Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College
Northampton, MA

JOYCE BERKMAN

Interviewed by

LORI SATTER

October 30 and November 7, 2008
Amherst, Massachusetts

Narrator

Joyce Berkman (b. 1937) grew up in San Jose, California, graduated from the University of California- Berkeley with a degree in History in 1958, and subsequently, earned a PhD from Yale University with a dissertation titled: *Pacifism in England: 1914- 1939.* Berkman's employment history includes a tenured position at the University of Massachusetts- Amherst. During her early years there, she developed courses that emphasized women's contributions to history, at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Those efforts culminated in her participation in the establishment of the Women's Studies program at the university, in the 1970s. Her commitment to feminism and issues pertaining to women led her and others to create the Five College Women's Research Study Center, which remains devoted to supporting women scholars. Her two books, *Olive Schreiner: Feminism on the Frontier* and *The Healing Imagination of Olive Schreiner: Beyond South African Colonialism*, add to our understanding of Schreiner's feminism. Berkman has received numerous awards, the most recent being the Tapestry Health/Margaret Sanger Award in 2006.

Interviewer

Lori Satter (b. 1985) has a BA in Feminist Studies from Mount Holyoke College. Currently, working towards a Masters in History from the University of Massachusetts- Amherst.

Abstract

In this oral history Joyce Berkman describes her childhood in a middle- class family and community in San Jose, California and her experiences as a tenured professor at the University of Massachusetts- Amherst, from 1965 through the present day (2008). The interview focuses on her entrance into feminism and the feminist movement, through academia in the 1970s, her contributions to the curriculum and students and faculty at the university, the establishment of the Women's Studies program at UMass and her struggles for acceptance in the History department. Berkman's narrative illustrates the countless ways that one woman without the aegis of celebrity can influence and create real changes that affect multiple generations of men and women. The challenges that she faced in order to make feminism and a feminist analysis part of everyday discussion about the human experience helps us to better understand the history of the women's movement on a local level.

Restrictions

None

Format

Interview recorded on digital recorder using Sony IC recorder ICD-P520. Six tracks.

Transcript

Transcribed by Lori Satter. Edited for clarity by Lori Satter. Transcript has been reviewed and approved by Joyce Berkman.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Digital Audio Recording

Bibliography: Berkman, Joyce. Interview by Lori Satter. Digital Audio recording, October 30 and November 7, 2008. Sophia Smith Collection. **Footnote:** Joyce Berkman interview by Lori Satter, digital audio recording, October 30, 2008, Sophia Smith Collection, tape 1.

Transcript

Bibliography: Berkman, Joyce. Interview by Lori Satter. Transcript of digital audio recording, October 30 and November 7, 2008. Sophia Smith Collection. **Footnote:** Joyce Berkman, interview by Lori Satter, transcript of digital audio recording, October 30, 2008, Sophia Smith Collection, pp. 1–10.

Women's Activism and Oral History Project
History 372, Fall 2008
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Transcript of interview conducted October 30, 2008, November 7, 2008, with:

JOYCE BERKMAN
Amherst, Massachusetts

by: LORI SATTER

SATTER: Today is October 30, 2008 and this is Lori Satter conducting an oral history interview with Joyce Berkman. I'm wondering if we can start with your early life to get a sort of biography before we jump into the more current things that you've been up to. And so I was hoping that you could tell me the kind of community you grew up in, in California?

BERKMAN: Well, in childhood I grew up in San Jose, California, then I went to UCLA for my undergraduate years– so I suppose you were interested in primarily in my K-12 years.

SATTER: Right. Sure.

BERKMAN: Uh, how to describe the community? The neighborhood, in which I grew up, was a varying straight [strata] of the middle class, including my pediatrician, who lived on the corner, and individuals who were just like successful plumbers, who were doing OK in the manual trades. All the women, that is all the mothers of my neighborhood friends stayed at home. None of them, none of them had a job, except my mother. And my mother co-managed, co-owed [co-owned]the small department store that my father was primarily responsible for, but it was very much a mom and dad operation. So she was gone a lot and as a result, I think we were the only family in the neighborhood who had someone as a live in domestic. There were periods when we didn't and when my mother would hire someone for once a week for housecleaning there were occasional sitters and there were a number of college students who would live- in and do a certain amount of care taking in return, and– but so, there was a variety of strategies in order to enable my mother the opportunity to work. I was not happy with that, I should say. I really, I mean envied all my friends, their moms were home when they came home from school and did the typical mom things. So at that time it was not something I liked.

I had skipped a grade and was young starting schools. So my birthday's late November and I skipped a grade which meant that once I was maybe ten or eleven I was looked upon as the smart- aleck and someone who was someone's kid sister not really belonging to the group of people who were anywhere from a year to two years older than me– usually more than a year older than me

because I started school at a young age, my birthday being so late. And I suffered a great deal of unpopularity was something I had, so in a sense the community I had some neighborhood friends, because they were different ages and schools. None of my neighborhood friends were in my same class at school. My closest friend, my next door neighbor, was Catholic and went to a parochial school, so we had no overlap in the actual school experience. The teachers uniformly were poor. I had one or two decent teachers between K-12, but no one good and I think my resolution to become a teacher, first of elementary school children, then high school children, finally college, was to offer an alternative to people like me, as a child, a better teacher, a much better teacher.

Then the community in high school– I did develop a bond, a close bond with several friends, we were a little circle and that was lovely and that continued to the present day. These are still my very good friends when I'm out in California, in San Jose. So, there was that. My father was an Atheist and my mother was active in the Jewish community, which was not that far from our home, maybe about three blocks. And she insisted that I join various organizations– Jewish identified youth organizations– which I did and I wasn't popular there either because whereas maybe in other places there was an element of maybe some religious– I wouldn't call it discrimination– but almost all our friends were very active in Christian youth groups of one kind or another and I wasn't part of that. But the Jewish youth groups were much too free and easy sexually for me, and they were not intellectual at all, and they really looked down on someone who had any kind of ambitions other than of becoming a wife and mother, so I felt very much within that community an outsider. My primary identify– my primary identification heading into college was of an outsider. And so that's in terms of community I don't feel I had a community.

SATTER: And did you grow up with siblings?

BERKMAN: Yes. I have a brother who's almost eight years older than me, who's very patronizing (laughter) and I had, I had no close relationship with him, whatsoever. And a younger sister, almost seven and a half years younger than me, who became very close with me after we were– after I was– in college, really when she began college, till that time she was very much my baby sister and I did, I had a very tenuous relationship with my parents. Admiring my father a lot, not my mother.

SATTER: Do feel that your parents raised you and your siblings the same in terms of any kind of gender messaging coming through?

