**Misbah:**

Well, thank you so much for doing this interview with us.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes.

**Misbah**:

For the FGS history project.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

And we are celebrating 25 years of majors.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yay.

**Misbah:**

And so we wanted to interview you because you have been here for half, almost more than half of the time that majors have been here.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Misbah:**

And so we just wanted to ask you a couple questions, get the details, get the tea.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Get all the tea.

**Misbah:**

All right. And so we have a few questions planned.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes.

**Misbah:**

Our first one is what were your first impressions of CC and FGS when you first arrived in 2011 as a Riley scholar?

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes. So, well, first I wanna say, um, thanks to you all three for taking the time to, to do the interview, and thank you to Dr. Kumar, my colleague, for insisting that this, um, was something that needed to happen and that should happen. And for our colleague, Dr. Guessous, for, um, echoing that and supporting that as department chair. I think it is. It's always been something I wanted to do. I always wanted some student to do a history of the then program, now department for a capstone or something. And it just, with everything that that was going on this whole time, it just never, um, became a, a priority. And then Covid happened. And so I'm so happy that there's at least a ball rolling in that direction. <laugh>.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Um, but yeah, first impressions of CC and FGS, I mean, it, it was, I wasn't able to see the, the college or the, the then program as clearly, um, at first because I was still dissertating. So I was a dissertation fellow as a Riley scholar. Some are post docs, meaning they've completed their dissertation. I was not. So I had the weight of that. Not only that, I'm married. I was then, I am now, I had two kids. And when we moved here, um, our son started kindergarten here.

**Misbah:**

Oh, wow.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. And our daughter was in preschool, they're one grade behind each other. So, you know, it, it, and we moved all the way across the country from Indiana on limited resources. So, um, it was such a busy, chaotic time. And it was my first job, what I would call a full-time job. Um, so, you know, there's a lot of gratitude that comes with that, a lot of excitement that comes with that. And, and, and that's what it, that's what was primarily sort of engine in that was the primary engine for my relationship with the college and the, and the, the program at the time. Um, it was typical, meaning, the program was comprised mostly of like anywhere from, I don't know, 12 to 15, 10 to 15 faculty who have, um, contracts in other departments. So that could be anything from, at the time, Physics to English, to History to social or to Sociology. And that's usually how Women's Studies, like programs are. Um, they, they don't exist without those people deciding that the things we study are the utmost importance and then creating spaces for that to happen. Um, but since CC has the racial demographics it does now, but especially back then, it was so white. Um, it was very, very white. And it, that became more and more palpable as time went on in ways that I don't think they expected. And I wouldn't say I didn't expect it, but I didn't know, um, how it was gonna look, what it was gonna look like and how it was gonna sound here.

**Misbah**:

Right. Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like, I heard all about it. My dissertation chair wrote an article about being in a Women's Studies space as a graduate student, and it being overwhelmingly white. She is not, she's a Black woman.And how her and her, her friend and colleague experienced that and the frustrations they had with that, the challenges that had with that, I'm of, you know, the Black Feminist tradition. So it's not like I was lost on me that, you know, the tensions between, um, white feminists who struggle with racism and people like me. It's not, it's not like that was lost on me, but you just don't know, you know, you don't know what it's, what it's gonna be. You don't know how it's gonna feel, what it's gonna sound like. But at first it was nothing but excitement and energy. And fun. And, and this is a well-resourced institution. So I was looking forward to, um, maximizing opportunities to, you know, leverage those resources to do the kind of work that I wanted to do. Which I did and still do.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. Sounds like it was like your first big kid job.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

And that you knew it was gonna come with things.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I knew it was gonna come with things. Yeah. I just didn't, I was busy.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know what I mean? Dissertating and all that stuff.

**Misbah**:

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But I, but yeah, because I taught college for seven years before I came here.

**Misbah:**

Oh, woah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But yeah, I started as a grad student in my master's degree program. We got our tuition paid and fees paid, and we got a stipend, a modest one. And for that stipend we had to teach.

**Misbah:**

Ah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And therefore we had to, this isn't always the case, but we, uh, took courses on teaching college level composition, rhetoric, and things like that. So I wasn't new to the college classroom, but I was certainly new to a PWI like this. A rich one.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I mean, I went to a PWI, but most of the students that I went to school with were on aid.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. **Dr. Lewis:**

So, like, it's almost, it was almost like the inverse, like the amount of students that full pay a CC was the amount on Pell Grants where I went. So I grew up around working class white people. I went to school, working class white people. So this stuff was woo, you know what I mean? But it took a while for me to settle in and start to notice it, and then to realize how it was gonna impact me professionally.

**Misbah:**

Okay. And so what did you notice? What was the structure like of FGS at the time? What was your relationship like with the people who were leading FGS at the time?

**Dr. Lewis:**

Right. Right.

**Misbah:**

And how did you fit in then into the structure and like the duties that you had?

**Dr. Lewis:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So the structure, right. So there were those 12 to 15, typically maybe 10 to 15 people. Um, and it's so wild because when I, when I was hired, there was a program director.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Who, like I said, most people were in another department and they were sort of doing this um, because they cared about the work that was being done here. Um, very little, if any, compensation. And recognition, official structural institutional recognition. Right. But by the time I got here, there were three.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Or maybe two or three. At, at various points. There were two and three and three and two <laugh>. I swear. Like, there were two different configurations of three people <laugh>. There were two of two. And that in and of itself, like, it, it, I understand why that move was made, because, again, you know, running a program like this takes a lot of time and energy. Which is a lot to ask of somebody who has similar, if not the same responsibilities to a whole other department. So institutions tend to keep these kinds of programs in poverty by sort of elevating the volunteer, love, labor and, you know, “we’re doing this because we love it.” And I've always been opposed to that. Um, I mean, especially in a field where, you know, women's invisible, people of color's, invisible labor. Yeah. It's like, why would we?

**Misbah:**

Be the people? Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But, you know, people get caught up, and, and things start to just happen and people aren't thinking critically about why things are happening. But, but so that was the structure which was out of control.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

That's not a good way to run anything, in my opinion. Especially when there's this new young Black woman

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

In here. Like, you just wanna try to make sure all your structural ducks are in a row <laugh>, or don't do it. I mean, you know what I mean? I was hired to like, bring diversity to the college and the program. You know, even, even academically, because the program had been accused of, of leaning heavily natural science and social science, and I'm not that, yeah. So even though I'm in the social science division, see structural stuff makes a difference. Right. Just because we're critical of it doesn't mean we don't value it when it's done *Well*. It, it makes sense. But, so I was, so, I had that weight on me.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

And then the structure was always changing. And it, it was, it was, it was a lot of people in a room who, um, you know, were able to come to the meetings and give their thoughts on things, but who weren't able, not always because they weren't unwilling, but who weren't always able, even if they were willing to do the, the, the heavy lifting of the program. Like teach the core courses, advise the capstones, advise the majors, advise the minors, um, do the bulk of the programming.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And not to say they didn't do any of it, but I mean, you hire somebody to do that, you're gonna expect them to do that. Right. So there's that. But then that person is a Black woman who doesn't have tenure, who didn't even have a tenure track job when I first got here. I didn't have a tenure track job till my third year, but I'm trying to get to know the students, get to know the place, or I'm trying to, you know-

**Misbah:**

Stay.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Get in here and learn how it goes and contribute to the space and do what I do. And it just got messy. And I mean, racism was happening. Racist sexism was hap-pen-ing. Um, and one of the ways that, that, that happened was that, you know, I would do all this work and that would be appreciated. But when I insisted on people respecting my knowledge about the field and my intellect was, it was a struggle sometimes. 'cause I'm, I'm forceful, I'm very hip hop generation, so I talk a certain way. I act a certain way. And that's all good. When everybody's in a good mood. They love it when I'm saying, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, shit, shit. Fuck.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Because then they feel like they can do something. You know, they don't talk like that at work. 'cause So then when I do it, it's like, oh, we can be free through her.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. <laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But as soon as that fuck is directed at a motherfucker, then it's a problem. Which okay, fine, it's a problem. But there were just cultural clashes and it, it was a mess. And, and I, and what I really wanted was to be able to create a space where there was, um, where, where we could hold one another accountable for our commitments to the field. Off campus as much as on.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Right. And they, they didn't do that. They weren't doing that. And like I said, it wasn't always because people weren't willing. But it's hard to do that when you're doing that in your own field.

