot of the effort of the public university administration for the last 30 years has been to try to transform the meaning of students from students to consumers,and to make students think of themselves as coming to campus to receive a good or product rather than coming to campus because they are members of a institution and a project for which they have a voice and a legitimate claim for how the university should run, what it should value, and what it should care about. So I think that students are really fighting the long counterinsurgency pacification of their identities. They're just being told every day to put their head down and study.

[25:33:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
Put their head down and go to work-study and so, for example, there are efforts right now to really produce broad student debt abolition, and what could be more important than refusing to pay debt that they should have never incurred in the first place? My hope is that we're seeing the start of a broad student movement that is going to fight against its pacification as individual consumers and come together as the collectivity known as students.

Lauren Graves:
I completely agree and I think a big part of it now is we actually have professors that agree with us, and that are willing to talk about these issues, whereas like you mentioned when you were in college, it

was difficult to find anyone willing to even talk about sexuality or anything in that realm but I've had professors, like you, that have actively talked about how important it is to stand up for yourself and stand up for those around you. And I think that can definitely foster change, both in college communities, but also nationally.

Chandan C. Reddy:
That's right, and I think we're seeing it, which is exciting.

Lauren Graves:
So let's shift a little bit, I would love to start talking about your personal work and how you started to become a professor. And specifically revolving around the ideas of feminism. You discussed when you were in college, you were very interested in lesbian studies and looking at the racial affairs and the effects of imperialism and colonialism. I'm really curious about how you think feminism contributes to your work as a scholar, specifically in your GWSS and CHID departments?

Chandan C. Reddy:
I mean, I think feminism is the fulcrum of everything I do as a scholar. When I was coming to critical consciousness as a student, the only place where discussions of anti-blackness and race, as well as discussions of US empire and British Empire and race that said something about the history of my family formation and past in India, as well as discussions of queer politics and opposition and HIV and radicalism. The only place where those multiple conversations were all together was in feminist's space.

[28:30:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
And in kind of you know, black feminist postcolonial feminist, queer feminist, you know, transnational or third world feminist at the time that I was a student. So for me, feminism is a space where the kind of histories that constitute me are understood to be a fulcrum of the world that we have inherited and the way that the world moves into the future, you know what happens in the global South will affect what happens in the global North and yet we know so little about the global South and that's one of the

lessons that feminism teaches us. What happens in the politics of sexuality is not restricted to intimacy; it organizes how bureaucracy and life and death are distributed, and so we know that those processes are underappreciated, and yet they impact what the future is going to be.

Chandan C. Reddy:
So feminism for me is about a kind of critical conversation about the less appreciated elements that constitute our lives, and that will be the important social processes to know and to try to engage and to transform if we're to have different futures.

Lauren Graves:
That's so interesting, and it reminds me a lot when I took your class you discussed the idea of intersectionality and how vital it is to feminism and I can definitely see that, with all the work you do, and I think that's just really amazing. When do you think you first identified yourself as a feminist?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Oh, that's interesting. You know I don't know if I ever said I was a feminist as a political identity. The political identity, I traveled in the world at the time, both as a student and as a graduate student and in the organizing I did in New York; was always as queer of color and I just presumed that queer of color was another elaboration of feminism. But I always...

[31:24:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
I would say, probably, since my second year of undergraduate identified feminist inquiry as the primary intellectual fulcrum of my thinking and I understood feminist inquiry as bringing together diverse strands of Marxist inquiry but through feminist materialist lenses. Inquiry into colonialism and racism, but through feminist lenses as you're saying intersection all forms of analysis on race. so I think for me, more than identifying as a feminist I identified with the feminist political intellectual- I want to say tradition but it's that's a bad word because it's actually a kind of living changing tradition and that's what makes feminism so so rich.