BERKMAN: The– my parents were probably more open to my ambitions than many other parents would have been. They wanted me to have it all, and they wanted to have it all with me. That is there was no issue. My brother they pushed forward they supported his career ambitions they made it clear of course they would like him to get married and have children but that was not in transgression. I was raised to yes, become somebody. At that time as I think it was, I kept

articulating the desire to be a teacher- that's what they were supporting- they were not keen on a professional career, I think until well along in my college years but both of my parents thought it was important if I wanted to work. They validated working outside the home, as well as getting married and having children. They were also upwardly mobile and they wanted me to marry "well" quote unquote, marry in a professional someone who would earn a lot of money or at least earn enough money that I would be secure.

SATTER: Were you aware at all of any kind of a class distinction in terms of the people that were coming in to help raise you and your siblings while your mom-

BERKMAN: Oh yeah-

SATTER: - Was working.

BERKMAN: I was very aware that there were class differences. And these did not much effect[affect] me, at the time– I was not that sensitive to it at that level. Where I was sensitive is that my parents weren't as wealthy as many of my friends at school. I lived in a ne– an area that was– had a number of rather affluent families along with those of that were much less affluent. And those girls had the best clothes, you know, they had– they bought at that time the label Lance [Lanz]that everyone felt they had to have and Spaulding [Spalding]shoes and whatever was the 1950s fashions and they were the ones who were the most popular, who held the school offices. And I could not afford that level of dress. So I was aware of that disparity. There were no women of color in my school. So, there was in a sense not a sense of race and class being interwoven. There were a few of Hispanic background, but very, very few.

And as result, it was very much a class, very subtle class, differences. And the friends that I then formed in high school, who became my dear friends, were all sort of middle, middle class. And we were all in a similar kind of situation in terms of not as wealthy as the more affluent certainly not as poor as the other range of– except there was one friend of mine– I take that back– whose father was an alcoholic, whose mother died and she worked in my dad's store. We were very close friends and she then went on to become a teacher and entering my same middle class, but I think she identified middle class. Her sense that she had to work and that she was on a marginal income did not give her a hidden sense of class identity, at least to my recognition over the years. So class- I think I could– the issue the issue of poverty was one that I grappled with in high school, intellectually rather than on a visceral level. And, we did deal with issues of poverty. I did have one, one of the few very good teachers I had for high school, American History, and that was in the eleventh grade and he was very keen on looking at the experiences of the poor, the exploited, labor history, and the United States.

SATTER: You've mentioned a little bit about this already, but I'm just curious if you could talk a little bit about the kind of broader political and global context that you experienced in terms of the Cold War and those kinds of, like you say global events that took place. If maybe you could speak a little about how that

kind of affected your view, as you decided kind of where to go to college and those adult decisions?

BERKMAN: When I– I'm trying to figure out how old I was- but when the war– when World War II was over I– my parents– well my father, my mother was pretty apolitical. My father was progressive and he began the first human relations commission in San Jose. And so there was this kind of liberal, humanitarian ethos in which I grew up. The first conscious political activity I engaged in was model UN. I was very much taken by the vision of the United Nations. I wanted very– my dream was to be US ambassador to the United Nations. That's what I really wanted to do– when I had dreams of what I wanted to do when I grow up. But other than being a teacher, it was being an ambassador to the UN. I really bought into the notion of an international– even an international government. And I think that motivated a great deal of my political activity. In fact, I belonged– I participated in what was called the middle- modern UN conference, which was held at Stanford for students for high schools throughout California. And that was very exciting.

I was appalled my McCarthy– Joe McCarthy. We had relatives who had been Communists. We, we knew how much they had to disguise and repress that past. These were New Yorkers who had migrated to San Francisco. The horror of the McCarthy years is something that I grew up with and the one good high school eleventh grade American history teacher would point to the PA [Public Address]system in the room and say, "They can overhear what we're talking and they can fire me because they may think I'm radical. I can be brought before to the House of Un-American Activities Committee." My friends tended to be much more conservative and I was taken to rallies for McCarthy. I know something of a kind of cult, almost Nazi like cult devotion. And whenever I see even for people I admire like [Barack] Obama these huge rallies and I watched the one where I saw the one on television in Florida, I remember those McCarthy rallies. And it frightens me, it actually frightens me to see a big political rally. And I think that's also a consequence once television entered my life of seeing rallies for Hitler.

There is no question that from very early on I was aware of World War II, and as after it was over the impact of the dropping the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki I thought that was horrible I– my immediate gut reaction to that when I learned about the Holocaust and how that connected with the Second World War anything that smelled of tyranny intolerance you know really hit me hard and I was– I combated with that and I was– I was pretty much the most left wing member of our high school.

SATTER: Did your parents kind of mirror that back to you? Or were you kind of-

BERKMAN: My father– my mother as I said was not political– and my father because of human relations commission and concern for creating the– mutual understanding on race and so forth. There were a lot of issues in San Jose around race relations. From housing to country clubs you name it. There were country clubs that would not admit, in the 1950s, an African American, would not admit a Jew. So there's wholesale discrimination and he was very

actively involved in. I don't think he can be described though, as far left as I was. And we began to differ over the course of college and graduate school years because he was more moderate and I wasn't. I was not discouraged that is, this family– my family welcomed debate. I mean we argued all the time at the table over issues of– sometimes one parent was committed the other wasn't. Sometimes– my mother wasn't political she didn't want me to marry an African American and we used to get into these pretty rowdy debates– I was only going to date African Americans! I wouldn't stand for this attitude and so we had those conversations and that was not discouraged. Other families would discourage their daughters and sons from debate, you know at the kitchen table.

SATTER: You mentioned that you had kind of a younger- older sister dynamic and I'm wondering if these kinds of political views eventually kind of infiltrated-

BERKMAN: Yeah.

SATTER: - her assumptions?

BERKMAN: My brother was more conservative and still is. Because after he graduated [University of California] Berkeley, he was an electrical engineer. He was able to avoid the Korean conflict by working in a defense industry– in the missile industry. And he continued to work on missiles, government contracts and all the other sorts of things. And so when the Vietnam War broke out he was very upset that my sister, who was by then at Berkeley always involved in protest movements and I shared views. She and I have almost identical politics over the years she's become a bit more political having gone through a period when she wasn't political at all. She really an [inaudible][Jungian] analyst and spent many years just devoted to the inter-personal and not the social or political. But more recently she's become much more politically minded. I can talk to my brother about my views, in some areas we're overlapping. He is voting for Obama. But for example he does not share my view of the Iraq War. He still feels that the problems there are the mistakes of our military and not the Arab en–[I don't know what I said here, but he and I differ over Arab-Israeli issues] and so that's very different perspective.

SATTER: I'm wondering if you can also share with me the kind of factors that led to your decision to attend UCLA [University of California- Los Angeles], especially since you– it seems like your two other siblings kind of went a different-

BERKMAN: Went to Berkeley.

SATTER: Yeah.