**Misbah:**

 Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So I'm expecting you to publish in journals and go to conferences and you're doing the same thing. And it's, it's a, it's a nightmare. But that's what I wanted, because that to me was the only way that I could co-create a space that was as attentive to the field as possible, as if people were in it.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So, you know, when I wanna make a change to the curriculum, I wanna do that in conversation with people who are conversant with curricula in this field across the nation, not just right here.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Right. Like, so, so, but, but, but you know, I got, we got along. Yeah. I mean, for the, you know, <laugh> for the most part up until, you know, certain things started happening, I still get along with some people. To this day, it's not for me, it was never about getting along. It was about me having a space where, what I know about my field was the center

**Misbah**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And the priority.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And for some people, it's like, well, who does she think she is? And I'm like, exactly. Who, you know, I am. So therefore now that's the case.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I fought hard along with other people to change that so that it wasn't just me making all the decisions, but I wasn't gonna make them. Um, I wasn't gonna be as willing to make them in conversation with people who weren't conversant

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

With. The. Field. Even as we change it. Like, that's what our field does. We think institutionally, structurally. Yeah. So it's not to say the field says this, so we do that <laugh>. It's just to say, if we don't, why

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And what qualifies you to say we shouldn't or that we should. Right. So, so yeah. That's, that's the fitting in question that you have is a good one.

**Misbah:**

It just sounds like you wanted people committed.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes.

**Misbah:**

To a particular field.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Absolutely.

**Misbah:**

Day in and day out.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Absolutely. All the time.

**Misbah:**

All the time. [laugh]

**Dr. Lewis:**

Every minute. I mean, it's, it's, it's like, you know, my husband owns a barbershop. He doesn't want barbers who only come when they feel like it. Or when they can get out of it. They part-time job.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Or if that is right. Like, say that he had a barber who had a whole full-time job and was cutting hair on the side to make extra money. It's not to say he would say, no, you can't do that, but let's be clear about what that means. there's a difference between me and you. 'cause I'm here every day.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

All day.

**Misbah:**

Exactly.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So maybe if we have a vote, you get a half a vote.

**Misbah:**Yeah. **Dr. Lewis:**

Or something. I don't know.

**Misbah:**

Right.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But we, but it, but it, it seemed like me insisting on that made a lot of sense to, to some people. And to some people it felt offensive. It felt like they were being pushed out of something that they built, which makes sense to me.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I'm not the only one, we're not the only ones that that's ever happened to, but for me, that was an important conversation to have. And as a result, I know you wanted to talk about some of the initiatives that I. That I, you know, co-created or created myself. One of them was the advisory board because we, as we started to change. Meaning, when Dr. Guessous was hired and Dr. Kumar was hired, there were lots of people who understood that those moments were, were occasions for other people to step away. or to reimagine their relationship to the, to the then program. But we never wanted to give the impression that we weren't interested in intergenerational or interdisciplinary collaboration. How could we? I mean, we are not, we are not of the feminist traditions that are invested in these stark contrasts between, first wave, second wave, third wave that never, that, that's not even what we come from. So we created the advisory board in order to keep that alive, but in a manageable way.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Where 12 or 15 of y'all are not gonna sit in a room and decide what our major is gonna look like.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm.<affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

 But you certainly can have, we, we certainly would love a few of you, A couple of you. To have some conversations because you have, you have institutional memory.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know, you've, you've, you, you've got all kinds of knowledges and experiences that we find valuable. So that was one way that we, that was one solution that we had. We didn't ever wanna sort of squeeze everybody out permanently, forever. There are also other initiatives that I supported when I was director of the program, which was Dr. Guessous’ book, or excuse me, reading group.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Where the program would sponsor, um, members getting a book, and they would come discuss the book every block. Similarly, Dr. Kumar's transnational film club.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Where the, the program would sponsor, uh, some refreshments and beverages at his house

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And people would come and, and talk about a, a particular film that, that exists in the transnational film, um, realm focuses of course, on gender and sexuality, but not always, you know. Yeah. Or at least in an intersectional and transnational way. So those are, and, and then I also co-created the FemmeSTEM symposium with Andrea Bruder as a way to, uh, center, you know, the, the intellectuals out there who do stem and feminist inquiries simultaneously. So people could say whatever they wanna say, but our, the, the, the fruits are trees there, <laugh> show <laugh> that we value collaboration always, but we wanted the autonomy that was necessary to shape something that we were unwaveringly committed to. We didn't have anywhere to run. And I also felt the same way about my relationship to REMS.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

I was an affiliate faculty member of REMS for years. But when they started to hire people, that to me was a cue not to abandon them and sort of say, well, you've hired people, good luck to you. Please. 99% of my course is cross list with REMS.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Every course I teach other than intro, theory, and senior seminar cross list with REMS. But I did think it was important for them to have what I was asking for as well. So it's not as if I only want it for me.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I want it for everybody who has the kind of commitment that illustrates the kind of expertise necessary to run a department or a program.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like I just said, we own a business. I don't go into economics and business trying to tell them <laugh>. And I literally own one. several we had that doesn't necess that that doesn't sort of get, it gives me a knowledge and a set of expertise. But I know the limitations of my own knowledge and expertise, and I wanted other people to do the same. I think it was just hard for some people because we were Black and Brown.

**Misbah:**

That that's what I was gonna get to because I was like, it sounds like whenever like white people feel like they know something and they get challenged, this is something that you've taught me honestly, where it's like,

**Dr. Lewis:**

How dare you?

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I mean, that's a question I've literally been asked. Yeah.

**Misbah:**

How,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Who, no, not how dare you that too, but who do you think you are?

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I'm always like, oh,

**Misbah:**

Me.

**Dr. Lewis:**

What makes you ask that? Yeah. Everything, like I said earlier.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Who I think I am is everything. You know I am. And that therein lies the problem.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And then I have the character I have and the personality I have. And we all do, especially me and Nadia. And I don't exclude Dr. Kumar because he's not passionate or brilliant, but he, by the time he came, the, the message was clear almost. Not all the way, but you know, I am how I am and she is how she is. So if you are an insecure white person, you are going to feel like you are on your knees constantly when she and I are in the room. Especially at the same time. 'cause she has a way of presenting herself as qualified, secure, confident, and she is all those things. Even as she struggles with those things. And so do I. And I have a similar, um, way of being in a room. It's just different.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But both of us struggle deeply.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

With insecurity, with imposter syndromes. Even though we know we're smart, we don't, we're not downgrading. Yeah. It's just real. Now you put us two together and ooh, if you, if you are not a confident, secure person, you are going to feel very, very small.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But what we were trying to get people to understand is that is not our problem, nor is it our responsibility. Most of the people we were dealing with were older than us, had been here longer than us, and had tenure already. So why should we, as pre-tenure women of color, with all the baggage we come with being expected to nurture and care for, and dim our lights so others can shine. Why should we do that in a space that is committed to resisting that .

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But see, that's what we mean by keeping up.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know, we wanted people keeping up with the field and being, being committed to intersectional analysis, transnational analysis.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So that they would understand when they were perpetuating those things. Like, I have to be, when I'm perpetuating various forms of heterosexism.

**Misbah:**

<affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

Or cis sexism.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

We did, we don't, we don't expect anybody to, we, you know, we always say there are no finish lines here. There are no finish lines. We don't expect anybody to have reached them. But when we name it, we don't want pushback.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Especially by people who aren't even familiar enough with that, that set of analyses to even know how to push back or when.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis::**

But see, we do. So if we're saying things that each other wants to check, we, we, we, we get to assume you know this.

**Misbah:**

Yes.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know this.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And we wanted the room filled with that.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

The presumption of knowledge and commitment.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

That's all.

**Misbah:**

That's it. Yeah. <laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

To me it always comes back to knowledge and commitment. Like commitment especially.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yep.

**Misbah:**

Like knowledge could be gained even from what you were talking about.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Absolutely.

**Misbah:**

If only you choose to commit yourself to that.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes. But. Or don't stay over there wherever it is that you are. And do a newsletter over there, <laugh> Yes. You take your students to a conference.

**Misbah:**

Okay. So we've talked about the transnational club. We've talked about thebook club. We've talked about Femme in STEM. What are some other things that you've seen or co collaborated with

**Dr. Lewis:**

So many things. Dang

**Misbah:**

Yeah (claps enthusiastically) We wanna give you you flowers.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. One of the things, one of my favorite things is Gail Murphy Geiss, who was an affiliate, A core, and a director.

