SLF Portolan Project
Interview with Nalo Hopkinson, Andrea Hairston, and Sheree Renée Thomas
Los Angeles, California, 2019

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Hi everybody, this is Mary Anne Mohanraj, and I'm here at the World Fantasy Convention 2019 in Los Angeles. I'm here with Nalo Hopkinson, Andrea Hairston, and Sheree Renée Thomas, really delighted to be interviewing them for the SLF.

So, I thought we would start with how I first got to know all of you and your work. I think the first one was Nalo Hopkinson. I met Nalo at WisCon, it would have been, I want to say around 1997-98, when WisCon was making a real effort to do outreach to people of color, and they had actually invited me to come, and I was a starving grad student at the time, and said I couldn't possibly fly from California all the way to Madison. And they had covered my expenses to attend the convention. And I got there, and there were five people of color, at the seven –

Andrea Hairston: That was a good year. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah, at the 700-something person convention. So they had an issue, which they were trying to address. And Nalo was one of them. Does that match up with your memory? And, I don't know, was that your first WisCon as well, or?

Nalo Hopkinson: My first WisCon was right after Clarion, and I did Clarion in ‘95, so it was probably a few years before.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: A little before, then.

Nalo Hopkinson: I think I knew who you were before then.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Maybe? I had done Clarion in ‘97 – Clarion West – I had been writing for a little while, but in erotica, not science fiction.

Nalo Hopkinson: And naturally I was reading it! *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And then, I can't remember when *Brown Girl in the Ring* came out –

Nalo Hopkinson: ’98? 1998 *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So, around the time I met you, then! I honestly, I can't remember whether I had read the book or not at the time that I met you. I have since read all of your books. And so, at the time, I read *Brown Girl in the Ring* which has, like, organ-snatching in the streets of Toronto, cyberpunk youth stuff, and I hadn't read anything like it. I loved it. Not as much as I would grow to love *Midnight Robber*, which I think is maybe still my favorite. But we’ll, maybe we'll get to that. So – and then – I want to go in order. I think I became aware of Sheree's work next. Because I – when did *Dark Matter* come out, the first one?

Andrea Hairston: 2000.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: 2000. You guys are good with the dates. I am not, my students mock me for this. *[laughter]* So, in 2000, so two years later, *Dark Matter* came out, which was this anthology of, I don’t know how to say, I would say –

Andrea Hairston: Stories from the African diaspora, that are speculative stories –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Stories from – But it's American only?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, no, no, no, no!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Or it was throughout. Yes. Okay. So –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, yeah!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Nice, nice. So, a century of African diaspora –

Sheree Renée Thomas: UK as well.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: – speculative fiction, and it was amazing. I really think it was a groundbreaking piece of work. And I remember, I had conversations, then and a little bit later with other

editors in the field, who were saying that when they first heard about the book, they were like, “Oh, is this necessary? Is this useful? Is there really anything sort of interesting about bringing these texts – these authors together?” But then they read it and they thought it was incredibly useful. And that just really, they were – they said “No, she really kind of redefined something and brought stuff to light” that they had not been aware of –

Sheree Renée Thomas: That’s so insane to me that someone even would question that it was useful.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. Useful to whom? *[laughter]* To whom?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Considering the number of anthologies that have been put together over the canon. That is fascinating to me. But that jives with how I felt –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. We can talk some more later about – *[laughter]* Did you, when you were bringing this anthology to – who was the publisher on that?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Betsy Mitchell at Warner Aspect.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right. Was it a project to convince her of this? Or she was just on board –

Sheree Renée Thomas: No, she was on board.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That’s great.

Andrea Hairston: She, yeah, she wanted –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, she was really supportive from the beginning. Yeah,

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That’s terrific. And so there was *Dark Matter* and *Dark Matter II*. And I think it was many years after that before I actually met you in person. Right. So, at some con down the line. And then I also, I think, I think I met Andrea at WisCon as well, probably. Because we both go to it pretty often.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And just, for those who don't know, WisCon is the first feminist science fiction convention. And it's held in Madison, Wisconsin over Memorial Day weekend, every year. And it's one of my favorite cons. It has had some struggles and growing pains over the last couple decades.

Andrea Hairston: Like everything else.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah, yeah. And I think –

Andrea Hairston: And doing, you know, doing what they can do –

Nalo Hopkinson: Life is growth.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yes, it's – growth is not often painless, right.

And I remember what I was first struck by was, you know, I don't usually – I have to admit I don't go to readings a lot because I – I'm now putting this down to my ADHD, recently diagnosed – but I have a hard time sitting still through readings, I find it really, really challenging. I also find plays challenging and concerts and whatever. And – but somehow someone convinced me – "Go see Andrea Hairston read!" *[laughter]* and I went, and I was blown away, because it was so performative. And it was so – and you are both a writer and a theatre person, is that a fair – ? And a professor of drama at?

Andrea Hairston: Smith, at Smith College.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: At Smith College. And I think you bring all of that to it. And it was, I think only after I saw you perform that – and did all the voices, and! *[laughter]* – that I went and read some of your work. And I think, trying to think what my favorite is, probably *Redwood and Wildfire*, although it's hard to pick, which I teach in some of my classes. I love the way it takes the – you know, it starts with this sort of magical – magical realist, is that fair? But some, some sort of magical element to Black Southern history, is that like a fair –?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And, and with this very violent material – there's a lynching early in the book – and then – but [it] moves from there through with a kind of time travel element to the beginning of the film industry in Chicago. It covers a lot of ground very smoothly, and ties things together that I would not have thought to bring together. So. Anyway, there's a little intro to their work, you should go read it all.

And I was just delighted to suddenly discover that they were going to be here because I never get to get these women in a room together! *[laughter]* It's awesome. Usually, I'd see one or the other at different cons. So, what I was going to ask, with this 20-something year perspective, if you could all talk just a little about where the field was, maybe, when you came into it, where our genre was and changes you've seen. And we can – I can be more specific, but maybe we'll start there. So – anyone want to go first?

Nalo Hopkinson: Well, talking about Sheree's anthology, the first one, the first *Dark Matter*, I mean, part of what was so groundbreaking about it was that it was also a retrospective, and at the time, Sheree coming out and saying, look, Black people have been writing –

Andrea Hairston: We've been here for a LONG time!

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes. And here's the evidence – was, was groundbreaking, because you still had this idea that Black people weren't reading science fiction or fantasy, much less writing it. Black people didn't like intellectual pursuits at all.

Andrea Hairston: No.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Or there were exceptions. Right. I think the editors I talked to about this, I think what they were saying was that they – You know, they obviously knew about Octavia Butler, and Delaney, Steven Barnes, Tananarive Due, and they thought that was where it started. And I think your book made it

very clear that it has been around for a long, long time. Right?

Nalo Hopkinson: Right.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah, it reminds me of Joanna Russ in *How to Write Like a Woman,* when she says, you know, if they acknowledge that you can write, it's because you're an exception, right?

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Andrea Hairston: You don't belong to a community of people thinking the way you think, the way the rest of us do. You are just some anomaly.

But I remember, because I was at Clarion with Sheree, and Nisi Shawl gave me a copy of *Brown Girl in the Ring.* And so I remember, you know, she just said, “You must have this book!” and I'm like, “Why? Okay!” you know, so go Nisi! And so of course I read it that night. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And you were attending Clarion, both of you?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, we attended Clarion in 1999.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Oh, okay.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. So it's all around this time. And so, then we went to the reading in New York and saw, with another dear writer who was at Clarion with us, Ama Patterson, we went to the reading and that's – I mean, literally, it wasn't too long after, I think it was like 2000, that I went to the reading and you were in – there weren't that many of us there. It was just like, we were in this little dark room –

Nalo Hopkinson: – small bookstore in New York?