BERKMAN: Yeah, well my brother went to Berkeley and I didn't want to walk in his footsteps. That's the primary concern. The other issue is in relationship to San Jose, Berkeley is an hour away and there would have been a lot more pressure on me to come home on weekends or even monthly. My brother did. And by going to UCLA I was at a greater distance I would not feel the same parental

pressures to come home as frequently and yet I was going to a public university. One of the values that permeated in our family– through my father and my older brother– is that if you really think you're a Democrat, a liberal, you do not go to a private institution. You go to public high schools. You make them as good as you can. You go to a public university, you make that as good as you can. And places like Stanford and the Pomona complex, that's for richer, elite people who really are not committed to democracy.

SATTER: Do you share that view?

BERKMAN: Uh, yeah. I still do to some extent. Less so– my husband teaches at Smith, but to some extent I am, and remain very much a champion of public education. And I am appalled to see that beginning to fray, fragment both– even at the high school level with charter schools– well charter schools aren't as bad– but with private schools, home teaching and all that, that has emerged in the past years.

SATTER: Did you know that you were going to be studying History when you set out for UCLA?

BERKMAN: I began thinking History might be a major, but not committed. And the first– at the end of the first semester– I knew it would be History. The other options for me were Political Science and I seriously considered law. And therefore, Political Science would be pathway to becoming a lawyer that was the path I would have taken, but I still– there's this part of me that's drawn to law. The– I had a remarkable first semester History course, Western Civ[ilization]. You know we were assigned to read the entire *Republic*, not an excerpt, we read the entire *Republic* and I couldn't put it down I was so gripped. It was one of those– do you think you could you turn it off for just a sec? (coughing)

END TAPE 1

TAPE 2

BERKMAN: I took this extraordinary course. It was very much intellectual history in which we studied the texts, some in excerpts, some in the entirety. I fell in love with ancient Greece, all the ideas that emerged, the philosophers, the legal historians. And I think probably by the middle of that semester I knew that this was what I wanted college to be. I was excited by ideas and identified, I think pretty much as an intellectual. At that point in time, I was totally unaware of gender as a category of interpretation whatsoever. Ah, I was just the world of ideas that I got through Plato and Aristotle and Saint Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas was thrilling and, and so much so that that's what I wanted to teach. And at that point I decided well I can't really do this in high school. So I guess I'm going to have to become a high school teacher. But I wasn't– college teacher– but I still wasn't sure that was the path I wanted to take and continued preparing for

high school teaching. At the same time keeping in the back of my mind that I might want to teach college and also keeping in the back of my mind I might want to be a lawyer, rather than teach at all. So those all continued to stir in my brain as I you know, took course after course. I think I was fortunate in the history department at UCLA. Other departments were not as strong, so the question would be had I had a really outstanding Political Science professor might that have had an impact. I don't know. I think I was very susceptible to the influence of faculty at that time. And I had just the most remarkable history professors.

SATTER: What would you– how would you say the gender make-up or kind of disparity in the department affected your education, or your kind of learning process?

BERKMAN: I did not have– there– there was not a single woman [faculty member]in the UCLA History department. There was not a single woman in the UCLA Political Science department. There was not a single woman in the Economics department. I took courses you know, well rather course because I was planning a high school– courses on Economics, Political Science and the like and I took overloads every semester. No women in Philosophy. The female teachers I had were in languages and in English– one English semester– and they were not very good. And I didn't like them and I had crushes on some of my– the male faculty. So I mean I just didn't get into those issues through the classroom. I did get into gender issues my senior year at college because of an episode that arose– and that I'll share with you because as it's one of the turning points in my personal history. I was what was called Standard's Chairman at the dorm. Let me explain, I wouldn't join a sorority because I didn't like the idea of living with all women.

SATTER: They had coed dorms?

BERKMAN: No, I was in an all female dorm. But the sorority was so bent on making you into this model of marriage and family life. And I didn't want– I didn't feel like I'd have space in a sorority to exercise other kinds of my talents. So, I was Standard's Chairman and there– a rule was set down by both the Dean of Man [men]and the Dean of Women that if there was going to be another panty raid-panty raids happened every year at UCLA and at a lot of campuses in the '50s. That if anyone in a dorm or in a sorority at Hillguard [Hilgard]Avenue– which ran down one side of UCLA– was lined with sororities, plus our one dorm– there was only one dorm, and sororities, there was a co-op elsewhere on campus, that was it. People lived in apartments or lived at home, in the [San Fernando] Valley. So I understood that someone seen looking out of a window– whether in a sorority or in a dorm that house would be put on academic– not academic– on social probation if there was a panty raid. So, as it happened and this is like April of my senior year there was a panty raid. And three women in our dorm were seen looking out the window at this commotion these guys running back and forth Hillguard Avenue. [Hilgard]So were some women in sororities. So we were put on social probation for the rest of the semester. And what this meant no one could leave the dormitory after eight p.m. at night

without the expressed approval of the Dean of Women– you to go through a process. And I was to implement that because I was quote unquote "Standard's Chairman." I refused. I saw it as a flagrant example of the double standard. I didn't have that language, double standard. I just said this is unfair. And the issues of fairness is historic for me and I could go– and that's a whole other root to take because I've been very sensitive to any kind of injustice from childhood on. But this was to me patently unfair. The boys were getting off scot free, our house and the sororities were put on social probation. The sororities managed to get off social probation after a week, but we hadn't succeeded. Another blatantly unfair situation. I went to student government organization on campus and got their one hundred percent support till the end of this. Major form of political activism for me at that time. I rallied of course the whole dormitory to support my going to the student government. Got their support and then I went to see the Dean of Students, Dean of Women Students- Dean Cebet.[Cavett] And I said, I had the backing in my sorority– I mean of my dormitory. I had the backing of the Student Government. We would like to have– we want the social probation lifted. It's unfair and you know, we all oppose it. And she was furious and she said, "You women are responsible for this and I'm appalled that you would protest and if you continue to do this I'll see that you don't graduate," and went into this tirade. And I said, you're not going to not graduate me. I was straight A student, a Phi Beta Kappa in my junior year, you know you try to do that and this will be all over the newspapers. She didn't do it but she would not lift the probation. But I wouldn't implement the social policy as Standard's Chairman. The dorm mother– because we had dorm moms at that time– couldn't do anything about it. And so we just defied. You know it was an act of civil disobedience (laughing) I guess of a kind. But that was such a blatant example of inequality between men and women that alerted me.

At the same time in my senior year I was watching scholarships go to male students that didn't go to female students. I applied to Yale, Columbia, Harvard and Princeton. I wanted to a top notch, Ivy League for my graduate school. I'm proud to boasting to say that I was accepted at Yale, Harvard and Columbia, but not at Princeton. And I got a letter back from Princeton saying that we– a one sentence letter– we do not admit females. And there was a whole series of these kinds of events during my senior year that made me cognizant of gender discrimination. But it didn't apply– I wasn't thinking about women being left out of the curriculum or anything like that or not being hired, you know for professorial positions. That area, in fairness, did not kick in.