**Misbah:**

Oh.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Um, yes. All those different things. Um, early in my time here, she had started going to a meeting called SEROW, uh, which is an acronym for the Southwest Institute for Research on Women, which I then was going to quite a bit. And Dr. Guessous will, once she gets her bearings, um, about herself as a new chair of a new department. With all these promotions going on and everything. She could give her a minute. But, um, at one of those meetings, Dr. Murphy Geis, um, learned of a student advisory council that another, uh, department chair or program director had done at their institution, because it's mostly program directors and department chairs coming together, or single faculty members

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

To talk about the state of the field, the state of their own departments of programs and such. And she brought the idea back and I loved it. And so I advised it from the minute it started, I think in 2010 or 11, up until this last year, I think eventually we became a chapter of Iota, Iota, Iota. And you all are the officers. And, you know, we did a constitution, it needs updated. Um, we, I insisted that the member or the officers be able to go to the National Women's Studies Association annual meeting at no cost to them. Um, that has always been something that I think is really important. I had friends who went to small liberal arts colleges like this, that had resources. Who did stuff like that as undergrads. And I never got to, so when I started learning about that, I thought, oh, that's what that kind of place does. That's the point of having that kind of money is that, you know, and we've, we, this is another initiative, but it also relates to, to going to the conference. Since I got here, 40% of the majors and minors have been students of color. So those are the students who get to go to the conference, right? So they get a chance to say they saw this person. I'll never forget, I can't remember what year it was, but it was definitely in Wisconsin. And I will never forget, I'm in the lobby just talking to my people. The students are walking, they see me, I see them, we say hi, and I'm just talking like nothing. And they are freaking out. And I'm like, what did what? And they were like, over there. Like, who? Because I'm like, please, <laugh>, I'm a little spoiled. I've been coming to this conference since what, 2008? So I'm like, I've been here, done that. It's Gloria Steinem, Angela. I mean, it was, it was the who's who Bell hook some damn body. And they was Losing It. And in that moment, I mean, even before that, it just was like, this is what it's for. I mean, I've, when I presented papers, I tell the students, don't come to my stuff. 'cause you heard me, you hear me all the time. GoTee Up. And then they always come, like, they always look out and they go, which is the door. I love that they do that. I just don't want them to feel like they have to do that. You know what I mean? But they ain't gonna come. And then they, you get to introduce 'em to people, which is, it's powerful. I mean, but, but even that got resisted. It was like, my department doesn't do that. So I'm like, see, that's what go over there to your department then. And advocate for what you want in your own department. Do not come to F G S and try to bear out whatever resentments you have over there, because this is a well-resourced department as well. It's not broke, you know, it's never been broke since I got here. <laugh>. So you think I'm, but but, but, but at the same time, there were these blockly happy hours for faculty and everybody was making more money than me. And at the time, I could afford my own beer. So I was like, oh, no, no, no. You don't get to have happy hour and the kids can't go to the conference. So we could talk about initiatives that started, but that's when I ended.

**Misbah:**

<laugh> period.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I was like, no, no, no, no, no. And every so often, Nadia and Rushaan and I would go have a lunch and things like that. It's not to say we don't enjoy the fruits of the labors that were given to us, or that we inherited and that we did. It's just to say priorities. So stuff like that. I mean, you know, I inherited the Rag. So that was, that was something I inherited. But nobody ever got paid till I was chair. Never. Or either the editor was getting paid and nobody else. So, and for a while it wasn't getting paid at all. And then I did that, you know, then we started the newsletter and I, the alumni spotlights and the website change and all the social media stuff. But one of the things I wanted to talk about was the academic, the intellectual. Right. There was no critical whiteness studies course at this college before I got here. There was no study abroad, off campus, um, study program in FGS till mine. You know, we created a mission and vision statement together. We redid the major together. The minor together. We created a whole course numbering system. So now people know if they want to, how we understand the difference between a 100 level course or two or three and a four. Right. We don't just say novice, intermediate in advance just to be saying it. We have a rationale. Right. You are cross listing guidelines. We change because, and we're still in the process of revamping all that because we started so much of that Right when covid hit. I mean, it had been addressed before. But really picking up on it and starting to move the needle was right before Covid. Because, you know, there are some courses that are across the, that are not consistent with our commitments to intersectional analysis, first and foremost. And even the transnational. Right. We don't expect every course to be, uh, to take a transnational approach. Right. But an intersectional one, absolutely, or why are we offering it? And then the students take it and come to us. And this isn't even FGS, you know what I mean? But we were so terrified to make a move on some of that stuff because of the pushback. You know, that's why we created the advisory board. It's like, if you wanna be in the room, be in the room to help us make risky moves, put your tenure in front of you to do that. Don't just come in here having wine

and eating snacks, talking out. I don't know, <laugh>, put your tenure on the line to your homegirl. That's course is about to get dropped off. If you don't wanna do that, why are you here? Because I'm gonna do it. And we did, even though we were scared, we still was moving. You know what I mean? So yeah. We, we've been, we've been afraid a lot of times. I don't even say I stay afraid for myself 'cause I don't mind fear. But in other cases, I might say, you know, just worried about dealing with the mess.

**Misbah:**

I mean, I feel like it is scary though.

**Dr. Lewis:**

It's very scary though.

**Misbah:**

Especially to make any move at an institution that like you work at and like

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. You gotta live. You always say, you know, I always say students come and go. So yes, I care about students' experiences here, but I'm also like, you're gonna be gone in three years. So I do spend a lot of my time take, trying to take care of myself and the, and the people who are going to potentially be here forever. I feel the same way about parenting. Like if me and my husband are not well and our marriage isn't, well what the kids gon get from that. You know what I mean? So I'm always about the people who the kids lean on the most when they come, you know? But yeah. So I mean, they used to have a feminist carol sing. It was cute, you know, where they would get together. And I always wanted to update the lyrics because the lyrics would be so cute.

**Misbah:**

I Saw one that was about like Gloria Stein.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes.

**Misbah:**

There this one about like, what was it, Susan B. Anthony.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes. They have all these, it's cute, but we just let it go. 'cause we couldn't keep all that stuff. You know, it would be like, look, if y'all want, keep

**Misbah:**

It it vintage

**Dr. Lewis:**

It was very vintage. And that would be cute at, you know, could you imagine? But that was our thing with some of the people who were resistive and everybody was not

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm.<affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

 But the people who were resistant to our claims, our, our sort of pursuit of autonomy. We would say, Hey, if you wanna keep the carol singing, do the carol singing.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

We used to have a feminist collective FemCo student organization, it fell off. And I say now, me and Nadia were just talking about this the other day as a result of the demonstration, the teach in.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

'cause we know for some people it's like, wow, you know, FGS changed and let FemCo go. If the students want a FemCo, they can start one. I'm not in the business of telling students what kind of organizations they should have. Triota is going on.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

One day you might look up and I don't know, I'm all for change, you know what I mean? Not, and I'm not the kind of person who thinks teleologically about change. Right? Yeah. Like, All change could change isn’t progress. Progress. I just know change is the only constant. And I'm, that's why I wanted to make sure I did all the things I just mentioned. So that when it was Nadia turned the chair, I wasn't in her way trying to live out dreams that I didn't get to live. You know, I always wanted to do this or do this. But yeah, we really, I mean, 'cause Dr. Guessous didn't come until my fifth year.

**Misbah:**

Hmm.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And him, my seventh, Dr. Kumar came my seventh. Yeah. So for five years I had it on my back in a particular way. And there was a woman who did have this job that I have before me, but right when I got here, she was on a year long leave and then resigned.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So she and I never even worked together. Yeah. Like we had a relationship. We went to lunch a couple times we talked, but yeah. So it was always the one person, the one person, the one person.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And that was one of the biggest things I did collaboratively, was to fight to get those lines. The one that Dr. Guessous has, the one that Dr. Kumar has. And now, as a result of our most recent external review, which I led, we got another one. And the first, uh, what do you call it? The first operating budget increase in over 10 years. Like, even though we got more people, more students, we've never got a operating budget increase. And we finally got one after 10 years. So Yeah. Those are some big like woo hoos

**Misbah:**

Initiatives.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

No. 'cause I was thinking about how if last year at NWSA, somebody just didn't like tell me that I was just talking to somebody who knew bell hooks. Like I was justrandomly there talking to somebody who knew bell hooks.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Exactly. It's the conference.

**Misbah:**

And ended up like on the, like <laugh> on the plenary after two minutes. And I, two minutes later, like I was just talking and I was, and I was just talking to her about Telfar I was like, I was asking her, how do I get a Telfar bag

**Dr. Lewis:**

It's so fashionable

**Misbah:**

And like it's

**Dr. Lewis:**

A fashionable conference, I'll tell you that.

**Misbah:**

And I was like, somebody already like, knew me because they knew you. They were just like, you're one of Heidi's kids.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Listen. And that's the thing too. That's the thing. That's what we want to happen. Right. Like, I swear I would go to that conference and nobody would know nobody here. And I would be like, what in the world?Like I wanted the program to ring bells like I and it do now. And sorry, I mean, I'm not sorry at all, but I'm like, you can't say Colorado College and f g s without me. You can't.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Unless that person is like other people who don't keep up and you don't know. And it was never just about me look at if, if it was just about me, there would be nobody after me.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. And I feel like I'm already, like it was all about that, that legacy.