Andrea Hairston: Yes. Something or, or a little theater or, you know, it was –

Nalo Hopkinson: Something, but I remember you introducing yourselves to me.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. And then, yeah, *[laughter]* right, we were in this little room, and I was like, “Wow.” You know? *[laughter]* So I think one of the positive things I could say about the 20 years in between these events is that I, you know, more and more people, that I have come in contact with, not that they weren't – they were always there. But now more and more people come together and partly I think it has to do with *Dark Matter* and *Brown Girl in the Ring*. Because you made community with a book, just, you know, like you said, “We're all here, we've been here, and we can talk to one another.” And we're not alone. Steve Barnes said to me yesterday on a panel, that he does not feel alone anymore, you know? Yeah. Okay. So that's, that's the 20 years and it starts, you know, Tananarive Due said that *Dark Matter* just made a difference to her because she can see all the other writers who were there now and in the past, so it gave you a sense of belonging to yourself, right, as well as to other people. And that book really did it, and then *Brown Girl in the Ring* was like, “Oh, okay, I see why Nisi gave this to me!” *[laughter]* And then, of course, I'm connected to Nisi for the 20 years too, so it was just a whole gathering of forces that kind of starts with these amazing visions that you all put out.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I'm almost envious of you, because I feel like I'm still, I’m 20 years in, and there are a few other South Asian writers in the field. There's Vandana Singh and Anil Menon, who were there when I started, and others have come in since then. But I think we're only now – like, no one has done that kind of book yet. Cecilia Tan and I talked about doing an Asian speculative lit – East Asian and South Asian, we didn't think anyone would go for one or the other. And we talked to an editor at maybe DAW – it might have been DAW, might have been Betsy even – who was interested, but then, I can't remember, there was some – it wouldn't have been Betsy. It would’ve been somebody else, because it was somebody who then moved to a different house. So the project got orphaned. And then we tried

again, and it just did not seem that there was a lot of interest and –

Sheree Renée Thomas: How about [unclear name]'s project?

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I'm not sure, I don't know what [unclear name]'s working on right now.

Nalo Hopkinson: [another unclear name]?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, [unclear name] – the anthology where –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Oh, this is recent, it's very recent. So I haven't read that one yet. And there are things very recently, but I think it's that – Gollancz has just come out with a book of South Asian science fiction, and so there's, there's stuff, but – *Brown Girl* was 20 years ago, *Brown Girl* and *Dark Matter* were 20 years ago, so you had a long – Like we're now seeing the fruits of that 20 years of work. I'm listening to this podcast, Bad Brown Aunties, which is super great –

Nalo Hopkinson: That's wonderful!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. It's queer South Asian arts people, not all writers, like all kinds of music, etc and so on. But I keep being really sad, listening to it, because they are younger than me and they're growing up in a community and it does make me feel, like, super lonely. Right? Like, it casts me back to that time. So I'm with Steven, I'm like, you know, it's great. It's great that this community is emerging. Because I have to, you know, you think about what – you had that essay at the end of *Dark Matter* from Chip Delaney, where he talked about, he was going up at the Nebula Awards, I think, and he was going up to get his second or third Nebula of the night and his friend Isaac – Isaac Asimov? I don't want to get this wrong – I think it was Isaac Asimov.

Nalo Hopkinson: It was Isaac Asimov.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Asimov said to him, "You know, Chip, we only gave that to you because you're Black." Right? And –

Nalo Hopkinson: He said “a negro,” actually.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: A negro, is that what he said? Ugh –

Nalo Hopkinson: And he said it in front of the mic, but he was trying to make light of it.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: He was trying to make light of it, right?

Andrea Hairston: It was a joke, supposedly.

Nalo Hopkinson: Because other people were very upset.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. And it's one of those things where it's this, like – and Chip talks about it in the essay, like, he understood that Asimov was trying to defuse tension, etc and so on. And at the same time, the fact that he had to say it, right?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It must have been a terribly lonely time, right. So, alright, that's, that's super sad.

So, as things have changed, I hope. For your work, you did *Dark Matter*, and the follow up, *Dark Matter II*. And then – what have – what other sorts of things have you been working on? And where have you been, what kinds of community maybe have you been engaged in, in this time?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Okay, 20 years, my 20 years. It’s been 20 years, okay – for me, a lot has changed and a lot hasn’t. There’s still this sense that you're interlopers of a party or conversation that you weren't exactly invited to. That was very much the sense that I got in ’99, in 2000 when we did the book. The idea that somehow you are needing to be introduced to the genre, and that you haven't been reading the genre or a part of it or supporting it –

Andrea Hairston: Or *developed* the genre, as it developed through the 20th century, right?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I went to my first Star Trek mini-con when I was 10 years old in 1981. *[laughter]* You know, so – I've been a geek for a long time!

Sheree Renée Thomas: Or supporting the authors and the publishing companies!

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, right! You are part of developing the genre. Period. No guests, no nothing, just at the center.

Sheree Renée Thomas: So this is, this hyper – you know, you're invisible but then there's this hyper-visibility as well. So you're not present, if you're not physically in the space, but when you are physically in the space, you're invisible as well, you know what I mean? So that dynamic I don't think has changed very much, because the system, you know, the publishing industry hasn't changed a great deal. Advances are lower! *[laughter]*

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah, there's been that.

Sheree Renée Thomas: They're giving you a third of it at a time, you know, so those things have changed. We now know what digital rights are, you know?

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: When you say the industry hasn't changed, do you think – I mean, it's obviously changed in ways with the collapse of the distribution systems and so on, there are some big structural changes, but you're talking about things like – The same people are in power –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I'm talking about how writers are –

Andrea Hairston: Are treated.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, how writers from marginalized communities are treated and discussed. That's what I mean, and how –

Andrea Hairston: So you still have the exceptions, right?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, yeah –

Andrea Hairston: So you want to point to some, you know, okay – N. K. Jemisen! – and that's like – Octavia Butler! or – Nalo Hopkinson– you know, so you have like the one or two you know – Nnedi Okorafor! and then –

Nalo Hopkinson: And so you remove some –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, and then but – I mean, you know, but what about all the people who are also writing, and then they disappear because there's those who are famous. And if you were as good as them, you'd be famous. So we don't have to pay any attention to you, almost, you know, because you're not exceptional.

Sheree Renée Thomas: That's what mean, that's what I mean. How writers are being treated in the field and how they're discussed in the field. And, in a way, also how they're marketed. So that is not necessarily something that I can see is – When I go online, and I still see people talking about inclusion, and they're still having to have panels about diversity. And there's like slogans and logos and –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: "We need diverse books," I mean –

Sheree Renée Thomas: And that tells me that that the institution hasn't changed yet, because if it were solving the problem, it would be a moot point.

Andrea Hairston: We would be asking different questions, we would be doing other stuff.

Sheree Renée Thomas: We would have other conversations and things that we're working on. But that's the same conversation that was happening when Walter Mosley and I were on the PEN Open Book Committee, you know, which was, the goal was to try to get more Black people in publishing. Get more, you know –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: But that does seem like that would be, like one step is to get more Black editors, more Black publishers. Has that been happening? Do you think? More Black agents?

Nalo Hopkinson: I think in the independents –

Sheree Renée Thomas: In the 20 years? Yeah, I think there have been, there are more people, but it's –

Andrea Hairston: But not more power.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yes. *[laughter]* And also there is still, that "there can only be one" mentality. So there's one. There's one.

Andrea Hairston: Or two, you can have two.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I haven't seen the two. I've seen one! *[laughter]* I've seen the one! *[laughter]* I remember when they used to be afraid to have, like, a Black editor AND a Black assistant, you know, because now you're cut off from information – you've got to have someone in between, that can go and get the watercooler information, stuff that you're not going to get, necessarily, because there is a – there is that block. So that part of it, eh, not so exciting. What is exciting, and I think now is wonderful, is that we can talk about more living, contemporary authors, who are –

Andrea Hairston: Right. So this community is –

Sheree Renée Thomas: – creating short stories and novels, and works –

Andrea Hairston: Comics – films – and games –

Sheree Renée Thomas: We can talk about far more people now –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah –

Sheree Renée Thomas: – than we could when we first started the *Dark Matter* anthologies. And people are doing – they're in the mainstream houses and they're also in the independent presses. And they're self-publishing, and all this stuff is happening.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: You mentioned comics, games, and films. I'm sorry, did I cut you off? I didn't – You say things that I get excited about and want to respond to! *[laughter]* So, you mentioned comics, games, and films, and obviously, *Black Panther,* and just there's massive stuff happening in that area. But, you know, we're all primarily in the book world, right? Do you feel like there's a big difference in like, there's just more space for Black writers and Black artists and Black, Black work in comics or film or games than in literature? Than in fiction?

Nalo Hopkinson: I think the digitization of publishing has meant that there's more ability for people to sort of make their own work and get it out there, or start small presses and get it out there.

Sheree Renée Thomas: And connect to audiences.

Nalo Hopkinson: And connect to audiences, yeah.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, to find who is interested in what they're doing.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah, there are still huge gaps, but –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And maybe some mediums, like comics is very visual, easy to put on the web, to start finding your audience, whereas a novel –

Sheree Renée Thomas: A little harder. And especially, I think there's always the big specter of distribution, you know, but with, you know, with the online communities, people are able to – sort of almost like what mixtapes used to do, and now what streaming is doing, now people are creating their own content, and going straight to the, you know, built in communities where they can get some traction and build the audience and everything. So they're working outside of the system that hasn't quite changed, and has only seemed able to comprehend one or two of us at a time. *[laughter]* So people are forced to, if they want to be artists, to work outside that –

Andrea Hairston: Well, they're creatives, so they find a way, they make a way.