I'll give you-I– in terms of my– that track of unfairness– I was always aware where my brother had privileges that I did not have, that were not usually based on gender more on age, that he was older. I wasn't sure I could differentiate between those two factors. But where you can really trace a pattern in my behavior is in the first grade. I was in the cafeteria and the boy next to me drank some of my milk, so I refused. I was brought up you know, they might have germs, these other people, and so you don't drink milk other people have drunk from. And I refused to finish. It's World War II and the person supervising the lunchroom said, "You can't go back to your classroom till you finish drinking it." I said I'm not going to drink it and I sat there defiant, and

refused. She was very angry and sent me back to my classroom, ultimately and I was, then had to come before the elementary student council of which there was. And they didn't– you know I just had to– I just had to give my case and they all said I was a bad girl but they didn't do anything about that and that is classic. I mean, there are all those incidents growing up where I thought I was treated unfairly and so I had this keen sense of what's just and unjust. And I think that's what entered in when I looked at gender relations or class relations or race relations, what is fair.

SATTER: How many– do you know how many women entered with you, when– you went to– you ended up at Yale?

BERKMAN: I went to Yale. There were three.

SATTER: Out of how many?

BERKMAN: I think there was an admission class of twenty, twenty- two. One of the women was from Trinity College in Washington D.C. Baltimore, that area. And the other woman was from Mount Holyoke. There was a fourth woman actually, I take that back– where, where did she come from– she was older than us. She had been out of school for a while and that's why she– her name (drifts off). So the three of us, that is, myself and Mount Holyoke Ann and Trinity Cynthia became very close. And we were very, very good friends putting up with not to be believed situations that are gendered at Yale at that time.

SATTER: I'm a Mount Holyoke graduate myself, so I would want to go in a whole other direction about Mount Holyoke (two voices) but I'll stay with the current task (laughter). I would like to talk a little bit about-

BERKMAN: Let me just– I do want to say something about that first year. I was in what's called the hall of Graduates– there was what's called the Hall of Graduate Studies, where the first year men were housed– their dorm. Then there was Helen Hadley Hall, which is where the women lived. We were not permitted to bring men up the elevator to our rooms after midnight. There was, there was no such restriction for the men. I mean, this you know more and more of the same sort of situation and I learned that the first week, I mean that's the sort of thing. And then I learned the first week I was there, there were parts of library that were off limits to women. And one of the rooms, it's immediately to the right as you'd enter Sterling Memorial and that room was full of the most beautiful leather covered sofas, beautiful old wood lined shelves and that was strictly for the male undergraduates. Or I guess male graduate students. And women were not permitted there. There was a kind of pub called Moory's [Muary's] that was right next to campus– right next to the hall of Graduate Studies and near where I spent a lot of time, the library, that was off limits to women. Payne Whitney Gymnasium was off limits to women, so women couldn't go swimming there. So at that point in time there was very little accommodation for the women in the graduate program and that- obviously there were no women in the undergraduate program back then.

SATTER: I'm just wondering if we can talk a little bit about your experiences in terms of preparing to go to graduate school. I mean it seems like at least a geographical shift. And I'm wondering in terms of the friends that you had made at UCLA– in thinking of just kind of the theory that would develop from the feminist movement if any of your friends, or you yourself felt that kind of uncertainty about the future? Or that kind of not being able to imagine the next step.

BERKMAN: That's such an interesting question because it's difficult to regain, recapture in my mind– issues of memory. The– I'm the only one of my circle of friends who went on to get a doctorate. In time, a number of my friends got masters, but that was after they had children or after they followed the traditional, you know, path of becoming married and moms. The– I had a period of distance between myself and the California friends as a result, maybe five to seven years in which our friendships sort of faded. They took such different life paths than I had. I mean, that was to change later, we became much closer, but– again. But at that time it was– I was really striking out on my own. And I didn't have any support, except for my college roommate, who thought it was great that I was doing it. But she was on the path that she was pursuing, but she, she thought it was good that I was doing it.

Ah, when I got to Yale– that's why the three of us, Cynthia, Ann and I became so close because we had to support each other there was no support from the men. I mean they thought that we were taking up seats, if you will that a man who was going to become the breadwinner in a family was going to have a major career future, what were we doing there. The– there was faculty too. I mean some faculty were semi- supportive but there was a lot of– there were faculty members who were very suspicious of the three of us. One of them they really, really liked. And she was already so polished as a scholar that you know they could see– I mean it wasn't a matter of gold in the, in the rough. I mean it was already all there. Whereas my training at UCLA as a historian was pretty good. But my preparation in writing was not. Nor in actually first– in primary document research. Most of the work I did was based on existing scholarship on topics. I did some but not a great deal. The– so the support was not there, but my parents did– were willing to fund me in addition to the little bit of scholarship aid that I did get from Yale. They, they were willing to help me out.

I did have doubts, serious doubts about what I was doing. Whether I should have gone on to law school instead of what I was doing. In fact during my senior when I was experiencing these doubts even more I took one of those occupational interest tests and met with a counselor about all of that. Because I said, I'm just not sure I'm pursuing the right path, and he concluded that I– that law would have been a perfectly plausible choice. That becoming a professor of history was too, and also psychoanalysis– I have a– you know [inaudible] my sister and I evidently have something much more in common then I ever realized at the time. The pressure was considerable. On the other hand by the time I was in graduate school I was so determined to succeed as a professor in the conventional senses that I don't know that I needed more support than I got. I mean I wish I had it. And I didn't get the kind of serious critiques on my papers that my, my male peers did. On the other hand, I didn't think that much

of most of my male peers. I thought my god, why are they being coddled and treated this way. I mean their work isn't that good. And so that was always an awareness I had, some were– some were very good. But some of the boys were not and some of them dropped out. They couldn't complete the work.

The other thing that happened at Yale, which is a class based situation, many of the guys– and of course it's true of Ann and Cynthia came from private institutions. I think I was maybe one of very few who came with a public university background. And although they were much more polished in their literary style and their ability to write I was struck by the narrowness of their minds. That is, they were not creative. They could not seem to imagine outside the box. They were too disciplined.

And this occurs at the very time that [Abraham] Maslow wrote a brilliant piece on obedience to authority. I don't know if you know this work. It was one of the great works of the early 1960s. He did a study. It took place at Yale, in which the people had to press a button to shock someone if they gave the wrong answer. And it was amazing how readily the people who were chosen randomly were willing to hurt someone according to being requested to do that– that is they were obeying the orders. And part of it– the whole question of obedience to authority, was a key issue coming out of World War II and Nazi behavior. And as a result, I, I carried that concern, very much within me. My dissertation was on British pacifism between the two world wars and conscientious objection. So disobedience to authority has been a very big theme in my life. And I've been very suspicious of imposed rules, regulations, judicial hierarchies, all that sort of thing. And this was where feminism was ultimately going to make sense to me because gender hierarchy became an appalling phenomenon.