**Dr. Lewis:**

That's what I'm saying. It was all to get students to be able to have pride in where they went, what they studied, and to be able to take advantage of the relationships that we would have in the field that we are in. It's not that, I mean, I could do that in REMS. 'cause I'm, you know, firmly situated in Black studies. I haven't been at a conference in a long time.You know, I'm not trying to say I'm the same as, you know, Dr. Ratchford or I'm not, you know what I mean? We, we, we started going to the National Council for Black Studies as grad students. He still goes every year. I bet. Every year. I have not been in a while because I only have but so many conference funds and I'm interdisciplinary for real. I be going to American studies, pop culture studies, cultures, so I could, can conference everywhere. <laugh> and I, so I would never position myself as equal to him. ButI know enough people that do black studies Yeah. That I could cook, could cook you up. And that's what we wanted, was to be able to gift our commitment to the field, to the students. Yeah. And each other too. That's all.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

Period. Um, okay. So we've kind of already touched on this

**Dr. Lewis:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm.

**Misbah:**

But throughout your 13 years at CC, how has FGS needed to articulate its necessity

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

To the institution specifically?

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

And this could be through the tenure lens, this could be through like, so many ways.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

Like, I just wanna let you take it

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. I mean, you know, we've done proposals like everybody else, you know, we've done proposals. Sometimes that works, sometimes it does not.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know, we were really excited about the external review because even though a lot of our colleagues here and elsewhere see those as, you know, just things that universities and colleges make, departments and programs do for accreditation. Right. People will say that colleges and universities don't, you know, take them seriously because they'll give recommendations. And the colleges will never do 'em. I've done external reviews before. Right. You study it, you talk to people-

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You write a report, you make a suggestion. But my thinking was always, well, if we're gonna do it, let's do it in a way that's serious and meaningful. And then we can, you know, leverage its expertise to make requests. And we, we've done that successfully. Even with the previous external review that happened when I had first got here. And let alone this one that resulted in what I previously mentioned. So we've done the standard academic professional thing, propose, ask. Sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn't. I, me. So, you know, I have articulated that in ways that are a lot more forceful and aggressive. Only when I'm being ignored though, if I'm being ignored, I'm not gonna continue to be polite. I'm either gonna shut down completely and I'm gonna go ghost or I'm going to scream. Um, I wrote that expertise chapter that I sent to all of you and started it with the, with the quote from Sarah Ahmed about when you feel suffocated and you feel silenced, especially as a Black woman, a woman of color, some screaming is likely to happen. And that is me through and through. I probably never do it again. Here. They've gotten, they've, they've heard the last scream from me. Not because I don't have it in me, but because I don't, I'm not doing it.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like, it's just, it's my time has come to an end. Um, everything else I do will be smooth sailing or it will not happen. I invite others to scream if they, if they feel the need. But, but yeah. So it's, it's like our field. We've taken multivocal and multi-directional approaches to the various forms of subjugation that, that we've fought against here. Um, we've taken some, some radical approaches as radical as one could possibly be at a college or university at some liberal ones and most in between. Right.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Most everything is anyway. But, but I'm, I'm a, I'm a, I'm a big advocate for forceful, intentional communication with, with people in power. Um, which doesn't mean one doesn't, which doesn't mean one isn't polite, but it's, I'm not. Politeness and professionalism as defined by any institution like this, is not a priority for me. Um, when I'm being ignored or when I'm being silenced, or the people that I care about or, or fight for advocate for are, are. So it's just, I think, and I'm glad that you asked that because I think that's something that I would, you know, I've said to students who are gonna find themselves, you know, in settings where sometimes things are gonna be really smooth, you know, you're gonna ask for something, you're gonna get it and be like, whoa, okay. And other times you're not. And it's sometimes that'll make sense. Sometimes it won't. Sometimes you'll be like, okay, that's not thought I'd shoot the shot, but I don't need it. I don't want, other times you'll know, like, I, I will not go forward if I do not have this thing that I need to do this job well.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And me answering this question allows me to reiterate something I say all the time, which is it, there's no one approach, no one approach that's gonna either work or not. And so I'm always like, do what you feel and be able to stand on it <laugh> and take the consequences. See, when I was screaming, I was, I wasn't only ready to get fired, I quit.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like, I attempted to resign. I wasn't so, I was not, I was ready. I I, on the way to the dean's office the first time I was on the phone with my husband because yes, I drove from here to Armstrong. 'cause at that time I was like, I don't walk. I mean, Latra probably is like, how is this possible when you walk all over the place in Berlin? I don't know. There's something about that because there's stuff to walk to, like there <laugh>, you know, gosh, there's all kinds of stuff. Coffee shop this, there's walking, walking here. I mean, this is nature's beautiful.

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

But It's like, oh, I need a destination. I drove to Armstrong calling my husband like, we are going to be back on welfare today. And he's like, did it happen? It did. It sure did. And I'm gonna get fired, so I'm gonna quit. And I was not sad about that.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Or mad. It was like, okay, you have to do what you have to do.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

We all do. <laugh>. It turned out differently because I think people at the time acknowledged that that what, you know, the screaming was, um, a response to a lot of racist sexism that was so cowardly and so covert. And also knew that what they were getting from keeping me employed was worth more than the pushback I was getting. Not everybody acknowledges that. Not every set of administrators knows that. Sometimes they'll let the pushback that I get, they'll, they'll, they'll ride with that. And I'm like, do you. I mean, if you're scared of them more than you are me, I don't even need you to be scared of me. I just need you to know that what I bring to the table, I think is worth it. Hopefully everybody feels that way.

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

And if not, it ain't 'cause of me <laugh>. But every administration, every administrator, every administration is not like that. Every boss is not like that. Some people will see that fire as like, exciting. Like that's the kind of, you know, energy you want, the kind of passion you want. Others don't have that. And so therefore we'll be intimidated. We'll be, you know, so I've seen it all here in this short time. So yeah. I don't think there's one way, my way isn't the only way. It hasn't even worked for me at times, but it's worked enough for me to be convinced that I'd rather do it the way I did it than to be constantly silencing myself or allowing myself to be silent. Like I'd rather live like this. Like I could put my head up.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

After this, I couldn't put my head up if I just let myself be quieted or started to do it to myself.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

as a way to protect me. You know, Audre Lorde says, your silence will not protect you. I think that's what the kind of thing she means.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

But I think people think it’s just speaking is, I'm like, well, yeah, sure, great. That's wonderful and do it. But we're talking about if you can speak even when your voice is shaken, if you can speak even when the whole room is against you. 'Cause I've been there.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Maybe not the whole room, but I'd say like 98% of the room is like, get her outta here.

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I only have like one or two people in the room who have my back and I still do it anyway. Like that's, that's, but that's how we've had, that's how we've done it. I don't know if we had to do it that way, but that's how we've done it. And I'm glad with who we are and what we've become.

**Misbah:**

In that article that you were mentioning

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes

**Misbah:**

About expertise and all, like, where you talked about a lot of this extensively

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah

**Misbah:**

You talked about that snap and how post that snap you actually got what you wanted, which was a tenure track.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I mean, shortly thereafter

**Misbah:**

Yeah, shortly thereafter, there cannot be

**Dr. Lewis:**

I don't believe in coincidence. I don't believe in coincidence. I know a lot of people for their, for their racist sexist purposes, would like to elevate the, the, the realities of a coincidence

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

In regards to that.But I don’t so. But no, and literally a, a colleague of mine was in a room and someone was being critical of me and some other people. It was like a young people thing. <laugh>. It was according to her. And I, listen, I wasn't there.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So I don't know, but I believe her because I know the people involved.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I trusted her at the time and still do in, in that regard. And she said that there was like this chat about chitchat, about how, you know, we were, and, and not just me and FGS, it was just me at the time

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Um, I don't believe Dr. Guessous had even come yet, but it was like a lot of the interdisciplinary program chatter

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

About like, you know, wanting our own space, you know, all this stuff that I talked about. And there was sort of like a questioning of what we were doing.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And the, the colleague of mine said, well, Heidi got those lines, <laugh>. And the principal was like, she didn't do that all by herself. And I never said I did. But what I will never forget is we were having a conversation amongst, uh, faculty involved with interdisciplinary programs about just some things that we all were clear that we needed. And of course, I spoke up and said, we need more lines. I mean, at the times, REMS only had one, Southwest Studies had maybe one and a half, because I think, I don't know if Santiago was here yet. So they might've just had the half, Eric Panama line. Really? And then film and media had, you know, so please, we were just, oh, this is ridiculous. Asian studies didn't have none. And two colleagues of mine, one who was a core faculty member of Feminist and Gender studies, and one who was not, that person was a core faculty member in REMS, said right next to me, who does she think the college is? Santa Claus? I wrote about it. And the,

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I was like, what the, I was like, these people think in poverty. They scared.