Sheree Renée Thomas: They're creative, yeah. They do it outside and maybe it gets picked up.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's a lot of additional work, right. *[laughter]* You know, like, you've got to do your marketing, you've got to, like – and you've got to be developing new distribution systems. Right. So it does put a lot on people and I think some writers –

Andrea Hairston: Some people get tired of that.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Some people have the mentality to do that. I mean, I'm trying to indie-publish a book right now. And it's like, I'm having to learn a lot. I've been a writer for 25 years –

Sheree Renée Thomas: And that's changed –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And now I'm like, there's so much I don't know about publishing, right. And I have a lot of friends who are indie – doing like, they're not even doing print, right? They're going direct to digital. They're only doing digital because the costs are so much lower. And in some ways, that's great. They're finding audience, they are having some income, but I do worry that they are, at the same time, maybe they don't realize that they are segregating themselves from the, the awards conversation and the conversation about who gets taught in college classrooms. And – do you know what I mean? I worry about a, like a two-tier setup. And I'm seeing this a lot in like, international writings, right? My friends in Sri Lanka and so on, they're like, you know, "There's no space for us in the western publishing industry. That's fine. We don't need them. We'll go off here." And I don't want to see us divide, like have these towers, these different bubbles where we're not interacting because I think it impoverishes –

Andrea Hairston: The artists as well as the audience.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: You know, and it means that, you know, who might –

Andrea Hairston: I would like to read them, right? And then – but I'm not the demographic. So I may not pass by the markers, right.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And we see that, right?

Andrea Hairston: You know, not because I don't want it but because someone else has written an algorithm that assumes that I would not be interested, which is of course false.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes. Yes, and I, what I worry about is people excluding themselves FOR the mainstream, sort of saying, well, they wouldn't be interested in me.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Oh, self, self-select –

Nalo Hopkinson: I'm mainstream-published. I have ADD, I can't, I can't self-publish, that's too much work! *[laughter]* But I went the conventional route. And I know that there's space. It's not a lot of space. But if we start to make space. So I'm teaching the work, I try to find the work that would not be, you know, wouldn't be considered in Canada, and bringing those into the classroom. And so when people assume that they know, "Oh, nobody would publish me" – Check first. That's all I'm saying!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: This is what I'm telling them. I'm like –

Andrea Hairston: I mean, self-selecting out is not really good. And plus, the more of us that are pressing to get in, the larger the space. Yet, it's hard to say that when you just want a book out. So all of those things are things that are still going on. And those were going on 20 – those were going on 40 years ago, because I'm, like, old. *[laughter]* That has been going on for a long, long time. And then trying to, you know, second guess yourself, you know, with these decisions when you just want your work out.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I know, but you know, this is true of women as well, right. And this is, you know, there's a – when we were running *Strange Horizons*, I think at one point, we were sort of looking at how often people submitted to us. You know,

like, how many times they were rejected before they stopped submitting, and men, men persist, right?

Andrea Hairston: This is like – So I teach at Smith, and one of the things we're really interested in is how women self-select and, you know, it's ridiculous how easily it is to say you take it personally that it's *your* work, as opposed to men who say they, *they're* messed up.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: “They’re not recognizing our genius!”

Andrea Hairston: So the women decide that my work isn't good. And the men decide – and this is like, you know, over decades and we still haven’t shifted this – that the editor doesn't know crap. *[laughter]* You know, I –

Nalo Hopkinson: Truth is often somewhere in between! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: I know, I know! But so what we need, you know, so what we're constantly doing where I teach is trying to get, you know, do not self-select out, you know, like yes, work on it.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I say to my students – I mean, it's a – from like some of the research I've looked at, it's a strategy that marginalized people – it’s a survival strategy in terms of, like, you have limited resources; how many times can you submit to the same place, etc. Like, it makes sense in some cases, but it's like the death knoll in this game of publishing, right? It's like, you actually do have to keep persisting, right, in order to – if you want to crack those markets, and if you go off and you're like, fine, I'm just going to go elsewhere –

Nalo Hopkinson: You don’t actually know what the whole picture was.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. And often, if you indie publish, I think, I think people also don't understand. They don't understand the whole system that is beneath traditional publishing, that makes books visible. And so, people write a book, they put it out there. And then they're sad when they sell 10 copies. And there actually is a purpose to all the publicists and everyone else in a traditional publishing company, right? That is taking their percentage. Some of the writers I talked

to, they're like, “Well, why shouldn't I keep all the money for myself? And why should I give 10% to an agent –“

Nalo Hopkinson: ‘Cause the agent should be doing their job!

Andrea Hairston: But the agent should be an expert at what you may be an amateur at, or not good at at all, right? So you're the writer, that's where your energy and focus should be. And your agent, you know, should be able to help you with the writing but like, get your book placed with the editor who wants your book, you know, so. And that's worth it.

Nalo Hopkinson: I remember having a graduating student come to me and she was so tentative, she said, “How do I know which the queer-friendly publishers are?” and I said, “Assume they all are.” She said “How would I do that?” Well, find out who you want to be published by, see what they like, the worst that can happen is they say no when you go ask and then you go to the next one. But this fear of, of even sort of interfacing, I completely understand –

Mary Anne Mohanarj: I get that same question from – specifically about queer-friendly publishers. It’s interesting. Right. Almost as –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I think it’s possibly because people know that they're NOT, necessarily. And so they also have like limited time, limited resources. And also they haven't developed that thick skin yet, of their own, right. So they're thinking “If I’m going to shoot my shot, I want to shoot it strategically where it's going to bear good fruit.” And only –

Andrea Hairston: That’s why you have an agent –

Sheree Renée Thomas: People who have, what do they say? The confidence of mediocre white men? *[laughter]* Not everyone has that confidence! So they're like, “Well, let me just be strategic!”

Mary Anne Mohanraj: This is why we need community.

Sheree Renée Thomas: And it’s very freeing to hear someone like you say – tip it on the head and say “Yes, I acknowledge it's a fearful thing

and you may be one person, you feel like you can't do it, but assume they ALL are, and just" –

Andrea Hairston: Right. And let them rise to that! *[laughter]*

Sheree Renée Thomas: "And just go through it!" That means –

Nalo Hopkinson: But do it strategically. *[laughter]* And that exists for a reason. *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Right. And I published with an independent press, three novels, and they sold a little more than, than five or ten. But not a whole lot. I mean, okay, one was in the New York Times and that one sold a lot more.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That does help. *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: So having a review somewhere, even if you're a small press, and if – and a few of them won awards, and then every time they won an award, they sold more. But the publishing house –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I also – can I – I'm just going to pop in and say – I said indie publish, by which I didn't really mean small press because I, because I think – I meant the people I know who are like –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Self-publishing.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: "I write, I write a book, I put it out on Kindle and wait to see what happens," right? *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Okay, so I'm talking about small –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Small presses, yeah. Hopefully, a good small press –

Andrea Hairston: I run an independent press, so that's why –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So, like, a good small press will actually do that work –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, so I could get some, some traction with that. And literally, the difference between the book that was

reviewed by the Times and the books that weren't reviewed by the Times, the book that was reviewed by the Times has already sold more than everything. I mean, you know, literally like two weeks after the review, that book sold more, and I – you know, I love all my books. So that book wasn't that much better than the other books, but it's, you know, people would – "Oh, well, let me go look at it!" right, because it was in their view. So now I –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Let me ask you this, then: How do we raise – and I'm not putting this on you. Right? I don't think you guys should be the ones to do the work, but how should the community be raising the visibility? What would you like? What structures would you like to see being built to raise the visibility of your work, of other Black writers who are writing novels? Because I think, like, you know, I – do we need more Black reviewers? Do we need more Black –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah.

Sheree Renée Thomas: For me, I would like people to talk about things just beyond *Dark Matter*. I love *Dark Matter*, but that's –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah –

Sheree Renée Thomas: That's an anthology I edited 20 years ago, which I love –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Andrea Hairston: Why I always want to mention it –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It was groundbreaking –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I have great affection toward it, but it is not my writing –

Andrea Hairston: So I have been mentioning *Dark Matter*,

Sheree Renée Thomas: I have got my writing, and I have been writing a long time. *[laughter]*

Nalo Hopkinson: She has a new book out!