Lauren Graves:
Can you talk a little bit about your time organizing in New York?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Sure. When I got to New York...You know the brutal reality of HIV wasn't going away, of course. Whether I lived or died still depended on what people didn't know about HIV and what and we're doing about HIV. And at the same time, who I was as a person of color and as a South Asian migrant, which was a category that really didn't exist in California before as a social conversation but kind of exploded when I got to New York for me, those things came together in being able to organize among other South Asian diaspora peoples who were queer identified. And queer like from the spectrum of lesbian and gay and varieties of gender non conforming and even trans-identified as well as traditions of gender dressing and gender identification that were coming from South Asia.going from sort of drag even to Hijra identifications (or third gender identifications), and so falling into that group of folks was first and foremost a community but that community was just...

Chandan C. Reddy:
Forever needing to organize to survive. We had to organize to figure out how to get status because HIV was a ban on your ability to get a Visa or Naturalization. How to hide HIV status while trying to get documented or how to get around documentation once your status was known. Fighting with South Asian organizations that claimed that South Asian migrants were respectable, mostly Hindu Indian respectable families and didn't have the sort of "filth" of HIV and homosexuality as part of their community.

[34:54:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
So on the one hand, I was doing a lot of that South Asian organizing, and on the other hand, I was doing a lot of pan POC HIV organizing. Asians were such a small percentage of the communities of color that were being devastated by HIV, AIDS, even though the Asians that I was among one in two were being devastated by HIV, AIDS.

Chandan C. Reddy:

The Communities I was a part of like APICHA, which was Asian Pacific Islander Coalition for HIV, AIDS was part of a network of People of color HIV organizations that were trying to get the resources and the needs of communities of color seen and met, and so I fell into organizing with black, latinx, and indigenous people trying to fight the inequalities of the administration of the AIDS crisis between communities of color and white communities as well as between migrant communities and citizen communities as well as communities in the global South countries and the global South that many of us are coming from.

Chandan C. Reddy:

For example, in New York at the time, one of the people we were organizing with was Haitian Women for Haitians United, which was the group of folks that were organizing to release the Haitian migrants that were caught by the Coast Guard when they were trying to cross the Caribbean to the United States and were forcibly detained in Guantanamo. And it was the first long term use of Guantanamo as a detention Center, because of their HIV status, and never allowed to apply for asylum or come into the US, and so we were organizing race, class, gender, and empire. And, I fell into doing that organizing work with others, and it really transformed my life. And, one of the things that came out of it was that we established the Audrey Lord project, which is now one of the only and longest-standing queer of color organizing project centers in the country.

Lauren Graves:

That's amazing! So throughout the discussion of your activism, and your organization, I really want you to think about what were the most important aspects of your activism, and what do you think you're most proud of, for what you've done throughout all of your years of activism?

Chandan C. Reddy:

I think that the most important aspect for me is...building activism through solidarity. I think feminism has done this better than any of the movements so far, which is learning how to create social change through a politics of difference where people's very real, different histories are on the table. A very real difference of conditions and freedoms are on the table, and whose lives are stated differently by

institutions,and learning how to organize together with deep, deep trust. To create a vision for a new kind of politics that is not about nationalism, or citizenship or liberal or reform change, but about creating a different world that is founded on us being better at doing that because we know the specificity of each other's histories and the points in which they interlock.

Chandan C. Reddy:
For me, I think that was one of the proudest things about the organizing I did, is that we always tried to organize together and we continue to try to organize together and we win together and we lose together. And it's really hard work and a lot of these coalitions break down. And a lot of them fall apart for all kinds of reasons: of inequalities, of resources, and suffering and so, being able to hold on to understanding how and why, and when they fall apart, and how to do solidarity better the next time around. And being able to actually point to existing projects like the Audrey Lorde project that continue to exist as a coalition of a politics of difference that matters to me.

[40:23:00]

Lauren Graves:
So, how does this idea translate into what you teach and how you work as an academic?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Well, one of the one of the ways that it translates in how I work as an academic is that I tried to make sure that I spend as much of my time in my life that I do as a scholar to contributing to movements for social change among communities that are mostly outside of, and have no access to the academic spaces that I work and teach in.