The Yale experience though was very important to me in terms of forming these bonds, a sense of the opposition, the we versus they that emerged between the women and men in the graduate program. And I think a sense of the possibilities within a non- gendered approach to history, which I found very interesting, and very compelling for that time.

SATTER: I'm hoping you can talk to me a little bit about meeting Lenny, your husband and kind of how he fits into this lovely narrative that you're trying- (laughter and two voices)

BERKMAN: And a narrative that sounds more coherent than it obviously was at the time. Lenny's a cousin of mine. And I knew him, met him when I was three years old, when my mother took me to visit her family in New York. No contact, no contact subsequently. When I went to Yale, I wanted to connect with my mother's family that she left behind in New York when she went– one of the reasons my parents supported– getting back to an earlier question– supported my going east to school is they couldn't keep me with the argument well families stay together. Both of them had left their New York families to set up lives on the west coast. I was doing to them what they did to their family. So and I was very eager for a New England experience for east coast experience. I had read all these books by east coast writers, fiction and non-fiction. I was excited about seeing New York and all that.

Anyway, I went to New York and during my first semester and met family members and when I met Lenny I was very, very pleased because he was a person who really thought, who had ideas, he didn't just want to engage in chitchat. We had, you know wonderful conversations and we continued through letters and meetings to sustain this kind of intellectual exchange. He is half a year younger than I am and had not skipped a grade. So he was at Columbia, majoring in English and was planning possibly go in to journalism. At that point in time he was writing poems and short stories, not theater. But he, he was infatuated by this woman in his class, during his senior year of college. He[She] was going to Yale in theater. And he decided he would follow her and he would write a play and apply to the drama school. And he got in and she didn't. She– her application was rejected. He was admitted. I'm now in my second year or third year– no second year at Yale. He was one, just one year behind me in the process. And so we reconnect at that point and continue this very intense friendship and over time it evolved, romantically. But the important ingredient is that he's very unlike me. And I found really very exciting that his whole world– way of thinking was so different from mine and yet, we overlapped in basic values. His world as a theater person and, and as a writer is very much on the psychological and the interpersonal. He was very cynical about politics. Couldn't care less about the social– political world around us. And I in turn had not developed as far as he had within the realm of the interpersonal exploration. The nature of intimacy, those kinds of questions. Nor had I much experience with the whole history of the avant-garde and the arts. I had done some reading of Becket and what-have-you but was not steeped in it, which he introduced me to and that was also very expanding and exciting. So we complimented [complemented] each other very well intellectually. And we both– but we both had very shared views of how you treat people with respect. What– and he too believed very strongly in what is fair. So that kept us very much bonded and ultimately we decided to marry. The– in many ways we didn't have the word feminist, but we articulated feminism in how we envisioned our marriage and our family.

Just as many young women today have screwed up notions of what feminism is, so they don't call themselves feminists but if you– if they were to articulate their view of marriage and family it would be quote unquote "feminist." So this is without the language, or the vocabulary we had established that the life we had wanted to live was a feminist relationship. And so when the movement came it was sort of natural that we both you know, embraced it.

SATTER: Would you say that the two of you were raised similarly? Or would you say that one upbringing was perhaps more liberal or more progressive than another– than the other?

BERKMAN: He was given immense male privilege. He's the oldest of four children. The other three are female. There's no question– and he would admit to it– that his parents favored him. His parents were much poorer than my parents so it was very difficult for him to go to both Columbia and Yale without huge

scholarships, which he did garner. He is– his family is apolitical. That is– that's not quite true. His father at one point had been politically minded but would also become apolitical and his mother was not political at all. I can I think I can my family– through my father and through some uncles and aunts, far more progressive than his and much more socially and politically minded. His values however, predisposed him to the same kind of social– political world that I thought was the world we should live in. So there was no conflict or incompatibility there it's just that he was very suspicious of all the politics, saw them as totally corrupt, and couldn't accept any of the compromises that progressives need to make in order to win elections. The usual stuff that we're familiar with. And he– I don't if– I think he voted. But I don't know that– how much he voted before we were, you know actually married, because we were very young. We got married at the age of twenty-five so now– at that time it wasn't that young. I mean now a days twenty-five seems very young but then most of my high school friends in California were married by the time they were twenty, twenty- one. So I was late in the game.

SATTER: Now did you take his last name as yours?

BERKMAN: Yes. At that point when we married there was– the feminist movement did not exist so I– I mean it existed but not in our consciousness nor in the world right around us. Never occurred to me to take anything but his name. My psyche apart from my career was very traditional in the sense of although we had envisioned sharing an equality I still viewed myself in pretty conventional feminine terms. And I– it would not have been a battle I would have wanted to have fought at that point– in terms of a name. But then when I began to publish I then added my maiden name, and so all of my publications have both names. And I'm very proud that my two sons have both names, but they have their wife's name as the final name so that my younger son, off-spring is Theo– he has two of them so I'll just say– Theo Isaac Berkman Lamb[Lamm]. And Augine[Augwin] our grandson through our older son, Jeremy is Augine [Augwin]Berkman McDonald. So that they both use that form of– symbolically indicating you know their resistance to traditional patriarchy.

SATTER: Can you think of a time when, when– I think that sometimes in terms of thinking about theory we sometimes try to imagine a moment when either or in terms of supporting one's spouse over their career path. And I'm wondering can you point to a time when perhaps that issue came up?

BERKMAN: Yes I can and I– to be clear, I think Lenny was more of a feminist than I was. And I was still sufficiently wedded in the 1950s romance of family and heterosexuality and everything else to feel a little unease if I at points, many times. In fact– just because it came immediately to mind- in many, in the company of many people I wouldn't tell them I'm getting a doctorate. When I was hired here as a university professor and I would be in the company of people who were not connected with my department– with our department– and I, I would say I teach. I would not even acknowledge that I was a professor. I was embarrassed about that accomplishment and that position. For fear that it

would intimidate the women I was speaking with. Or might alienate the man I was speaking with. And anticipating that, I was in the closet. I mean sillily put, I was in the closet for professional women. I just could not openly admit it, for fear of either alienating or making a very awkward moment. And Lenny did not have that problem, obviously, because he's a male, but because he firmly believed I had a right to do everything I was doing.