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

Listen, I'm sorry, but I'm, tell you what, thank God I'm Black and thank God I grew up in a hip hop generation. 'cause I don't even know No. Like, I don't even, and I'm an only child, so please, I'm like, you just, you're not gonna ask. You're just gonna keep, okay. And then I, I, I should, I should have named them in that essay <laugh>, because I knew who it was. I could see it like it was yesterday. But I could tell that like, my boldness and my insistence on getting what I want was like rubbing people the wrong way because they hadn't been able to get what they want. And that tends to happen with me even on a personal level. Like even in my personal life, if I'm in situ-, like if I'm in a relationship with somebody who's like, woe is me, I never get what I want. They usually, they don't hate me because they know that that's a bad idea.

**Misbah:**

<laugh>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

You don't wanna be around me. I mean, because you gonna get shit. Because I'm getting shit and I share.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Even though I'm the only child.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I always have shared, I don't like to sometimes <laugh> because I be feeling like, dang, nobody help me get, no, I'm joking. <laugh>. But, but they struggle with me because it's like, who does she think she is? I mean that's, I should get that tattooed on me 'cause it's literally a question that people ask me explicitly and implicitly all the time. And, and so yeah, I had the snap and it was like, I wanna say the snap was in block five and the blinds was there in seven. Like it was that soon. That's why I'm like

**Misbah:**

Come on <laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

It was that it, I swear it was like the old president was like, <laugh> every ID program gets up to two and a half 'cause I'm not dealing with this mess.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Now with support from the board and the dean of faculty, Sandy Wong at the time, because Sandy Wong was an affiliate of REMS.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And she understood it. And that that's not how you want to be. But you know, I think there was just a lack of clarity about where such money would come from. And, but that's why like sometimes you got a hoop and holler 'cause they going, no, no, no. And then they counting on you.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I, and I, I think Jill was a great president. We still have a relationship. I think Sandi was a great dean. We still have a relationship. But I'm telling you, regardless of how an individual thinks or feels that position, those positions bring about a, a poverty mindset. Sometimes there's like, if you ain't gonna ask then good <laugh>. A lot of administrators don't sit around thinking like, Hmm, what can I give you to make you better? You gotta damn near break the door down. I mean, I asked for time to work on an Oxford University press book and didn't get it. Who wouldn't gimme that? Why you not don't. But that's why your name will not be on the back of my shit when it come out. It ain't gonna say Colorado College just gonna say, Heidi Lewis is somebody's wife and mom and students is in her life. <laugh> like, it will not because you, but that role makes it hard to do that. But I've also seen administrators do that. My dissertation chair is a dean who thinks like that. She's always thinking about, from what I understand from her people, not just her.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I went to her celebration and people were approaching me to tell me that she is the kind of dean, and I'm not surprised, who thinks about what she can do to support people so that they do their best work and feel supported.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And get supported.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Why wouldn't you? I don't know. I mean that's just one-on-one, but whatever. So yeah, the lines came almost immediately.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And then we were supposed to have two and a half as well, but after Nadia came, she and I and some lingering affiliates at the time, I think Trisha Waters was directing the program at the time, thought we'd ask the dean if we could just keep the half to ourselves because we knew it was gonna be some, we wanted it to be a line focused on queer studies. And like she and I, we wanted the person to be committed to definitely intersectional analysis, but transnational, um, was something we were interested in still as well. And so therefore we knew that that person would probably be a person of color. And we were intent on aiding affirmative action in that way. <laugh> I don’t see that changing.

**Misbah:**

I mean, it benefits white women. We know this the most. Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know, so we were gonna do it the right way. <laugh>. And we did, and we'll probably do it again. No, I'm kidding. I don't know what we'll do. But we are committed to affirmative action. You know, the program. Are we allowed to say that?

**Misbah:**

I dunno. I dunno.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I don't care. In this climate, I get in trouble. But we, we knew that. So we didn't, we didn't think that a pre-tenure person of color

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Who would probably be queer.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Because that's how our field just shakes out. We didn't know if we wanted to build a relationship on that person's back. Even though we do have good relationships with other programs and departments. Like we would've had a bomb hire with Southwest studies or Film and Media studies. So I'm not saying we don't get along with anybody. It was just like we thought we could take care of that person and the dean agreed. So, and then of course other programs are like, shit, we should have did that <laugh>. I'm like, say y'all ask for shit. Y'all just take what you get. You don't throw a fit. Well, I don't either until, but I am going to, I mean, I will throw a fit, but what I think it was was that we had a serious, we done, we did serious thinking about that.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

We had a serious real rationale.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And It was convincing. Right?

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So we, so that's how we ended up with three wholes and most other people still have two and a half.

**Misbah:**

To me, the thread is still commitment.

**Dr. Lewis:**

It's commitment.

**Misbah:**

Commitment.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Right now, now that we're, hopefully Dr. Kumar will get tenure. I believe he will, but we know how things work. Then we can start thinking about getting Rileys and different

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know what I mean?

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

We just wanted to all grow up and get stable. <laugh> and shit..

**Misbah:**

Have big kid jobs.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

Okay. And so

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yes.

**Misbah:**

We haven't touched on this part as much, which is that you were um, one of the few Black chairs in a department.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yep.

**Misbah:**

One, you are one of the few departments with fully POC professors.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah

**Misbah:**

And so what were some surprising moments? What are some particularities not just in the regular way that we expect people to just tell us racist stuff.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Right, right, right, right, right. That happens.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Exactly.

**Misbah:**

But just like, what, what's unique?

**Dr. Lewis:**

<Laugh> <laugh>, I just thought of something. We got told that hiring a white person would be diversity for us.

**Misbah:**

Yeah, I bet. I bet.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And we of course we responded like, are you, listen, we think about diversity in multi-layered ways.

**Misbah:**

<Laugh>

**Dr. Lewis:**

So who cares what goes on in this house? This college is still.. please. So I don't wanna hear that mess. But we got told that, um, I tried to use, you know, to your point, uh, some years ago, 2018, I think it was, so five years ago, um, I tried to use the dearth of Black chairs as an example of anti-Black racism at the college when asked, okay. I was asked

**Misbah:**

 <Laugh>

**Dr. Lewis:**

 I was asked by Dr. Roger Worthington, who was doing the external review of the college on racism with his team. I was asked directly what my thinking was about various forms of racism at the college.

**Misbah**:

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I used your point, which is just a fact.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And was just, they just attempted to, to shut me up about it. You know, you, I can't, it's hard to center Black people at a place that doesn't think about that. You know, it's like, it makes it seem like I'm trying to like, take away from somebody else's stuff or to, you know, we get pitted against each other. It's easier here.

**Misbah:**

 Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

'Cause there are fewer of us.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So that's, those are some things, but the, but the, those are some things that happen that we're like, oh shoot. Like, oh, right. Like when you're doing that kind of thing, this is the, this is the kind of nonsense that comes as a result. But the, but the amazing thing is being one of the few, um, departments or programs in this field with all faculty of color, has been like such a great illustration of how it is largely intentional when that's not the case, in my opinion. So, so people can't tell me that anymore. Like when I do external reviews and look at departments and it's all white people, I'm like, well, no, I didn't do that

**Misbah:**

<Laugh>

**Dr. Lewis:**

We didn't do that. So why are you doing that? And they try to say, well, nobody Black, let's go please. We're in Colorado Springs. You act like we're in Iowa

**Misbah:**

Houston.

**Dr. Lewis:**

That's right. Like, right. Or Houston works so many. I mean, please. And then, then this tough market <laugh>, you can get anybody to come anywhere. No, I'm kidding. But, but, but it, but yeah, it hurts to be reminded of that. But it's the, the, the thing that feels powerful about it is that I feel like we, we set the tone and we became an example. And I've been told that, I mean, most of the time when people ask me to do external reviews, that is why

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

As they say, you know, you were collaboratively able to do X, Y, and Z and we want to learn how you did that at a PWI with feminist in the title. I mean, 40% of our majors and minor been students of color. One year I think we had 13 majors and nine were black. I'm like, please, I've done stuff by myself, <laugh>, and with other people that have never been done. But that's, and, and being here, and it wouldn't just be here, in my opinion. Right.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But this is where I am. Right.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Being here has made me not name that as much as I should have.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Where it's like, oh, you know, I'm like, no, no, no. That's what I did. I did that. And then there were lots of moments where we did that.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