Chandan C. Reddy:
And so, for example, you know here at the UW i've tried to spend as much time working on social change on campus and working with students of color and queer feminist students on their education as I have building with organizers in the region to end the detention and deportation machine and to close the Northwest Detention Center and to free the remaining incarcerated people in detention centers as we try to close it. I probably spend as much work doing that, as I do in the classroom and I

make it a point not to list it as anything that I do in my work. So in my annual work reports, I don't put any of that in because I really think it's a responsibility and I think that the second you name that as part of your academic work you've kind of missed the point, because the tensions are real and they're necessary, and organizing in those spaces, is really about trying to create a world in which, maybe two or three generations from now those folks' kin will be able to access a different University. Because they're not going to get access to the things that we are doing in the University right now.

Chandan C. Reddy:
And so, for me it's really impacted my sense that you've always got to be part of movement organizing in the location that you're at.You have to try to do work that is being led by those impacted communities and not try to unify it always with your academic work. So that you can see the tensions, and feel them, and move between them and try to build a more meaningful social justice from below, by letting go of trying to integrate this academic work with it.

[43:21:00]

Lauren Graves:
That is so important. And you mentioned how you are working so that future generations can come in and people who don't have access to university now can come in and have access to a university that works for them. How do you think classes and students have changed since you started being in academics, even as a student to now, what differences have you seen?

Chandan C. Reddy:
You know, it's such an interesting question. I haven't seen a lot of differences, what I think is so wonderful and amazing and what keeps me going as a scholar-teacher or teacher mostly is that there is always a...radical student cohort. Radicalism doesn't come from the mind per se, it comes from people who experienced the contradictions of society and awaken to the meaning of those contradictions and so that way, I've always been privileged to see radical students enter the university and change it for the better from their critical projects. I do think that there are moments where student organizing goes from being on the margins to really being what we call sometimes counter-hegemonic to really being in the broad field of the university's activities and so is broadly engaged by all aspects of the university.

I think we're entering into that moment right now once again with the Defund Movement, the End UW PD Movement, the movement to demand that the university redress anti-blackness, and think about things like the George Washington statue. Those are demands that are really saying that this is a university steeped in a colonial moment and anti-black history, and we have a lot of work to reimagine ourselves once we understand that that's our time that we're living. So for me, it's not what's different but how much it's the same and we might be entering into a moment of protracted effective struggle.

[46:05:00]

Lauren Graves:
So in addition to that, what are the major changes that you've seen in the field of GWSS, or how are they the same like you were saying?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Yeah, I think GWSS is always reinventing itself, I think that's what's so awesome! In a sense, it's not that there are these major changes because new subjects, you know sort of previously excluded subjects are entering into GWSS, It's how, folks who were already in GWSS are reinventing the conversation of feminist studies.

Chandan C. Reddy:
So, for example, GWSS at UW has had indigenous feminism as a part of it, but I do think that Indigenous feminists thinking about the importance of native communities for understanding the colonial present of Seattle, the region and of feminist studies, as well as the importance of understanding the colonial present as a significant aspect of how we have to rethink social justice, has reinvented GWSS recently. So it's not that there wasn't Native feminism and now there is, it's that the character of Native feminism's conversation has changed, and in terms of the efforts it's making in relation to GWSS and it's impacting the re-envisioning of GWSS.

Chandan C. Reddy:
I think that, for example, I was a queer of color scholar in GWSS but now we have Kemi Adeyemi and Bettina Judd and they are really transforming how we understand queer studies by looking at Black

lesbian, Black trans, Black queer subjects and the conversations that those subjects are bringing to GWSS in reinventing feminist studies for it. I think that, GWSS has for a really long time had a faculty working on feminism in the global South, but I would say with people like Sasha Welland in the department and Priti Ramamurthy, is really also addressing these questions of transnational feminist rethinking of sexuality, and transforming how we all talk about sexuality in the department. So, I think it's just more like GWSS is constantly renovating its conversation and it's expanding its understanding of the sets of conversations that are ongoing in feminist studies.