But to give you an example, I have my position here as an instructor. I haven't finished my doctorate yet. This was when there was this desperate need for lots of teachers to teach the required Western Civ course, which every student had to get in order to graduate. So, Lenny's finished his dissertation. By this point I think I had finished my dissertation and I felt it was his turn to get a teaching position. So he, you know, threw his hat in the ring and nothing much interesting was coming up and finally, there's this little place, college called, I think the exact, it's like Spirit Lake. It's in Nevada. A small, liberal arts, idealistic community, wonderful little school. And he applied there. And he was considered as a finalist. And the president came to Amherst and interviewed us. And inexplicably he was denied the job. And I still feel that it had to do with me. Maybe I'm sensitive on the subject. But that he feared that I'd be infectious to the other good spouses by having this kind of background, and this kind of ambition. And I'm not really clear. He might have- I mean we talked with him about my teaching years as well. And he didn't seem opposed, he seemed even supportive. But I don't know if he was performing. So we remain, in retrospect, very unclear why that job– and he was given a false explanation, for why– it was clearly it was not a real explanation of why he didn't get the job. The– but at that point I was prepared to leave UMass, a tenure track position, go to this little hinky- dinky place in Nevada so that he could teach. So there, there are those moments.

SATTER: Well, wait what year was that?

BERKMAN: I'm thinking that would have been 1967, 1968, something in that vicinity. But I don't know that we– that either of us have had situations of privileging beyond that, significantly one's career over the other. Where you see these things happening [inaudible] Lenny didn't have much time to playwright while teaching at Smith and sharing equally in parenting. But now and then he did have a chance to write a play. And theoretically, he could have marketed the play. Now if you market a play successfully in a theater you have and you have a very unknown theater adopts it in general they would want you there for a week or two, to assist in whatever revisions they were going to make for the run. We did not have childcare, at that point, the kids were little and Lenny and I– well I insisted and he insisted just every bit as strongly as I did that was not going to go away for a week and leave me holding the bag. His– with my teaching and the children, with him off at the theater. Nor did he really want it that much and I had to believe that all along. Whether it was true or not, deep inside him, I don't know. He keeps insisting that it is true.

SATTER: You mentioned a little bit about your kind of coming into a sense of pacifism, perhaps even earlier than a feminist- (two voices)

BERKMAN: Yes.

SATTER: [inaudible] and I'm wondering, in addition to the panty- raid if you can talk a bit more about a more formal introduction to the women's movement? If you can kind of point to an experience?

BERKMAN: Yeah, and I– again because I didn't have the term feminist and I, I left out something really important. During the summer before we got married in 1962, Lenny had a position as a reporter in a little newspaper the Alpetus[Milpitis] Post and he was assigned to do a story on Pat- oh god what's her last name,[McGinnis] and I know if very well– who was the leader of the Californian movement to decriminalize abortion. And we– both of us– I can't remember when I adopted this position. Both of us believed in decriminalization of abortion and in Connecticut where contraceptives were illegal, the decriminalization of contraceptives. So he covered the story on Pat and her migrant workers that she was working with and the interest she had in decriminalizing abortion and I was very excited by what he was doing and he was too. Our wedding plans were a source of daily conflict. With my parents wanting a fairly conventional wedding and Lenny not wanting to have anything to do– I mean we're dealing with the you know, 1960s. It's 1962 and it's before you have these alternative hippy weddings. But we're already predisposed toward hippiness but I'm dealing with my parents who are attached to traditional ways. And Lenny is fighting tooth and nail, and I'm stuck in between and I'm having these tearful moments almost daily. Not sure I want to marry this man at all anymore and he, he finally consented to wearing a suit at the wedding– he didn't want to wear a suit– if we could have a petition to decriminalize abortion next to the guest book. Which we did, and most of the people signed it. And no one made a fuss over this petition that we were to give Pat as a result.

So I'm not calling this feminist. I'm calling this human rights. I'm calling this fairness. I'm talking about everyone having the right to control their lives, have autonomy, have freedom, every child to be a loved child. I was so aware of children who were unloved in the world. And it was very painful to think of children unloved. So it was not a feminist issue. But I– you know between this issue around the double standard and then this petition things were happening that I hadn't put together. So what happens? When do things get put together? I'll tell you when they start to get put together.

Oh, I have to add a few more moments. I think I– this is in the tape with David Cline. How did I get hired at UMass? Howard Quint who was chair of the department, now deceased for many years, came down to Yale to look for fresh blood, to bring up to teach all these Western Civ course. And he didn't care whether that person was male or female. He didn't care how long you stayed with the department. He had to fill the baby- boom need. And so I had my interview, lots of people had interviews. And I get a call from him about a week later on the phone and he said, "Uh, Joyce I'd like to offer you the job, instructorship, here at the University of Massachusetts but you've got to promise me something. You have to promise me that you won't get knocked up

for three years." Again, I didn't have a feminist label for this kind of sexual harassment. I just knew it was wrong. It should not have been done. But I wanted to job. So I said, oh, oh I don't plan on having any more children– I had one child by then– oh I don't plan on having more children. Um, for um at least three years. So he said fine. And so I was hired.

And when I got here I was one of several women out of maybe twenty hires that year. That's how many hires was taking place– all to teach this required Western Civ course. We became very good buddies because the department was very traditional, very hierarchical. Only the senior faculty members decided the fate of everything going on in the department. Lot of politics going on as well. Some of which I still don't know about. And the male faculty, new male hires had very ambivalent feelings about us. There was a lot of competition. People were double hired. For example, my field was European intellectual history, they hired Will Johnson[Johnston] whose field was also European intellectual history. We were both being brought in at the same time. There was no question. If anyone was to be kept to teach European intellectual history it would be Will. That– never a question on that matter. There was a whole series of droplets of events if you will that finally culminate when– and this is a strange way that is happened and it is true and it's what happened in the story I gave to David.

I get a call from Norma Gluckstern, who was the wife of the provost saying, you know we're having January inter-terms. And by that point in time there was a little bit of movement around women's experience– Second Wave feminism had hit. But I was so involved with the anti- war movement and civil rights that I– it was so far out of my horizon. We need someone to talk or maybe hold a workshop on women and history. Would you be willing to do that? I did not have tenure. I did not say no to the wife of the provost. I knew nothing of women in history. I had [not] a single course as an undergraduate. A single course as a graduate that touched on women or gender. Women, if they were, they were faint names. I mean, indeed they were no more than a Betsy Ross or a Martha Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt– after my middle name. And I did have some knowledge of Eleanor Roosevelt. And I did have some vague names.

Never took women in history seriously. And I said, sure, sure. And I begin to prepare the week before and I realized as I looked at a few books on women in history how this whole world– I had not gotten anywhere near it. Assumptions, false assumptions I had made. What stereotypes I had harbored all these years. What female self- hating had been involved in my utterly, odious attitudes toward women's history. How much of it may be related to the fact that I never respected my mother as much as my father. All those kinds of matters. And it was an epiphany. And the click experience that a lot of feminists talk about. And I, and it just, I just began to rethink the world.