Sheree Renée Thomas: I have two books already out! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: *Shotgun Lullabies*!

Sheree Renée Thomas: And I love those books!

Andrea Hairston: But the reason I mention *Dark Matter* all the time is because people forget the history all the time. So, you know, I'm an academic, so what can I say. *[laughter]* So and I notice –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: You've got three professors here, what can you do! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: There are these like huge gaps in like, yeah, you know, all of a sudden I am new? I'm like, "No, no, no, there is *history*." So that's why I mention *Dark Matter*. But I also want to mention all the people writing right at this moment. So I think we have to do both. I think we can, you know, I totally hear what you're saying. So mention *Dark Matter* and follow it up by what happened last week. Because then we have the fullness of our tradition, you know, together, you know, and basically each thing supports the other, so *Dark Matter* supports me now.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah, so I'll always say, when I talk about your work, I will always make sure I say author and editor.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah.

Nalo Hopkinson: Talk about *Dark Matter* and then talk about all your work as well. So that it's all brought in.

Andrea Hairston: – and *Nine Bar Blues* is coming out. That's Sheree's next book.

Sheree Renée Thomas: 'Cause I've been publishing in anthologies for 20 years. They weren't all in the genre. They were originally outside the genre. And so when I go to my shelf and I pull out my books, they are legion in terms of where I am. *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Books and magazines, yeah!

Sheree Renée Thomas: So it would be great in my lifetime to be discussed as a writer as well, and not just the person who edited *Dark Matter.*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So have people been doing these – Well, and I'll say two things, one is that, you know, I haven't read your novels, and I –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I haven't written novels, though –

Andrea Hairston: Short stories, short stories –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Short stories –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Short stories, but short story collections?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, yeah.

Andrea Hairston: So *Sleeping Under the* –

Sheree Renée Thomas: – *Tree of Life*, yeah –

Andrea Hairston: It's *Sleeping*, right? It's not *Dreaming*. It's *Sleeping*.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: But this comes back to the visibility question because I don't – I actually don't think they came across my radar. And that's why I feel like we need more people. Because if I had someone, you know, like, there's so much stuff coming at us right now, there's such a glut of stuff. And these questions of – did you say it's wonderful?

Nalo Hopkinson: *[laughter]* Yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It is wonderful! It's great! It is great.

Sheree Renée Thomas: That was the dream, right? That's the change, I can pick up my two hands and say "It's more than these two hands!"

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I guess what I mean is, there's a glut of everything, right. And so there's lots of, lots of white guys putting out stuff, lots of everybody putting out stuff. And I would like us to have – So, I'll give you an example. Last year, two years ago, Monandita Mondal did a piece for Tor.com that was just an overview of South Asian speculative fiction. And I think that's so important and so useful, to – And she talked about, here are some of the historical people who are writing, here's some classics, here's some contemporary, here's who's coming now. And I think we just need a lot more people doing that kind of work. I mean, in the academy, this is how you get to canonization. Like first you, they go and they count how often your work is cited. Right? And so that – those mentions and the kind of piling up of the mentions is, you know, it's one thing to do great work. It's another thing to have people be able to see it. Right? And to, like, bring it to the forefront. So that's, I don't know, I guess that's, that's where my frustration with this conversation is, I'm like, how do we build the review mechanisms and the awards and the – whatever.

Andrea Hairston: I think we need more –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I got Nalo's book because I was a book reviewer. So they sent it to me, *Brown Girl in the Ring*, to read.

Nalo Hopkinson: That's how I met Nnedi, she was reviewing my work, she emailed me.

One of the things I would like to see, where I see silos that I do think are not helpful, is the silos of social media. Where people are talking to their friends who also don't know the answers, and are guessing – So I remember seeing somebody –

Andrea Hairston: It's a very, very sealed community. I mean it goes around –

Nalo Hopkinson: It's self-protecting, you want to be talking to people who aren't going to be, you know, piling on. But I saw somebody on Twitter saying that she wished that there were Caribbean writers doing something like the fantasy she loved. *[laughter]* And, so, me, Tobias, Karen Lord – *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Hello? Knock knock?

Nalo Hopkinson: But we've made a list. Online. That we don't have time to keep up, but we're like, okay, so not only are we there. But look at all this, we've been doing this for a very long time.

Sheree Renée Thomas: And your anthologies. I mean, there are. Anthologies.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah, but I do think you have to, you have to keep surfacing it, right, is the thing, right? Like when *So Long Been Dreaming* came out, which is postcolonial science fiction, fantasy. I mean, I teach out of it. And when it came out, I think there were a lot of people talking about it, but now we're a decade on.

Andrea Hairston: That's what I meant about – we get erased. Because, you know, when people mention things, they will mention, I don't know, Isaac Asimov right? You know, and then whoever else came, like, near there and then later. They don't go *Dark Matter* and, you know, *So Long Been Dreaming*, right, unless it's us –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Or they talk about this stuff from *Dark Matter* if it was a given, and don't allude to the fact that W. E. B. Dubois was introduced as science fiction in that book. And that was not a known thing before that. At all. At all.

Andrea Hairston: No, no, no, no, right.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I am very aware of that.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. Right. So I think. You know, it was also from that book on *How to* like, you know –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: *How to Write* – Joanna Russ's book.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, one of the points is that you don't, you know, you don't do the work that, you know, if I say Shakespeare, we all know, whether we've seen one or not, we all know –

Nalo Hopkinson: Say Juliet on her balcony and everybody –

Andrea Hairston: Everybody knows, right? Yeah. And so it's part of the, you know, commonly repeated, not just, you know, over and over again. And so when we view it as valid, no one questions, and have any of you read those plays recently? You know, you're like, "Wow, okay," but you know, we view it as central to our culture, and we have to get *our* work viewed as central.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I did an exercise with my students at the end of the semester, sometimes, where I give them – "Here's what's being taught in the canon of American lit right now. Okay, what would you like to see in there instead?" And they can generate that list of, like, books and be excited. So we start swapping, and we take things like, Can we lose Hemingway? Can we lose this, like, you know, and they're like, "Yeah, you know, we're fine with taking out Faulkner, we're" – and I'm not but that's fine. *[laughter]* You know, and so we start swapping, right? And we can make it pretty far through, and I'm pretty excited by what they've generated. But we get to Shakespeare and they're like, "But we can't take Shakespeare out." It's this very funny moment of like – *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: I'm just thinking that, for that reason, it's fundamental European and American culture, and many others, right? So, so and I think that the whole idea of modernity is something that has to do with diaspora, something to do with challenges to colonialism, has to do with all the stuff we talk about. So to me, you know, and Shakespeare's writing right at the beginning of colonialism, right at the beginning of that, and he's setting up a whole world and we haven't shaken that world, you know. And so that, you know, so this isn't even about Shakespeare. Right? This is actually about, you know, that that worldview is still sitting

on us. And that's why he's so central, because he maintains the whole cosmological, philosophical, social, political, artistic power into certain hands.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's so interesting. So you're saying that if we, if our society had truly shifted, he would perhaps seem less relevant?

Andrea Hairston: Yes. Yes! Because his stories are –

Nalo Hopkinson: He's not the only brilliant writer. I mean, he's brilliant –

Andrea Hairston: And this is someone, and this is someone who thinks he's brilliant. This is not from the perspective of, you know, like a Shakespeare-hater, or "Let's get rid of the dead white man." No, no, but I'm saying something about the position of Shakespeare in our canon, and then all the people that then pull on those threads. And, you know, and what we're doing. I mean, if you just read *The Tempest*, and you'll have a sense of –

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes. And nothing is produced unintentionally [inaudible] a world that was coming into being –

Andrea Hairston: Yes! Yes! *[laughter]*

Sheree Renée Thomas: I've performed *The Tempest*, I was Miranda in *The Tempest* –

Andrea Hairston: Yes! Okay, right!

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah. So one of the things that I find is making a whole lot of change, and making a whole lot possible is online magazines like *Strange Horizons* where it's very easy to find the work. And to also know those writers are getting paid. And also, now that I teach more, and I've taught at places like Clarion, I'm following what my students do. My students have won a hell of a lot more awards than I have. And when they publish in places like *Strange Horizons* and other online magazines, I can then point my students to their work and I'm teaching *their* work. So I'm teaching people like Alyssa Wong, I'm teaching, you know, I'm able

to follow their careers, and that's one of the good things that online publishing has done.

