

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT
PODCAST SERIES:
CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINIST VOICES**

SITE: USA

**Transcript of Abby Dumes
Interviewer: Abby Stewart**

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Intro: This podcast series, *Contextualizing Feminist Voices*, is designed to provide background information for people using the Global Feminisms Project website. The podcasts aim to provide users with a well-informed perspective on interesting aspects of the interviews from a particular country. For each episode one of the project staff interviews an expert on that country site.

Abby Stewart: Welcome to this episode of Contextualizing Feminist Voices. My name is Abby Stewart. In this episode, I'm talking with my women's and gender studies colleague and medical anthropologist, Professor Abby Dumes, who will provide a perspective on recent interviews on Long Covid advocacy in the United States. Because we have limited time, I'll get right to my questions. Thank you, Abby, for doing this interview.

Abby Dumes: Thanks for having me.

AS: I wonder if you could tell us one or two themes that come up in the interviews the users should pay close attention to because those themes are especially important in Long Covid advocacy in the US.

AD: That's a good question. One thing that is particularly salient is that of self-care, and the strategies for recovery that the interviewees and other people with Long Covid use in the context of lack of medical knowledge about the condition. Since each interviewee suffers from or has suffered from Long Covid in some way, one commonality across the interviews is that, in addition to their advocacy, the interviewees are simultaneously caring for themselves, which often include setting limits on how much they are able to do, and what interviewee and co-founder of Patient-Led Research Collaborative Lisa McCorkell referred to as 'radical rest.' For example, take Chimère Smith. She's a Baltimore-based, Long Covid advocate, and former middle school teacher. She got sick with Covid in March 2020, and has been raising awareness about the importance of Black voices in conversations about Long Covid since June 2020. For Chimère, her ability to feel well enough to function, let alone advocate for herself and others, really hinges on rest. I want to read her quotation here because it's illuminating. She explained to me, "In order for me to be present, I have to rest. Let me say it like this: Resting has become my primary job. What I've learned how to do is make resting my number one priority, even to the dismay of family, friends, loved ones and people who just have that idea of going going going. I can't afford to do that, because if I go go go, I will be sick for days or weeks or months at a time."

Another important theme in these interviews is that of health and disability justice. Interviewee Donna Murphey, a neurologist, neuroscientist and community organizer, actually links self-care with justice when she explained that in trying to be better at self-care she has also been thinking about how "we integrate those practices into healing justice frameworks, since injustice has actually become embodied." So across this range of experiences and backgrounds, each of the interviewees touched on the relationship between Long Covid and persistent structural inequalities and the urgent need of interventions oriented toward health and disability justice.

AS: Thank you so much for that, Abby. It's very illuminating. I wonder, I think perhaps your last comment maybe moves us in this direction. But I wonder if you could clarify a little bit

more something about the feminist aspect of Long Covid advocacy in the US. And perhaps in these advocates' work.

AD: That's a great question, because Long Covid, or the persistence of often disabling symptoms after the acute phase of COVID-19 is over, may not seem like an explicitly feminist issue. Interestingly all of the interviewees identify as feminists, but beyond that, Long Covid advocacy, as it's fleshed out in the interviews, is rooted in the feminist practice of grassroots, collective action, and mutual aid. Each of the interviewees also described an intersectional approach to Long Covid that takes into account gender, race, class, and sexuality among others. And the last thing I'll mention is an insight from JD Davids. JD is a queer and trans person who created the "Cranky Queer Guide to Chronic Illness," and also co-founded the Network for Long Covid Justice. JD said that understanding pandemics are chronic, is a feminist pursuit. So here the idea that Covid can be chronic, as JD understands it, disrupts the binary between death and health, and is really fundamentally feminist. This is an important insight.

AS: Very helpful, Abby. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

AD: You know, I'd like to thank each of the interviewees again for participating in the Global Feminisms Project. Taking the time to share a life story is an incredible act of generosity. And it's even more so when you're feeling unwell and struggling with health issues. I'm grateful that these interviews on Long Covid advocacy are now part of the Global Feminisms Project's archive, and that a range of audiences will be able to learn from the interviewees' experiences.

AS: Thank you, Abby. You have illuminated the self-sacrificing nature of this work. And I want to thank *you* for providing these interviews to the Global Feminisms Project. A very important addition.

AD: Thanks Abby. I appreciate it.

Outro: Thank you for listening to this episode of *Contextualizing Feminist Voices* created by the Global Feminisms Project. The entire podcast team hopes it will help you understand and enjoy the materials on the website. If you liked this episode, check out the other podcasts in this series, as well as materials about countries, teaching resources, and interviews.