And there are lots of moments when they got in my way and they got in our way. Right. So I'm just, it's been so good to know that that's possible to have a Feminist and Gender Studies Department with three people of color. It's unreal. It's, and and it's been, I mean, we have our issues, right? Like we are still Black and Brown people at a white school, a wealthy white school if that out in the middle of nowhere. Meaning that none of us is in a city that is populated to a large degree by any community we belong to. There are not a lot of Muslim people out here. There's not a lot of Black people out here. There's not a lot of, um, South Asian people out here. So we're isolated and we're at this kind of school, and it's small. So that hyper visibility and the loneliness and isolation has worn thin has, you know, we've, we've worn thin because of that. And a lot of times the impulse is to turn on each other. 'cause that's what you get taught to do. And we've had to fight that so hard, especially Dr. Guessous and I, because it was just us then for two years. You know what I mean? So, but we have, and so we have a testimony now that I think is gonna ring so many bells. I mean, she and I started an article a long time ago. We haven't finished it. Who knows if we ever will, but I would love to. I know she would too. But part of our goal this year is to be more vocal on the campus and off about what we did together so that we can share the story. Even if we don't get to write and publish this thing.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

We'd love to do that because then it lives forever. And we don't have to be around, people don't have to call us up and pay honorariums. They can just read the thing and share it along.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I tried to write about that to a degree in the expertise chapter, but it wasn't really the occasion for a lot of that.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But the way we had to work hard to, it is a, it is a testimony and under siege. I mean, under consistent assault from what felt like everybody and everywhere. So that's been the best thing about it. And being a Black chair is like, please. I mean, I love power because

**Misbah:**

<laugh> Who doesn't

**Dr. Lewis:**

I love to do so much with it you know what I mean? I'm like, I don't give jobs out. And I mean, think like, because what I've been saying, like, one of the things I didn't even mention is like all the work study positions in this house I made.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like the, you know, the faculty.

**Misbah:**

Thanks for my job.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Oh, here's please. But I'm just saying, you know, the faculty research grant, I done got that every year. Except last year was the first time I didn't get one since like 2011. The, the research teams I put together, I'm, I love power and resources because I love to share it with people that I know, or that I'm pretty sure it wouldn't get shared with any other way. You know what I mean? Like, I made that study abroad course and people were getting their first passports to take that. You tried to d that.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know what I mean?

**Misbah:**

I did end up getting my first passport.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You did end up getting it though. You know what I mean? You may not have been able to do that, but so what? You did it. Like, I can't tell you how many students that was the case. Like, I don't have a passport. I'm like, oh, well you gotta get that. You gotta get your passport. And then they get to go abroad for the first time. Like, I, everything I do is, you know, I would never pretend that it was wasn't for me, but I can't think of a thing I did that was just for me. Like even the book contract, that's not just for me, that's for like, I look at it like this. If people could see that I got a book contract with Oxford, the elitism of Oxford gets, uh, pushed back on. And I'm happy for that to happen at my - because I don't care.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

And also more people see like, oh, I can do that. Like I can do that. I'm happy to be that person. Like, doesn't make me, 'cause I know who I am, so it doesn't make me feel like less smart. I want that. Like even the screams and the snaps.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

That was for the people of color who think they can't say anything ever. They're not gonna come over here and do it the way I did it. 'cause they're not me. It wouldn't even work. I don't even advise it. I'm like, don't, don't, don't, don't do it my way. 'cause you going to get hurt. Fake it till you make it is dangerous. <laugh> Don't. 'Cause somebody will expose you and then you going to look silly. But if you see me do this, then you might be able to come from completely silent to at least a little over here.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I've been able to do more of that with them here. You know what I mean? I did a hell of a lot without them here, with them here? And having their support and having that collaborative energy? It was like, sky's the limit. And I felt like that for a long time. Like, I could do anything. Like I could. I, I mean, I still do, but I mean, like, it's not my turn now. <laugh>.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

 But like, I felt like there was nothing I couldn't do. It was like, oh my God, if I did this without them and now they're here?

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

Please. We're doing whatever we want all the time. And that's how it's felt for the past

**Misbah:**

 I love it.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Seven years? Eight, I don't know how many hell years they've been here. <laugh> as long as they've come, <laugh>. That's what it's felt like.

**Misbah:**

Okay.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah:**

You’ve kind of touched on this again.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Oh yeah.

**Misbah:**

But what have been some great moments of pride

**Dr. Lewis:**

Oh yeah.

**Misbah:**

Throughout your time here.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Oh my god. Dr. Guessous getting tenure was like, whew. I mean, it, it was huge because, you know, I never doubted that she would get it, but she'd been through things.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

We both been through things. So whenever we were able to, to achieve the things we set out to achieve, despite, that's always an amazing moment. Uh, I'm, I'm, I'm certain I'm gonna feel that way again when Dr. Kumar gets tenure. Just, I also, like I said, I know how things work. So, um, but he's, you know, hiring the both of them and them saying yes. And, you know, their partners being able to, um, stay on here in a full-time role so that they can be comfortable and happy as possible. And just knowing that that was, we did that. I mean, that was another thing. It was like, CC doesn't do spousal hires, even though it had, you know, we were like, okay.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Alright, well then I guess we'll find out.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Even though it had, but a lot of times it wasn't tenure track.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis :**

Like, It would be like, your partner can be like a full-time lecturer for the rest of their life. And we was like, that's not gonna work. That's not gonna work for us. I mean, I was told, I mean, no <laugh>, like, just the, the biggest pride I've had in FGS is doing everything I got told I couldn't do or that we couldn't do. I mean, and it's so much No, you're never gonna get another line. All right. You are never gonna <laugh>, we're never gonna be, we're never gonna be able to graduate a lot of majors. 'Cause before I got here, the <laugh>, speaking of the anniversary of the major before I got here, the department then program had declared five majors only two times. <laugh>, please. I was consistently 8, 9, 9, 8, 9. Please. Like, are you kidding me? And now that I'm back in the classroom full time, please like, don't, I don't. And these, and these people**.** Like I said, a lot of students of color, you know what I mean? And people say, oh, it has feminism, so you should probably change it. You know, the gender studies that way.

**Misbah:**

 <laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

 I'm like, I'm not changing nothing. I like the challenge.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And it gives me, you know, an opportunity to introduce students to things that they didn't necessarily know or they didn't know in this way. 'Cause you all have more access to the feminist discourse now 'cause of social media and stuff.

**Misbah:**

I still didn't though

**Dr. Lewis:**

But still.

**Misbah:**

Until I jumped in your classroom. And I was like, what is hip hop and feminism?

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. What is that? You know what I mean?

**Misbah:**

What is that?

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like how, you can do that?

**Misbah:**

Like,I know how gentrification works, but what is this now?

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know what I mean?

**Misbah:**

You know, and even throughout Covid, we have nine majors.

**Dr. Lewis:**

No, exactly. I know. We gotta we gotta figure out something's going on around here. But no, we haven't been able to be consistently together for a while. Like, this is our first year being together

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Since I think Dr. Kumar's first year before Covid.

**Misbah:**

Oh!

**Dr. Lewis:**

Because then he, we've just had these sabbaticals and these leaves and these different things. So I mean, we're hiring right now.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Again, a tenured person.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know, and who knows how that'll work out. It's hard to get somebody who already has tenure to come to a place like this because they're usually, I mean, it would be hard to get me with tenure to go somewhere else. I mean, it would be easier if it was like in the southern region, like in the geographical region that I'm interested in that. So, so I think it might be the case that if somebody has regional ties here, then that could be attractive. But when you have tenure, you have comfort and you know, the place, like when I think about leaving CC, one of the things that, that, one of the cons of leaving is that I know how this place works.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I'd have to go somewhere new and learn who is who. And the people gonna be the same. They just don't have different names. So then I gotta figure out who's who, what's what. And people don't tell you the truth at first. They usually put a costume on and where that for a while. And then it takes a while. 'cause you're excited and happy to be there and grateful. You know what I mean? I mean, I'm up for that challenge. But it is something that would be a challenge. Right?

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So we have to see what happens with this search. It could fail. And, and I'm saying that 'cause that's the language we use, not because I would see

**Misbah:**

No, no, yeah!

**Dr. Lewis:**

But it is exciting to do that. Right. To try to like attract somebody to come here and, and, and, and be with us and do cool stuff. And then the students of course, I mean, like the students for me it's, you know, for a long time I was like, oh, I don't know. I don't wanna do this anymore. 'cause like I'm getting older and the students are still young. And I mean, I started teaching college when I was 21 years old. So I was my student's age. 'Cause I started in my master's degree. And I got my master's when I was 21. I mean, my bachelor's degree when I was 21. So I started that year, that fall.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Then I got here I was 28.

**Misbah:**

Uhhuh <affirmative>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So I was like a big sister. Now I'm like, oh shit, I'm the mom.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I mean, it's, the good thing is that wealth, wealthy people or even rich people wait to have kids. So a lot of my students' parents are like my parents' age. But

**Misbah:**

Yeah,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Literally like the ones who come from a little bit more poverty. Like, I just met a student whose parents' younger than me and I was like, oh my God.