Sheree Renée Thomas: It makes it accessible. To people who would never subscribe to journals, or a magazine, or –

Nalo Hopkinson: Can't afford a novel.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Or can't afford a novel, or their library doesn't have those books –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I teach at a state university, right? Every semester, I'm like, okay, how much of my syllabus can be freely accessible online? Because it's so hard for my students. So –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I think of audiobooks as well. I mean, they have the podcasts of it as well. So it's just far more accessible.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I'm building more and more on that. I just assigned my students to listen to – I think it was on The Skiffy and Fanty Show. They had Cadwell Turnbull talking about his new novel *The Lesson* and just getting that access to this work. And, I don't know, it wasn't possible before. It's, I think, really exciting for, for building a new conversation right?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. So and I think also that, you know – was it five people at WisCon?

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It was five. Five – maybe not at the whole con, but five writers! So –

Andrea Hairston: You know, even if it was 20, okay?

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah. And, though, that was how the Carl Brandon Society started, at the end of that con. So. Yeah.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. So, I just wanted to comment on that. That's not the case at WisCon.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: No, it's amazing –

Andrea Hairston: You know, even like, I went to a World Fantasy, I don't know, 10 years ago or something, and I haven't been back. So I think, you know, I'd go to cons, and some cons, I feel like I am the interloper. And you know, and I'm the guest of honor and I'm the interloper. I'm the guest of honor and nobody has read anything. And I'm like, “Why am I the guest of honor?”

Nalo Hopkinson: And usually your books aren’t available.

Andrea Hairston: And my books, no – in one where I was the guest of honor, the people in the book room said my books were out of print and so, so Tempest had to get online and you know, tear them apart. But oh lord!

Nalo Hopkinson: It happened to N. K. Jemisin.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, you know, I mean – Okay, first of all, you know, what we need is people, like – if you're going to have somebody as a guest of honor, and they're not, you know, whoever who is in every bookstore, then it is on you. Why am I supposed to be dragging my books to give to people when you are honoring me? So we should have like stacks of your books here. That’s all I'm saying! So you want, you know –

Sheree Renée Thomas: She loves. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Is your book here?

Sheree Renée Thomas: I haven't gone into – You know what, I haven’t gone in the dealers room –

Nalo Hopkinson: After a while, you don’t look, yeah.

Andrea Hairston: Okay, I’m just saying –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I thought, I want to have a good con. *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: I won’t speak to that –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: My one book is here on consignment because I brought ten copies. Hello! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: I just want to say if you are –

Sheree Renée Thomas: People walked out with old, very ancient old copies of *Dark Matter*. So I just said, you know what – *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Okay, so I think that one of the changes we could make is don't invite me as guest of honor, bring my books. *[laughter]* You know what I'm saying? Because people come up and say, "Oh, yeah, I'd love to buy your book. It's not in the –" you know, and I'm like, "Why are you telling me that? Go tell them that!"

Nalo Hopkinson: It goes deeper than the bookstores, because the bookstores are going to their booksellers, and those booksellers are saying we're out of print. And it's not true.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, and they're not, it's not true. So I think one of the changes we need to make –

Sheree Renée Thomas: So there's a whole 'nother thing going on there.

Andrea Hairston: – is talking to con coms, or whatever, and saying, this is a, you know, here's a thing you can do. Make sure, like when we go to WisCon, and that, there's a bookstore in Madison, and they always have my book. Okay, right. It's there. You know, so even if I don't lug, you know, in my, like, luggage that only gets 50 pounds, if I don't lug my books, then I can actually say you can get it there.

Nalo Hopkinson: And you know, and the distribution goes beyond – I mean, I go to the Caribbean for literary conferences, literary conventions, and they can't get my work because one, they've been told it's out of print and two, if they can find it they can't pay the postage.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Interestingly, for that Sri Lankan writer I mentioned, his name Yudhanjaya Wijeratne, and he was actually a Nebula nominee last year. He – in the novella category – but he asked online for – if any of his friends locally had copies of

Delaney, because it was too expensive to buy them and ship them to Sri Lanka. But then someone, one of his friends there was like, “Just buy the ebooks, Yudha,” and he was like, “Oh, right, I can buy the ebooks.” Right? So this is – again, this is the way the digital thing has made it – like, because I saw his initial thing. And I posted on my Facebook wall and I was like, “Let's ship some books to Yudha in Sri Lanka!” and I started organizing and then his friend came in, and it’s just like, come on. *[laughter]* This is ridiculous. I was all set to solve a problem that didn't need solving in that way. There was a much simpler solution.

Andrea Hairston: Because that's the technology you need at that moment.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And thank god Delaney’s books are available in ebooks!

Andrea Hairston: Okay. So. The problem with ebooks is that –

Nalo Hopkinson: Small press, small bookstores aren’t getting the funding.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, so we should also fix that, even though we have, you know, well –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: We’re getting this all done while we’re here.

Andrea Hairston: But I think we have, you know, multiple fronts, right? We can't, you know, because, you know –

Sheree Renée Thomas: I just thought this was about what the community can do.

Andrea Hairston: Yes. Right.

Sheree Renée Thomas: The reviewing element of it. And the blog hosting. You know, “These are the books we're reading –“

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Let me ask you this, then. So, I mean, community has clearly been so important in this conversation overall, and the ways in which you guys support each other, and are able to have these conversations. I know when I first started writing South Asian immigrant fiction, I went and found it all, the, like, everything I could find, and then I contacted the writers –

Nalo Hopkinson: Andrea has fed me. At least – *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And it made my writing better and, you know –

Andrea Hairston: Sheree!

Nalo Hopkinson: Sheree wrote me out of nowhere, and said “So, you got some stories?” And I knew which ones you wanted, too. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So, I guess I would ask, for people listening to this, watching this, maybe not everyone can make it to conventions. Where are you – Where are good places online to find this kind of community? Are there, we talked about the bubbles of, like, people hanging out – are there particular authors whose Twitter streams are great to follow and engage with, or Facebook walls, or something else that I'm not aware of? Are there, like, where are all the –

Andrea Hairston: I want somebody to make a platform for us. I'm sorry, I'm tired of those other people's platforms.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Andrea Hairston: And I think Tempest has been trying to do this, Tempest –

Sheree Renée Thomas: With her Tempest Teapot?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, but Facebook has been giving her a hard time!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: So are you saying, is there not one, is they're not like a – are there good things to follow?

Andrea Hairston: Well, you know, I’m not happy with some of the social media platforms for a whole range of reasons and, you know, that are like, you know, about – Yeah, I don't want to derail us and talk about how –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: No, no, that's fine.

Andrea Hairston: No, but so when I want – you know, I'm hungry for that social media platform.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: A good positive one. And then, are there are there podcasts to follow, or other good –

Sheree Renée Thomas: There are groups. I don't know about podcasts. And I know that people are feeling funny about Facebook. But there are groups like Afrofuturism 2.0; there's the Black Science Fiction Society; there's a whole bunch of different groups, you just put in Black Science Fiction – Afrofuturism – and you'll find them on Facebook. And people post there and share information and book covers and all kinds of cool stuff there, and you can talk with each other, DM or whatever. I'm not that great on Twitter. But I mean, I follow a lot of people on Twitter –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Me neither. I'm trying to get better at Twitter but it's tough.

Nalo Hopkinson: I am.

Andrea Hairston: It's tough!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: You're good. It's tough!

Sheree Renée Thomas: It's tough to have conversations –

Nalo Hopkinson: Mostly I post some recipes, but – but you know, places that have been, so – Bocas is a literature festival that happens in Trinidad, that gives out a couple of $10,000 U.S. awards for Caribbean literature every year. And they do really good programming.

Sheree Renée Thomas: What is that again?

Nalo Hopkinson: Bocas, B – O – C – A – S. They do really good programming, so I link to their Twitter feed.

Often it's the authors doing it, I mean, Kamau Braithwaite would, every year would just, he would keep in touch with who were the newest Caribbean writers and he'd send out this long email.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's great.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah.

Sheree Renée Thomas: So everyone can keep up with it, right.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah. It's being done, but people have to think to go look for it. They have to think to put in those terms on a search, and not just assume that because they're not seeing it that it's not there.

Shree Renée Thomas: – that it doesn't exist. There's a big group –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Maybe we need a coalescing of these, all these individual efforts into something –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, yeah.

Nalo Hopkinson: And some google-fu, yeah. *[laughter]*

Sheree Renée Thomas: – Black Speculative Arts Movement, which has, like, local groups all across the country. They talk about water –

Andrea Hairston: Reynaldo –

Sheree Renée Thomas: – Reynaldo Anderson, John Jennings, you know, started it. I first went to their – I think 2016? And I feel like everything changed, because what was different about their Planet Deep South Conference, the first – BSAM, as they call it – was it was very grassroots. It was not just scholars, or just writers, but it was –

Nalo Hopkinson: It was everybody.