[49:07:00]

Lauren Graves:
You mentioned how a lot of professors have contributed to the field of GWSS so I'm curious how you believe that you contributed to our department?

Chandan C. Reddy:
Oh interesting.

Chandan C. Reddy:
I think that I'm trying to elaborate a critical understanding of sexuality as a...

Chandan C. Reddy:
I have to think about this for a second, it's a really good question. Um you know, I think that what I'm trying to do is really contribute to thinking about how we can study sexuality to develop an understanding of a new kind of critical political leftist politics and a reinvention of a leftist politics that is specifically thinking about the political economy of the global North and the global South. And that's what I try to train students in, that's the kind of conversation I try to bring to a room and those are the kinds of scholars and activists that I try to bring to campus. It is how a deep conversation in a queer of color... sort of non-Western queer sexualities can really reinvent a materialist, Marxist feminist conversation, and I think that's what I'm trying to do over and over again to my work.

Lauren Graves:

That is amazing, and I think your work is really impactful, I know that when I took your class I learned things that I never even thought about before. And it really inspired me to actually stay in the GWSS department, because I wasn't quite sure what I wanted my minor to be but taking your class really helped me see how important it is to look through an intersectional lens and how so many of these events and all these activist groups there distinctly different but they're all...

Lauren Graves:
They all have similarities and they're all connected in some certain way, and I think you really helped me learn that. We're running really low on time so i'm just going to skip to like one or two more questions. What do you think are the most pressing feminist issues, as of today?

[51:49:00]

Chandan C. Reddy:
You know, take the Covid pandemic. In the Covid pandemic, the very first people who lost their jobs, who became precarious, were women and the very last people who are getting hired back into their jobs and getting any kind of economic stability are women. So I think that what feminism teaches us over and over again is that something like the economy is a racialized and gendered phenomenon. And, so I think that you know the most urgent sort of questions for feminism is how do we make sure that we are creating the knowledges necessary and needed after this pandemic such that society can never be the same again.We cannot try to incorporate this pandemic into the timeline that brought us to this pandemic. We need to rupture that timeline and bring a new revolutionary time into existence. For me, that is feminism's biggest challenge.

[53:13:00]

Lauren Graves:
And one final question so in the past decade or so there has been a huge push away from humanities, and into STEM, how can we get more people interested in GWSS and interested in seeing how important it is to look at these humanitarian issues through a feminist lens?

Chandan C. Reddy:

I think that students will come to feminism because of the social change they see around them. So as much as the University is trying to suppress student curiosity about their own capacity to change the world, but also the knowledge that they need for real change. The University just wants to tell you the knowledges that you need for real change are technical knowledges. Better biosciences, better engineering, better understanding of STEM knowledges. But it is students seeing social change in the world that comes and makes them search out for other knowledges and that's when they went into programs like GWSS. So in a sense, I think that the way we expose more people to GWSS is that we participate in organizing for broad social change outside the University, because when that comes into people's imagination, They want me to go find the knowledges that can help them understand it, and they will come to GWSS, we don't have to go to them at that point. So, I think our task is to support organizing.

Lauren Graves:

Thank you so much this interview has been wonderful and I'm so happy that you were the first person I thought of. I think that this interview will contribute so much, not just to me, but to any Professor or student that may listen to this in the future.And I just want to say, I really appreciate everything that you do both outside and inside the classroom and I think that you have such a major impact on your students that you might not even realize.

Chandan C. Reddy:

I'm so touched by that Lauren, you've been like the most erudite interviewer, but also so gracious and hearing your account of working together in a classroom is kind of everything for me, so I just hope you know that your serious engagement with the stuff that I put on a table for us to talk about transforms my life. It makes my life meaningful and better, and so you know my wellness is in your hands and I'm so grateful for how deeply you work.

Lauren Graves:

Thank you so much, I hope you have an amazing rest of your week and I hope you feel better soon.

Chandan C. Reddy:

I will, these allergies will go away, I promise. Alright, talk to you soon.

[56:13:00]