**Misbah:**

<laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis :**

Like, I'm 42, his mom is 39. I was like, holy shit, it's, this is it. This is the time. And my son is in college now. My daughter will be in college next year. So I'm like, I felt like that that, that that gap was growing too wide for me to know what to do about it. But it, I just needed time away to focus on other things. And now that I'm back, it's like, oh yeah. Like the students do stuff that never ceases to amaze me as much as they get on my nerves. Because why would somebody that young, much younger than me not get on my nerves? I mean, please, I'm sure I could get on y'all's nerves as well. But there are these moments like in Berlin where it's like, oh my God, they get it. Or they're trying to get, or they're asking these questions like they're still, they, they, they, they are following me into a new direction of like, we're, we're primarily focused on curiosity and inquisitiveness and not like solutions and answers. So whenever they're like committed to that, at least with me, you know, it's not for long. It's nice. You know what I mean? It, it feels really good 'cause, and I don't, and I'm not even one of these old people who has worries about the future. I'm just like, students get on my nerves. Like, you're 19 years old and we're at this liberal arts, you know what I mean? To the come they tell you. And you know, with you, I tell you about your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your partner about, you'd be like, oh my lord, I don't care. Nobody cares. But only because I've been there, done that and I'm so far removed that I often forget or have to be reminded about how things feel at the time. It's like, at the time you seen your capstone feels like it's the most important thing that you have going on. 'Cause maybe it is. Or, you know, your, your, your girlfriend breaking up with you feels like it's the worst thing that ever happened to you. 'Cause maybe it is. You know what I mean? Yeah. And I'm so past that. I'm like, oh, shut the hell up. But then I have to be like, okay, what now? But I've learned that students follow us everywhere we go almost. So, when I wanted students to focus more on what I was able to offer them intellectually and not just personally, they went, yeah. I mean it was a little rough, but it, they went. So it's like, okay, I just have to lead them where I want them to go. And also be open to listening to students

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

Tell me what they need that I may not understand. And having kids that age does help. That still means something to me. That students are, are excited about learning things and they get motivated and they're, but that's the best thing. I mean, FGS is just so different. I mean, we, I mean, I just, I love everything about it. And it didn't come easy. It came from struggle that sometimes I feel comfortable talking about. Sometimes I don't because it doesn't just involve me. So I don't always wanna share other people's stories without consent. But I just will say, like I said earlier, it has not been easy. It has not been like, we just gel and we get along and we're yelling. No. There have been times where I think each and every one of us thought, oh my God, like, how are we gonna get through this? And it was never anything like, major, major. It was just the, so much of what we were facing was so pronounced in our personal and professional lives that it felt like, whoa, we're supposed to get along. We're supposed to be friends. And I think we all decided that making this department now the best thing we possibly could, you know, as, as, as you know, making it the best we could was the most important thing. And that we'd have some laughs and cries along the way. So I'm just, yeah. Everything about it is, I can't think of a thing I'm not proud of. Literally. Not that we did.

**Misbah:**

 Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

You know, I, yeah. I just, you know, we'll, we'll work on, we'll keep working on things. But anyway, so that's, that's, that's that. We're not gonna, we're not gonna settle.

**Misbah:**

No.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But we're going to take a good chunk of time

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

To celebrate.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And just let things be.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Because things have been so rocky with Covid and everything that a lot of the changes that we made, we don't even know how they work. Like junior seminar, you know, of course we created, um, modeling Southwest Studies and their junior seminar. We were so impressed with their students. And the students talked a lot about that being a critical space for them. But goodness, by the time we started it, covid happened.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So we're just now even getting into a rhythm of understanding what it means to have a junior seminar. What the implications will be a senior seminar as well. Right. So we just need some time to breathe and relax. But it's us. So we're always gonna be thinking about the next thing. <laugh> not Dr. Guessous. She's like, I'm not <laugh>, Dr. Kumar's the worst. He's like, let's do this. I'm like, ah, <laugh>, I'm tired. No, I'm kidding. But no, he's got the fire. But then he takes a year long sabbatical if he gets tenure and we hire somebody new. Right. So we're always, we're always getting put in these positions where we have to like readjust. So I'm always like, we don't need to add it <laugh>. But then this is me who did all the things. I mean the website, I mean, please. So yeah, that's what I would say. I'm the intellectual scaffolding of the major. That to me is like

**Misbah:**

I still think it's another way that y'all showed like us how to be committed because

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah**

Because like it's one of the longest majors also.

**Dr. Lewis:**

It is.

**Misbah:**

And I was like

**Dr. Lewis:**

And we did that on purpose too.

**Misbah:**

Exactly. And that's what I

**Dr. Lewis:**

That’s not an accident.

**Misbah:**

That's what like

**Dr. Lewis:**

We might reduce it only because we have to think about it, but, but only because we, we, we set out to make a point and we feel like the point was made.

**Misbah:**

Yeah. And that made sense to me. 'Cause I was just like, yeah, if you want to be here

**Dr. Lewis:**

Be serious

**Misbah:**

You’ve gotta be here.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.

**Misbah**:

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And don't come telling me about your double major and all that stuff. 'Cause I don't care. I mean, I used to care so much. I'd be like, well let's get but, but, but, but we just had that conversation. We have to think about it and talk about it. And a lot of things we wouldn't dare do. And so we hired somebody. 'Cause we want them to feel as though they've been a part of, we wanna become something different when a new person comes. I learned that from Paul Buckley. Like, every time you hire somebody, you should intentionally become different. Like you shouldn't just try to fit them in to what you've been doing. So we don't wanna dare do anything major like that until they come. But we have talked about that. Yeah. Like, 'cause we just wanted to make sure that people were taking all of us. At various levels. Right. You're not only taking me at the 100, even though it kind of ended up being that way 'cause of my reduced teaching load. But now that I'm in it full time, that's all they talk about is like, well the students have to take you at the 300 level. The students have to take you at the 300 level. I mean, and I agree, but it just shows like how much we care about each other. Having a robust positionality in the program. Like, I didn't mind being the intro theory person. I was the best at recruitment for a long time. I felt like, you know, I mean, so I was like, that's where I need to be. You know what I mean? Is in that space. And if I was gonna be on a reduced load, I wanted to have like a really critical space in the program and to teach like high enrolled stuff, gateway stuff. So that it wasn't like I wasn't having the kind of impact that I wanted to still have. But now they're like, oh no, you need to get up there. I'm like, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. Okay. I'm up, I'm up.

**Misbah**:

 <Laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And now Dr. Guessous is doing the, uh, CC100. Like I did that every year except last year for like 10 years. And now, and her in it now. I mean, everything just makes sense. It's like when we talk about what she's doing in there and she's workshop things with me, 'cause she knows I've taught it. I'm like, yo, this is intro. Like this is a great way for a student to enter college, you know, by asking these meta questions, these conceptual questions and not sort of focusing on like the, you know, nitty gritty necessarily, but not, not that, but just focusing on ideas and questions and frameworks and how. Like that's a great way to introduce a student to college. Which doesn't mean, I don't think mine was.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

 And she doesn't think mine wasn't either.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But it's like we're all just kind of like, it just, it it, that's what I'm proud of is like that we are allowing each other to change and grow and be different and supporting each other and doing that.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And who could ask for a better department? I just don't wanna make it romantic. 'Cause I've literally heard

**Misbah:**

 <Laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

People have said to me like, our department, we love each other. We love, and then I've had people in that same department. Like, I hate everybody in here. You know what I mean? I don't wanna be fake like that. Like I just, we don't fight all the time. Like we are laughing and talking and chatting constantly. But I just want, it was not, we worked hard for that. Like, we fought for that. That was not certainly given to us, nor was it nurtured by anybody outside of these walls. Nobody cared about us working together well and helping us figure out how to do that. In fact, some people was rooting for our downfall.

**Misbah:**

That's what I was-.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. Like I, I have a colleague, a white colleague, we have a white colleague here who I actually, we cool. Like, we don't even have no problems. We never even had a argument. Who said, um, in relation to some of us had gotten into some stuff like we wanted to get along. And he said, I mean, I guess one could look at it like, you know, that you, you wanted all these faculty of color and now you can't even get along. I was like, you are so racist. <laugh>. Like, do all y'all get along? 'Cause if I'm not mistaken, I heard that a white male colleague threw a chair at another one of y'all. See, I ain't even threw No. Y'all I said was fuck you. I could have threw it more than a, I could have threw a chair and then some. I didn't even do that. But see, everything they do is normalized.