Sheree Renée Thomas: – but it was readers and community activists. And people who are looking at the science fiction the way that adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha were looking at it, in terms of case studies. "Oh, okay, they wrote this amazing story about this" – like if it was about water wars, or what have you – "We're facing – we couldn't get water in this community. Well, can we use this to have a

converse– this ART, to have a conversation with people who are stakeholders in the community and people who are social change people who are working with nonprofits and other groups to change it?" And they use the art as the centerpiece for the conversation, and then they try to solve the problem that way. That – I didn't see that happening in the 90s. *[laughter]* You know, we were still figuring out who had access to the internet, you know what I mean. And so people are having different conversations and it's with people who are not just in fandom. That's, you know, there are people who are outside of fandom, but are still part of the community who read, and love the work and are trying to support it. And that was really like, that felt very powerful to me.

Andrea Hairston: And then there was the Black to the Future conference at Princeton, and adrienne maree brown was there, and –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: We just had a Black Panther conference in Chicago. So that's interesting too.

Andrea Hairston: So I think those kinds of events happening are also good. And, you know, they can bring people together, because we went and there were activists as well as writers, as well as Reynaldo. I mean, so it was a really interesting gathering. So, you know, people can do those. I mean, I organize things like that at Smith. So, and I did it for a long time. But like I said, I'm an old lady now. And I think when I retire, that's what I'm going to do is, I'm going to say to the college, "You know what I want? Don't give me one of those stupid parties." *[laughter]* So what I want is a whole semester, you know, of bringing – Yeah, no, see, I got this idea already, you know – of bringing all the people I love and having them talk to each other while I listen. *[laughter]* So that sort of thing, and I want to bring different kinds of people because I, you know, like I have an eclectic group, but that sort of thing. I think we can make that happen. Because Paula Giddings did it when she retired, I was like, "Ooh, girl!" and she was not in the same field whatsoever. But I came and talked about science fiction and had your pictures up. And everybody was like, "Yo!" You know, so –

Nalo Hopkinson: So, another piece that needs to change is the Academy. There are so many creative writing programs that will not LET their students write science fiction. And I'm not – if you're a professor and that's not your thing, that's fine. But the Academy itself needs to be hiring more of us.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. I don't know what to do about that, because I'm at one of those places. And so I get all the people writing science fiction novels. I'm a – you know, I write science fiction novels, but I'm a playwright, I'm in the theatre department. I am, you know, so I do it because I, this is a – you know, I love my students, that's really the only reason. So what we need is more support.

Sheree Renée Thomas: And there are people out there who try it, but they know that that's not their thing. I mean, I was invited to go to writing programs to talk with writers, because they were – they were doing projects that didn't quite fit in with their committees, you know, so I just was another a resource.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah, yeah. I end up being on a lot of side committees.

Andrea Hairston: And I brought you to Smith, you know, because we have a writer in residence position, and so, people have to be thinking, okay. And you know, and I'm not in the English department, but the theatre department welcomed you! *[laughter]* You know, they did! I mean, so, you know, I think we can be creative – and theatre gave money for the anthology you wanted to publish.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, we printed books!

Andrea Hairston: They printed books, and theatre was like "Yeah!"

Sheree Renée Thomas: Oh, yeah, it was amazing – with student art – it was gorgeous! Local co-op owned printing biz, ooh.

Andrea Hairston: So I said, I went to the chair of the theatre department and I said "You know, those three people are theater majors." *[laughter]* I snap like that, right? And they were like "Okay, okay, okay." *[laughter]* So, so I think what we have to think out of our, our lanes, like you said, we don't need to be in

silos. So if we can – because, now you know there's a notion that this is – like you said, what was – Marlon James is on the National Book Award list, tra la la!

Sheree Renée Thomas: Now it's trendy! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, right! So, I think we need to take – seize this moment. It may pass, but if we have seized it, we can put in structures.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I mean, there's so much potential there, right?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, seize it!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I think, right? And, like, to go with it.

Sheree Renée Thomas: It's a good time now. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: – to take, certainly, I know, for all of the things that could be better, things were much worse. *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, and when I say it's a good time, I mean, that's – this is a good time for us to fix what's wrong.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Yeah, yeah. *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: Right? That's what I mean by a good time! *[laughter]* You know, because I think if we seize this moment – and I know that's like a 60s phrase. So.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: No, no!

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, but if we seize the moment then when, you know, like the winds shift, we have laid out things that keep growing. You know –

Nalo Hopkinson: And we've done this before.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, we have, yeah.

Nalo Hopkinson: And we know how. But, to build on that –

Andrea Hairston: That's what I mean, right?

Mary Anne Mohanraj: WisCon 20 years ago there were five of us; now the POC dinner has hundreds of people, right?

Sheree Renée Thomas: They don't have room!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: – and so it is. I mean, you know, so they – Can we, I'm going to, I'm going to take this, you know, stay in your lane kind of kind of phrasing, because it reminded me something I did want to ask you.

So, I'm a – and this is a huge change of topic. So. But I'm a brown woman interviewing three Black women, right? And it is making me think of two things. One is when I first came to WisCon, I don't remember what I said. But I said something that was casually stupidly racist and, and Nalo and Debbie Notkin sat me down and had an intervention. They just spoke some truth to me. And I was coming from a, you know, fairly class-privileged background, right – my dad was a doctor. Whatever. And so it was very helpful. And – in fact I still quote you all the time to my students, basically every semester I quote some of the things you said then, so! And, and they find it helpful. So, it's being spread and passed around.

But the – and then that also makes me think about – I want to say it's – Vijay – Akash? Patel? – *The Karma of Brown Folk*, I can't remember, I'm sorry, I'm blanking on the last name, but that's the book, *Karma of Brown Folk*. It's going to come back to her, yes.

Andrea Hairston: Yes! I'm having such name aphasia! It's driving me crazy.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: But the book basically makes the argument that South Asians in America have wanted to identify with white people on a class level, right? And we have, we have voted politically, etc. and so on, along those lines, and we need to make common cause with Black people and see the ways in which we are in similar struggles, and that we need

to put our shoulders together and fight these fights and not pretend we're white, essentially. And it's a great book. He's a great speaker, if you ever have a chance to hear him.

But I guess I would ask, as we're having this conversation, as we're building these things, maybe just talk a little about where do you see places for brown people and Black people to work together, and maybe are there times when we should be staying in our, you know, staying in our lane a little bit. Are there times when you've seen a brown person coming in and making it all about them or – Do you know what I mean? I feel like I've seen incidents of this and I've had – I've seen incidents, essentially, of Black people saying, “You're not actually Black.” Right? “Yes, you know, you have some skin color discrimination and you have” – whatever. I mean, I can talk about Sri Lanka and the war and being Tamil, and the issues there –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, but the historical experience is different.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's very different, right?

Andrea Hairston: Even if you are viewed in a certain lens, you know – So, the darker you are, the worse it is for you in America. So that doesn't actually mean – you know, that’s about skin color, but it's not the same as culturally.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's not the same, it’s really not the same. Right. And that and, you know, I'll, I'll tell you, I went to a science fiction convention, I want to say it was a World Con in Philly, that was held in the same convention center as a medical conference – 20 years ago. And all through the con, staff people addressed me as Doctor, you know? They just, as a default, assumed that I was one of the doctors at the medical convention, right? And I don't think that would have happened if I were a Black woman. So.

Nalo Hopkinson: No.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I want to just say this. Just trying to think about it, or wrap my mind around it. That people claim blackness whenever,

the rare times that they find it convenient for them to do so. So that's just a common thing, and the thing that I'm always thinking about is reciprocity. And so people walk across the back of your – as Cherrie Moraga said, you know, walk across "this bridge that's my back," you know?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, *This Bridge Called My Back*, yeah.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, you walk across it, you're sitting in the front doors – you don't have to go through the back doors, or any of the other stuff anymore. And there's never any acknowledgement that that is part of the sacrifice that Black people, Black community, Black people had to go through, like, people died, and were murdered, and teenagers were, like – had their skin ripped off them from water hoses and dogs or what have you, as they were trying to hold, hold the line. And, and so, I find in the, in the literary community, that there's a like, there's all, anybody – if there's something Black, we're open to everyone. So we almost, like, don't police your blackness. So if you self-identify in this instance, as African-American or a part of the diaspora, then you're there, so you're in Cave Canem, the poetry foundation, you're in, you're in every –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sheree Renée Thomas: – you can get the fellowship, you can get everything, but there isn't any reciprocity the other way around, you know. So I just, I'm always watching and like, oh, they're Black in this space. And then when I see you in your regular life, you're doing something totally different. And there isn't any common cause, there isn't that shoulder to shoulder. And that just, I just, I don't know, it's just something I've been, just been thinking about, because I'm noticing it more, I guess, as I get older. And I just know that there's always an openness in our community, here.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes.