And at that point– it came at a very critical point because I was thinking of leaving teaching to go into law school. I felt I had made the wrong choice between the civil rights movement and the anti- war movement and issues around civil disobedience I wanted to be a lawyer protecting those who committed civil disobedience. I had you know, increasingly I want to be out there. I want to do something really practical about what's happening in the

world. And I was on the verge of leaving academia when I suddenly got so excited about studying women. I didn't have the word gender then. It was studying women and rethinking my whole life in terms of rethinking all these questions. And then reading what was out there, which was not a great deal. And just immersing myself in everything I could get my hands on. And somewhere along the way the word feminist appears and I say Ah! So that's what I am. And Lenny is a feminist ally and could call himself a feminist too. That's a good word. And then helping to create Women's Studies on campus. Then the story just unfolds. I had enormous opposition in this department. There's just- no one's left of the people who at that time stood in the way of my wanting to regularize a course in women's history. I could do it as a kind of pilot course.

SATTER: Well, I think that's where we can stop for today. Because I think that's a whole other- (laughter)

BERKMAN: And it's a whole hour.

SATTER: Well.

TAPE 2 ENDS

TAPE 3

SATTER: Alright, so I'm sitting here with Joyce Berkman on November 7th at approximately two o'clock. Ok, so we left off with talking about your kind of entry into activism and your time at UCLA and at Yale. And I was wondering if you could talk to me a little bit about your more formal introduction to the women's movement? We talked a bit about some early moments. But I'm wondering if you could elaborate?

BERKMAN: Sure. I think the process– did I talk about being asked by Norma Gluckstern, the provost's wife?

SATTER: No.

BERKMAN: Ok, in the early 1970s– I think it must have been '71 or '72. I'd have to look back at old, annual faculty reports. Norma Gluckstern, who was the wife of Dean– provost Gluckstern (coughing) excuse me– asked me to participate in the January win– inter term. There used to be an array of short- term workshops and courses. And she asked whether I would do one of women in history for this. And because I was untenered, assistant professor, I didn't think saying no to the provost's wife was a good idea. Even though I knew nothing about women in history, or very, very little. Never something, as I said at Yale, I focused on. But in preparing for this little workshop, it- the experience was something of an epiphany to realize how absent my background was. And how beginning to read a little bit in the subject made me aware of how incredibly important it was. So that coinciding with all the rumblings that was already–

that were beginning in the Valley. I was aware that there were consciousness raising groups. I was aware that Second Wave feminism had begun to gather some momentum. I was just so busy with my, you know my little child and I was pregnant with the second child that I had no time. Combining that with what was then a, a 4-4 course load to engage in other activities. Most of the women who were involved in consciousness raising groups were spouses of faculty and had a bit of time. They were not employed full time. So I decided upon completing that workshop that I was going to propose a course on comparative English and US women's history to the department as a special topics course. To try out and see where this would lead me. And that was my first formal connection with the women's movement, consciously saying I want to get involved with feminism.

Simultaneously, I became an advocate for changes in the school curriculum at the elementary school level. I– I'm trying to remember if someone– and you may have the CV– '73, '74, '75, somewhere right in that vicinity I chaired a community on sexual stereotyping in the Amherst schools, K-12. But my oldest child was only in elementary school then. So I was focused primarily on your early readers and then later on, I became more involved in later educations. Steeped in that. And by that point I was beginning to read a lot of the early Second Wave feminist tracks, by reading books, you know not just [Betty] Friedan, which I had read years before when it first came out and it had no impact on me whatsoever. It was given to me by a male friend in El Paso, Texas, there for me and I read it and I said this doesn't relate to me. I didn't make any connection with the Friedan book at that time. But I returned to it later and I was also reading, *Sexual Politics,* an, an array of books that were beginning to emerge in which gender was identified as a signal category of analysis for understanding human experience. So I say that was the– that marks the beginning. I don't think I joined an organization. Except for the Women's Studies program, which I helped shape and found at the University. So I never joined NOW [National Organization of Women], until much later. When I basically gave money. I was not a participant in NOW functions. Ditto for many, many other organizations. I don't recall in the '70s being an active member of a women's feminist association off campus. I was devoting my activism on campus. Both in Women's Studies, trying to change consciousness in the History department, working through the Amherst schools to make it a better curriculum for boys and girls.

SATTER: Can you recall– I know that some authors are very connected to describing their identity when they, when they write different pieces. And I'm wondering if that's a technique that you use. And if it is have you ever, or when was the moment that you decided to put feminist in that cadre of identities?

BERKMAN: Hmmm. I can't date that. It's somewhere during the same period after I decided I was going to offer a course-

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: - and associate myself with the feminist movement, explicitly. The moment that occurred, I really can't remember when that happened. I just know that the people around me were also identifying more and more. The academic– the women were a small minority in the humanities. But we were increasingly calling ourselves feminists. And connecting with Second Wave feminism, in one way or another. But as I told you in the previous hour interview I didn't even think of myself as a feminist by being an advocate for reproductive rights. I didn't think of my feminis– myself as a feminist for believing in shared parenting. I didn't believe– I didn't use that label. The label became a part of my life as soon as I began teaching what was originally– to be more accurate– a comparative British and Women's history, American Women's History– to be more accurate a comparative feminism. So that was the title of the first course I taught was comparative feminism in England and in the United States.

SATTER: I was looking earlier today at the UMass archives and I was looking at kind of the early records of the-

BERKMAN: Mhmm.

SATTER: -Women's Studies program. I found a very interesting document. I think it was from maybe '71 or '73 that kind of outlined the goals of the program.

BERKMAN: Yes.

SATTER: And I was wondering if you could speak a little about how those concepts came about? (telephone).

Berkman: Telephone, why don't you turn it off.

TAPE 3 ENDS

TAPE 4

BERKMAN: The question is um-

SATTER: Just kind of the development of that foundational document.

BERKMAN: Document. At that point we were very conscious of extensive discrimination of women faculty throughout the [Pioneer] Valley– UMass, everywhere. We were very conscious of how women were not getting promoted or getting tenure, they were not being hired– departments were either wholly male, or had a few token females. And the same kind of (coughing) impetus to create a community of women who together, could effect change. Since as individuals we were relatively powerless to effect change. So one of the foundational notions was actually– as Sarah Evans in *Personal Politics* talks about this point when you realize that your individual disgruntlement has a class basis, is categorical. And you decide to organize together to create the possibility of change. And that had

happened in the early ’70s. So enough of us realized that it’s not peculiar– what was going on in the History department, English department, Philosophy– that we were all facing many of the same kinds of limitations on our activities as women. We were not being appointed to committees, we were not getting on conference schedules, our publications were being– we couldn’t get publishers for our work, our scholarship. So the whole gamut of scholarly and teaching activities were under focus.