**Misbah**:

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

We get, we're under a microscope. 'cause it's only a handful of us. But yeah. So no, it wasn't, I'm glad you, you, it wasn't, it wasn't just that people didn't help us learn how to do that. It was that they actually rooted against it and were cheering. And being like, told you. So I'm like, I don't care if you, I I I don't care if you hire 30 black people and I don't like nine of 'em. So what? They still need to be hired in a hurry. Yeah. And retained.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And I'm sure Santiago feels the same way about Chicano. We don't need to get along. We don't. But it would be nice if we didn't not get along, if, if, if our not being, you know, friends or not get along wasn't so pronounced because there's only two of us or however many at the time. That's what the problem is. Hell, if I went to a HBCU, I'm not liking half of them and half of 'em ain't liking me. Oh well I don't care. 'cause there's so many other black people. I've got a group.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

<Laugh> and the students go through this mess too.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

That's why I'm so proud of y'all. That was a pride that teach-in because it showed that that kind of solidarity can be done. Regardless of the intracommunal conflicts and intercommunal conflicts that we have. That's what can come out of it too. Not just the fighting over these little resources that we all these little pieces of pie. But we gonna do that too. We gonna fight again. Okay. Now I want you to know the Black students and the Asian student will be into in six months. No <laugh> might not be six. NASU and SOMOS will be-

**Misbah:**

 That's an age old.

**Dr. Lewis:**

It's an age old. We're not gonna settle that debate.

**Misbah:**

Age Old.

**Dr. Lewis:**

That's what we built.

**Misbah:**

But here we are.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Here we are

**Misbah:**

An Asian and a Black,

**Dr. Lewis:**

An Asian and a Black

**Misbah:**

<Laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

A Muslim and a Christian

**Misbah:**

They're gonna say it in these exact words like <laugh>

**Dr. Lewis:**

An Older and a young.

**Misbah:**

And a trans and a straight.

**Dr. Lewis:**

I was gonna say, I wasn't gonna go there because I know how you might feel about it getting out there. But I was gonna say a cis and a nonbine

**Misbah:**

<laugh>.

**Dr. Lewis:**

A het and a queer.

**Misbah:**

They’re gonna say it. They're gonna say it. And yet we're gonna be here

**Dr. Lewis:**

And we're gonna be here doing it.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Okay. Last question. My God. Oh, I don't have any hopes

**Misbah:**

Hopes and dreams. What are your hopes and dreams for the department, long term, short term. What do you want to see? 'Cause for now you're here.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah!

**Misbah:**

I, I hope you're here.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah.I've seen it. Yeah. But for now, I don't care if I'm here or not. I hope that it is. I hope, you know what? I'm well. Number one, I do hope that all the faculty in it, including me, but not only me, and whether I'm here or not, see it as a space of support and care. Even when the institution may not be willing or able to provide that or the world. Right? Like I want every adult faculty person and staff person to, to feel like this is where their support is. Even when there's disagreement. Even when there's whatever. I know I have. Um, especially as of late, like, I want it to be like, you know, you're getting celebrated. You're getting every little thing you do. I mean, I'm the one who started posting all that news item. I'm like, everything everybody do because you know, somebody told me when I got here, you know, don't talk about your accomplishments. 'cause this is a school that values humility. And I was like, oh, that's, I'm very hip hop generation. I'm the greatest to ever walk the fucking campus. And if you think that I'm not gonna make that known, it should bother you. And if it bothers you, you better. I don't know what you better do, but

**Misbah:**

Something

**Dr. Lewis:**

I hope you feel that way, but you better have some receipts. 'Cause I got receipts. Now look here. I'm not just saying it the best. This is not aspirational. It starts out that way. But fake it till you make it got an expiration date in my room.

**Misbah:**

<laugh>

**Dr. Lewis:**

Ain’t gonna be no faking it for too long. It's gonna be real.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But I want, I started that for that. Like, I want people, every little thing, Nadia, it's something she would do. Oh, that's not it. What we're celebrating it. We're making it a news item. Students, you got this internship, we're gonna put it in a news item because I want that for all of us. Because we don't get that often out here in this world. Especially in a place where, like I said, the majority of us are not able to be in close community with our communities, our chosen communities and given one. So I want this one. We ain't gotta be friends, but we going to clap <laugh> and we gonna celebrate and we are going to support. Like if you're struggling with course evaluations, we could talk about that with no shame. We could talk about that without you worrying about somebody putting something nasty in your, in your tenure letter to bring you down. You know what I mean? Just because you might have struggled with a course, you know, that was new. You know, no students as well. You know, um, accountability is, is, is, is is what I, is what I want. Like all of that with accountability. That's the, literally, and I want the students to see it as a place where, where, uh, where they trust it.

**Misbah:**

Mm.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Because there was a time when, you know, I was asking for a lot of trust from students and I'm, I have to look parents in the face who are like, look, my child is Black and from Little Rock, Arkansas talking about majoring in Feminist and Gender Studies. Could you explain to me, you know, what, what can they do with that? I don't even know what they could do with that. And that's a real question. And it's legitimate. And I had the same questions about my own self as a student. I want that level of trust. Like we, we, we don't have a magic wand. We can make no guarantees. We're not God, I said the GOAT not God. <laugh>. I know the difference. One's an animal. <laugh> one's an animal acronym. But I do hope that more and more students go back to this time of like, seeing this study as critical to their lives. Even if they feel like they already know it's 'cause I'm already of color. I'm already queer. I already know. I don't need that. I already know. Like, I want that. Like that's what I, even for like REMS and Southwest studies and stuff, right? Like I want students to see those areas as critical to who they are as a person, but also as an intellectual. And I want them to see us as intellectuals so we can help them become intellectuals. Not necessarily professors, right. <laugh>, but great. It is for some, you know what I mean? But I want them to see FGS and all the other interdisciplinary programs too as a space where they can become who they wanna be and get the kind of support and guidance it takes to, to get them to, to that next step. I don't wanna only be the person students come to when, you know, white students do bad. Or when white faculty say something on purpose or accidentally, right.

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

'm fine. I'm like, I can't even say it. <laugh>,I'm fine. <laugh>. But really, I think that just like reduces us to like these, these roles that don't capture the expansiveness of our humanity and our professional abilities. And I wanna be that again. Like I, I wanna be that person where it's like, oh, Dr. Lewis can help you write like she's good. So she can help. And then, and if in that meeting you wanna bring up the faculty member thing, you can, it may not be the time she wants to hear and talk about it.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But, It's not like you never can. You know what I mean? Yeah. So I want this Black and Brown students at CC as a whole to start working together so they can work they shit out even though there will be no solutions necessarily and no settling of debates.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And then do solidarity with one another and then build their intellectual capacity in collaboration with the faculty who I almost would guarantee that most of us dreamed of that.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**Dr. Lewis:**

Like, oh, I wanna be a professor so these young people can <laugh>. You know what I mean? And so I wanna, I wanna see that. I wanna hear, talk about the racism, fight, the homophobia, all that, all that, all that sure.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But I think one powerful way to do that is to become the intellects we all sought to be when we entered into this space period.

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

Any one of it. We could have went and did anything. We all went to college.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

And we all and you all came to liberal arts one. Yeah. Even though you may not, a lot of students are. I didn't even know what that meant. I just know I, they sent me a mail.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis :**

And I applied to the mail.

**Misbah:**

They flew me out. I was like

**Dr. Lewis:**

Flew me down and gave me a full ride so

**Misbah:**

Yeah

**Dr. Lewis:**

I Dddn't know liberal arts. I'm like, okay, well at some point motherfucker, you heard liberal arts and that means thinking, thinking, thinking, reading, reading, reading, discussing stuff. Is it vision building, vision building. Like all this. If what I did, if what I've done as a, as a transformative and collaborative leader in FGS looks good to anybody, it's because I had a vision first and foremost before I started doing anything. I was like, oh, okay. This is what I want. And this how, and talking to people who've done similar things and learned

**Misbah:**

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

**Dr. Lewis:**

It's okay to take the time to do that. Everything does not have to be an urgent action. Sometimes it does.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So that's what I, that would be my dream for like, the students who we all really do this for, is to like maximize those relationships and opportunities to be able to build a vision for themselves to become whatever the hell they wanna become, um, through this avenue.

**Misbah:**

Right.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yeah. You're gonna become a lot of things, but

**Misbah:**

Yeah. <laugh>

**Dr. Lewis:**

Came here to become something, right?

**Misbah**:

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

A thinker that's, and I want us to be

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

Who they see as, um, part of the community that can help them with that. Not the only ones.

**Misbah:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

But part of that, the students of color as well. Right. It's not just the white students who need us to fix them. I can't, first of all, no <laugh>. No, I can't fix anyone. I can't even fix me.

**Misbah**:

Yeah.

**Dr. Lewis:**

So, yeah, that's, that's it. I could say a million other things, but that's what I feel comfortable saying right now. <laugh>. I'm like, did I miss anything?

**Misbah:**

No, I think you did it, imperfectly perfect!

**Dr. Lewis:**

Yay. Yeah. Imperfectly di- I, I think so too.

**Misbah**:

Yeah!

**End of Video**