Sheree Renée Thomas: We are very reluctant to shut the door on anyone because we've had doors shut on us –

Andrea Hairston: I was going to say, that's a historical, like, trauma! Historical trauma.

Sheree Renée Thomas: We just truly don't want to do that. And we're also so happy to have allies –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, come on in!

Sheree Renée Thomas: We're so happy to have allies. And so you – "Come, yes, join us!" You know? Work with us, create art with us. But I don't see the reciprocity and that, that I find problematic. That's, that's my. Yeah, yeah.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. Well, and Pearl Cleage is a really good friend of mine, and she doesn't – well, she wrote one vampire novel. And she wrote a few speculative things in theatre. But she's very fair, and can pass for white. She's got blue eyes, right. So she was sitting in a room, and she was saying how she chooses, like, just, you know, to say, "I am Black," and then Black people accept her. And – but she is very aware that she can walk through the world and not, you know, and have someone say "Dr. Cleage," or whatever. And so when, you know, whatever range of privilege you have, right? I think people, you know, forget that you need to do something about it. So she's very clear. "No, I'm Black." You know, like, you know, and I take it on in every instance, not just –

Nalo Hopkinson: The convenient ones!

Andrea Hairston: – when it's convenient, you know. So someone said to her and her husband, who has dreds down to his middle, "Where y'all from?" She said, "Well, my grandfather was on a plantation." You know, and then that was fact.

Nalo Hopkinson: You're it!

Andrea Hairston: Right? "Oh, oh, okay." Right. But she has been, but she feels like the reason she does it and she says, "And please, you know, you light skinned sisters do not say that you

don't get skin privilege," which is different than – You know. So you just acknowledge, and I think if we start by acknowledging what our privileges are, acknowledging that we might mess up, you know, that we might, like – 'cause you wrote that once in a wonderful email, that we can all make some kind of mess up. Right?

Nalo Hopkinson: Oh god yes.

Andrea Hairston: And then please be there for me when I do. And therefor – I am there for you.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah!

Sheree Renée Thomas: That reciprocity.

Andrea Hairston: Right! Exactly! And you know –

Sheree Renée Thomas: That's what community is. We call out each other!

Andrea Hairston: Right. That's what community is, so, it's like "Honey child," you know, "stop acting like that. And here's why you acting like that, and we love you, but you can't KEEP acting like that."

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Right.

Andrea Hairston: Right?

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah. Yeah.

Andrea Hairston: So I think that's the work we need to be doing. And we need to do it as a group. Because it's, you know, I said this at a panel, we have to figure out how to be different together.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes.

Andrea Hairston: And that's work.

Nalo Hopkinson: And what you did, which is, I think, many of us still need to learn, is Debbie and I talked to you, and you took it on board.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I don't always. I can be very defensive sometimes. So I think that was a –

Andrea Hairston: Well, everyone is!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: – that was a moment where, for whatever reason, I was able to hear it, and take it on board, and do better, but I can point to various moments, including some that I still need to apologize to people for, where like, my initial reaction was super defensive.

Andrea Hairston: But you still did that one. And I think that's what you're saying.

Sheree Renée Thomas And then you have a self-awareness where sometimes there isn't any.

Andrea Hairston: I mean, really.

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah, yeah.

Andrea Hairston: 'Cause we all have those moments.

Nalo Hopkinson: Oh god yes.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Well, what you said, in that moment, I don't know if you remember this, was that racism is the sea of shit that we're all swimming in. If you're swimming in shit it's inevitable that some will stick to you. And that is still the metaphor I use with my students, and it's, you can see the light click on, right? They're like, "Oh!" I use it on the first day when we're starting this class on writers of color in science fiction and fantasy. And like, this is going to come up, so like –

Andrea Hairston: And we cannot escape it. There is no, you know, magic wand that dings you – "I, I am not in the sea of shit!" There is not. You know, it's in every institution, it's in the air we

breathe, it's everywhere. And so you have to go, “Okay, and I need help.” Like, I need other people because I can't see all the things that I am doing. So that's got to be up front. And we have to recognize how Black people in this country, you know, we're the most recognizable –

Sheree Renée Thomas: And you can't pass all the – wait, is that – you can’t pass for anything else.

Andrea Hairston: That's what Pearl was saying! That's what Pearl was trying to say, “I can be over here, it is my choice.” That's a privilege! That’s what she's trying to say, “It is a choice that I get to say, No, I'm Black,” you know, ‘cause she doesn't have to say that. I don't have that choice. I have to live through whatever, you know. ‘Cause she can just go “Okay, I’m not going to deal with that.” But she doesn’t. I know her. But she could, and that's a difference in our life experiences.

Nalo Hopkinson: And there's a cost, though, to saying that. I mean, people have said to light-skinned people I know, “Oh, you don’t have to say you’re Black. You could be anything.” Meaning they could be nothing.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah.

Sheree Renée Thomas: – so they could cut themselves of from the community, you know –

Nalo Hopkinson: Exactly. Family, friends, community –

Sheree Renée Thomas: It is a cost! And there were some people who went back and forth –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, right! *[laughter]*

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: I was just sitting in on a class of a colleague of mine in Africana Studies who's up for a promotion. And I'm, I'm on her committee, even though I'm in theatre and she's in English. Um. *[laughter]* And I will leave – I will, yeah? Right?

Okay. And we were talking about *Passing* by Nellie Larsen, you know, so that was the book, and the students really were trying to understand what the book was getting at. It was like, “Wow, this is really interesting.”

Mary Anne Mohanraj: They had a hard time with it.

Andrea Hairston: Not a hard time, but it wasn't an easy time. Right. You know, and how to deal with the two different women and how they deal with their, you know, choices around how they look and who they –

Nalo Hopkinson: How to survive.

Andrea Hairston: – and survival in those moments and what it has done to them, and meant to them, and what Nellie Larsen is saying about it in her position.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: To make with them.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, right? Okay. So – and I think it should just be, you know, required reading along with Shakespeare.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That’s a good idea. I’ll put it on my syllabus.

Andrea Hairston: Right! Just because, you know, America is about passing. You know, that's a central issue of America. Right? And so here she is articulating that at a really critical moment in our history. So.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: All right, I could talk to three of you forever. But I've kept you for over an hour. So I'm going to I'm going to try and like wrap this up with just a little bit, if I could ask you for – I'm going to ask you for maybe a recommendation each of some, something else you love, that’s coming out now, something you've read recently, something you're excited about. Or maybe it doesn’t have to be recent, we've got 20 years here. So if there's something that you were like, “I want to lift up this author, I want to lift up this text” and then – We'll do that. And then I want to end with what you're working on now, what you have coming out, etc.

and so on. Right, so, I know it's super hard, I should have like prepped you in advance!

So I'm super excited about Cadwell Turnbull's book *The Lesson*, which has aliens and slavery and Black people centered on an island – he's from the Caribbean himself. I haven't read it yet. But the podcast was amazing. I went right out and bought my copy. And it's waiting for me to have enough time to read. And it's, it's itching at me. He was so smart, both on the podcast and we were on a panel together about Afrofuturism where, again, it was me and four actual Black writers. *[laughter]* So! But I got to ask questions, which was great. I mean, I was sort of like "Maybe I shouldn't have been on this panel," but um, but I can ask questions. So, so, so that's my recommendation.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Okay. There are quite a few writers I'm excited about. So I'll just mention that *Trouble the Waters: Tales from the Deep Blue* is coming out –

Andrea Hairston: Edited by Sheree Renée Thomas –

Sheree Renée Thomas: And Pan Morigan and Troy L. Wiggins! It's coming out next year, it's coming out next year. And there are quite a few writers who are new writers in there. And also some writers who have some work that I think people should be reading more of. So I'm excited about that. It's a pretty amazing – I mean, I reread it recently and I still love that book. So that's always good! I would recommend people go and look for Kiini Ibura Salaam's *When the World Wounds*. I think it's just a wonderful collection, and I'm hoping that somebody adapts some of it into like film or animation or something because it's like really wonderful. And I guess the other writer that I'm enjoying is River Solomon. So. Everyone knows –? Okay.

Andrea Hairston: Well, I want to recommend *Nine Bar Blues* which is coming out next year, by Sheree Renée Thomas.

Sheree Renée Thomas: Stories from an ancient future! Yeah!

Andrea Hairston: Stories from an ancient future. These are –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Third Man Books –

Andrea Hairston: Third Man Books, and these are original to – except –?

Sheree Renée Thomas: Most of them are original short stories.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. So I would highly recommend that, and I did a review of *When the World Wounds,* so if people want to get a, you know, a picture of what the book is, it's in the Los Angeles Review of Books. So, you know, and I'm planning on reviewing Sheree. So, I'm trying to do the things that I have just told other people to do.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's right! We've got to – I've just signed up to review for Booklist because – and I said no, initially, because I said I don't have time. And then I was like, no, I need –

Andrea Hairston: But this is a skill that I have, right? And I will be on sabbatical and going to part time, so one of my plans is to try and review more – just the people I want to review. Because, you know, right? That's, you know, so that's what I'm going to do, so. So please, *Nine Bar Blues*.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Nice.

Nalo Hopkinson: John Jennings and Damian Duffy are about to release their graphic novel adaptation of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower.* And I have read it because I wrote an intro for it, and it really brings that book home again –

[Others] Oooooh! Alright!

Nalo Hopkinson: – it's like being there, again, but in such a different way.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I love how they did the – that kindred –

Andrea Hairston: Kindred. Yes –

Nalo Hopkinson: Yeah, teach you that word too, you know, I'm finding the truth so heartrending.

Did you say what you were working on?

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Oh, we're going to, we'll wrap back around, so why don't we start with that? What are you working on?

Nalo Hopkinson: I'm currently writing a piece for the *Sandman,* for Gaiman's *Sandman* –

[Others] Yaaaaaay!

Nalo Hopkinson: I'm in Year Two, about two thirds of the way through Year Two, and Gaiman created a new house in the Dreaming – if you know the *Sandman* books – that is run by Erzulie who is the African, West African diasporic goddess of love and beauty and, yeah.

Andrea Hairston: Heart –

Nalo Hopkinson: And heart, yes.

Sheree Renée Thomas: And the patron of my press, Aqueduct Press!

Nalo Hopkinson: Yes, yeah. So I get to put Yoruba religious beliefs in –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's a great, I mean, just a little shout out to Neil for making a space in his – he's got this big platform, this big whatever, and he didn't have to do that, right? To make a space and say "Nalo's brilliant, I want her in my world," right? *[laughter]* I mean that's –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Let her do what she do!

[Everyone] Yeah, yeah, yeah! *[laughter]* And do it, and do it, and do it!

Nalo Hopkinson: He's made one suggestion, it was a really good one. *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's great, when is – and that's – is that out?

Nalo Hopkinson: It's been out, it's – since last year, and –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's in issues – and then it'll be a graphic novel?

Nalo Hopkinson: – you can get the graphic novel that came out, and the next one for the next six issues is out in February.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: But you can get the one that's out? What's the title?

Nalo Hopkinson: It's called *House of Whispers* –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I NEED to go buy this!

Nalo Hopinson: *House of Whispers: The Powers Divided*.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Nice!

Andrea Hairston: Well I've just, you know, I hope, finished most of the editing for *The Master of Poisons*. So, I'm sending it out to readers to get blurbs and it will be out next September, 2020. And then I have some, you know, I wrote a short story, hahaha, for Sheree, that's actually a chapter in what will become my next novel, and I wrote a short story for Nisi, which is also a chapter in that novel. And the novel that I'm working on – a few weeks – is about Cinnamon Jones, who was in previous books, but this one is going to be, you know, she's the scientist, the artiste, and the Hoodoo conjurer. And it's a near future. And it'll be about artificial intelligence. So I have a seventh generation algorithm that I thought up at Black to the Future.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: It's such a generative thing, right?

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And Sheree, we just talked about your novel, is there anything else – or your collection, collection, sorry!

Sheree Renée Thomas: It's my short story collection, *Nine Bar Blues*, I mean that is –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: That's the new one coming out.

Sheree Renée Thomas: – that's the new one.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: And then if people wanted to go back, your other two collections, are –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Oh, I would love for them to look at *Sleeping Under the Tree of Life*. It's a hybrid collection because I'm a two headed woman, as Lucille Clifton says –

Andrea Hairston: Poetry!

Sheree Renée Thomas: – so it's poetry and fiction. And we're having a conversation again. So that –

Nalo Hopkinson: Sheree's words – woo! Yeah. *[chef's kiss] [laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: And we're both also in the collection that Nalo's –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Oh my gosh!

Sheree Renée Thomas: *So Long Been Dreaming*, which I read in New Orleans, and oh my god I had so much fun.

Nalo Hopkinson: And Uppinder Mehan, it was Uppinder Mehan who sort of got the project going –

Sheree Renée Thomas: Yeah, yeah.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Co-editors. It's great stuff.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I had taught with that!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I think this anthologizing work is also like super important, because it makes it so much easier to teach out of it, right.

Nalo Hopkinson: Right. So it was Uppinder's idea to put science fiction and postcolonial fiction in discussion with each other. And I think it was one of the few times, that first time that you could find that in an anthology.

Mary Anne Mohanraj; And I teach both science fiction and postcolonial lit, so I get to bring it to both classes, which is awesome.

Andrea Hairston: I am jealous of you all because I teach plays so I don't teach fiction.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Well, clearly we all have to write some plays!

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, write some plays, write some plays!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Actually, I will say, Angelique [unclear name] is a South Asian writer in Chicago, who has written, who in the last couple years has been emerging as playwright; has had two things put on, other ones coming up. And she is – she does genre work. I don't know if these plays are in genre. I'll talk to her. So – but she's definitely, she has a great piece with an alien who comes to an Indian-owned motel in North Carolina. Which was her background growing up, so –

Andrea Hairston: Oh, yeah! Okay, okay.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I love that.

Nalo Hopkinson: I mean, I am writing scripts.

Andrea Hairston: Yes you are!

Mary Anne Mohanraj: There we go!

Nalo Hopkinson: I mean, they're very, very different. But they are scripts –

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, I mean, I usually do plays and film, but you know, what I could do with a graphic novel is compare it to plays and films. You know, because of the way the story is told. I mean, it's not the same – but the way, you know, because it's images and, and dialogue, right? And that is really central to what –

Sheree Renée Thomas: This woman's brilliant class inspired me to finish a screenplay –

Andrea Hairston: Oh, right!

Sheree Renée Thomas: – my first full-length screenplay – which was an amazing experience. If you ever have a chance!

Andrea Hairston: I want that film! I want that film! The whole class wanted that film! Yeah.

Sheree Renée Thomas: We did, like, readings – that was so fun. *[laughter]* A lot of revising. When the actors bring it to life you're like, oh, that works. Oh, that doesn't! *[laughter]*

Andrea Hairston: That's good. That's the other thing I would love to do is to have more time to be able to like have a gathering of people and then to basically –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Create a workshop.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, to just interconnect.

Sheree Renée Thomas: I mean, that was the whole thing about Clarion West. We left there in '99; a year – was a year later? When did we go to Sapelo?

Andrea Hairston: A year later.

Sheree Renée Thomas: A year later. We were like "We must continue!"

Nalo Hopkinson: Princeton organized something like that for us.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah, yeah. And so I think we need to just figure out how to organize those spaces –

Mary Anne Mohanraj: We'll make a plan.

Andrea Hairston: – where we can get a critical mass of us together and it wasn't, you know, that's what was happening at Clarion. That's what happened at Princeton. And that's what could – I mean, and I brought a whole group of people to Smith. I just am tired. So – *[laughter]* When I –

Sheree Renée Thomas: You can't be the only one doing it!

Andrea Hairston: No, no, but like I said, when I graduate, I'm going to graduate, finally, from Smith – *[laughter]*

Mary Anne Mohanraj: I'm super interested in this idea of an unconference, right, which I've been talking to some of the tech people about, and so on, where you don't have programming, you literally just do bring all the people together. Trust them to do their thing.

Andrea Hairston: Yeah. And that's what it is. And then you get to a different level, because you're not, you know, at Clarion and at Princeton, we were not at the 101 level, you know, we were actually dealing with what are the questions and issues and things you were doing right now? And how can we, as a group, be smarter than who you are individually? You know.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: We're gonna wrap up!

Andrea Hairston: Okay.

Mary Anne Mohanraj: Thank you so much, it's been amazing. Thank you!