Why is this happening and what can we do about it? And that was a major impetus– so it came in part from a determination to do something about all the discrimination. The– another impetus was a recognition that by the early 1970s– certainly by the mid 1970s– there arose significant critiques in each discipline of the methodologies and theories that shaped that discipline, which were identified as having been the perspective of what was a wholly male, leadership in those disciplines. And as a result, let’s say something like what is the general cannon of novels? Or poems, that students in English were being assigned? Only Emily Dickinson? Surely, there were other women. What happens when you introduce other women into the curriculum– into the program– how does it reshape your sense of the periodization in let’s say literature or history? How does it reshape your sense of what is meaningful or significant? What does it do to all the assumptions that you have about your discipline? And that was beginning to happen. And so the other, as you say, agenda or commitment was not only to combat discrimination, but to foster a kind of cutting- edge reevaluation of each discipline’s theory and methods. Where this inter-disciplinary can contribute to that rethinking?

So most of us became very inter-disciplinary in outlook. And Women’s Studies by its very title was inter-disciplinary. We were reading Anthropology, we were reading Political Science. I’d say the hard sciences were being ignored, on the whole. But in the humanities and social sciences, we were looking at the common problems in the discipline and re-conceptualizing those disciplines and regarding Women’s Studies as the site where that path finally could take place. Because it could not take place within the conventional course structures of the existing departments. You need a space where you’re going to be able to offer courses on theory, on methods, on looking at gender as the ignored, and central category of analysis. Already, we were beginning to be aware that gender is experienced differently by women of color. That sexuality becomes a factor of social class. This was beginning to dawn on many of us, as we founded Women’s Studies. And the question even then, was how are going to create a curriculum that was going to be inclusive? But those issues didn’t begin to really hit hard till later in the ’70s. Till ’78, ’79, when it led to all kinds of struggles for– within the program.

So let’s see, what else about the foundational. At that point we were very committed to a notion of faculty and academic life as inseparable from what’s happening in the community and the public at large. And we didn’t want to create an Ivy Tower phenomenon. So at the very beginning, we stated activism is part of education that through praxis you– and I mean praxis, P-R-A-X-I-S– that consciousness changes. And that there has to be a reciprocity between activism and consciousness development. And that this needs to go on throughout the program and throughout courses and that there needs to be an

availability. The other, related to that, is the personal is the political. And we believed that very profoundly from the get– go that you– students– that– how– knowledge is not objective. We knew that already in the early ’70s. We could see that from how the knowledge had been constructed for us. And as a result, we introduced new types of pedagogy. And we knew we were going to do that. We called for a change in pedagogy. So that students would be encouraged to connect their personal lives, and their personal experience with their learning. And had, again, a reciprocity, an intellectual reciprocity between their experiences and the knowledge, the books they were being assigned, the projects they were undertaking.

So we had that– and we were from the beginning allied with Every Woman’s Center. Every Woman’s Center had begun, I think in 1970, or ’71, somewhere in that same timeframe. Patricia Zachary [Sakrey]Lewis– was then just Patricia Zachary[Sakrey]– was the first director. And our offices– Women’s Studies and Every Woman’s Center were adjacent. We were part of the old library, Goodell. And so there was a flow back and forth. And this one example was I had a student, Barbara Pritam, [Pridham]who formed Older Women’s League Network OWLs- or something like that. And she got one credit through Women’s Studies for doing that activism and arranging to have a readings course for older women in the community. Not necessarily older women only at the university. And increasingly there was a mutually nourishing process between Every Woman’s Center, which was community oriented and Women’s Studies, which tended to be more academically oriented. So I think those are some of the fundamental ideas at the outset that were still pretty rudimentary. We had yet to experience enough to know how to elaborate on these–what this would all mean, where the conflicts would arise. In the beginning, there was a very high level of consensus.

SATTER: I noticed in the course catalogue that in the description for your first course[the graduate course] in 1979 that you were very specific to mention that it would meet in your house. And I’m wondering how that was perceived, either within the History department or the Women’s Studies program? And what kind of dynamic or what kinds of conversations resulted from that decision?

BERKMAN: The ’79 course was double listed. It had- I had been teaching that course from about six years before then. I in fact, when I taught the first Women’s Studies– I, I taught very few strictly Women’s Studies courses.’79 would have been probably would have been the first. And I’m trying to think. I didn’t remember teaching it here. I think I taught that on campus. The first time I taught in this house, I think were my first graduate courses in Women’s History. I’d be very curious to see the catalogue you were looking at. Because I don’t remember teaching an undergraduate course here at the house because it’s too big.

SATTER: Right.

BERKMAN: And the graduate courses– when I began teaching here– I made that decision for two reasons. One is that I don’t like the university at night. It’s not only because it’s a dangerous location. And there were many incidents of rape– well

not many– enough. And because it seemed so sterile, the lights are so bright, and the rooms, particularly in Herter Hall are rather barren of much interest. And it seemed to symbolize the separation of academia from experience, the personal and political. And one way I could act on my belief in the personal is the epistemological, and the personal is the political is by integrating the two. I also had an interest in making it easy on myself. Because if I'm going to teach at night, – which was– I decided to because I wanted to course to be attractive to high school teachers and elementary school teachers. And they work all day.

SATTER: Sure.

BERKMAN: So that was the major reason– another major reason for night time teaching. I didn't want to go and park the car and then all that stuff. If I taught right here, granted I had to provide– and I did and I loved providing refreshments– it was so much easier. Just after everyone left I could just get ready and go to bed. So that added to the pleasure of doing it here. And increasingly it seemed everybody liked doing it here. And I'm not so far from campus– as you discovered– that it's a hardship for any student to get here.

SATTER: Do you find that that has set a kind of precedent within our department? Because I know that Laura Lovett frequently holds seminars and courses in her house as well.

BERKMAN: I don't know who else has. Laura lives very near campus.

SATTER: Sure.

BERKMAN: So there's an ease, a convenience. She came of course, as you know, not that long ago, six or seven years ago, and she was aware that I was doing it. But she may have done it for all I know, in Tennessee-

SATTER: Sure.

BERKMAN: Or for the course she taught at Dartmouth. I do not know what impelled her to do it. But I cannot think of anyone else in History. However, I think there were some faculty in English who lived near campus, who did hold their graduate course at their home. I don't know anyone who did an undergraduate course in their home. Though most of us, including me would have all the undergraduates– if the class was not large– over once a semester for some type of little party, something like that at the end of a semester. But I don't, I don't know. It's conceivable that some people in Women's Studies– teaching strictly Women's Studies courses that were not big– did hold it at their home. Another precedent for this kind of arrangement is that I had taught in Southwest.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: In the 1960s [inaudible] taught a course on History and Revolution. Very typical of a 1967, '68 course and those– there were a lot fun teaching it outside

the main part of the campus. Going to the dormitories where students felt at home. Where they basically rolled out of their dorm room into the classroom. So I think that also served as an inspiration to hold it at the house. I also wanted to de-authoratize[de-authoritize] myself to put it in those terms. One of the pedagogical principles of feminism, but really of new ways of thinking about education in the ’60s and ’70s was to break down the kind of hierarchy between faculty and students that led to submissive student behavior. Kind of blind following of a faculty member’s perspective, rather than discovering truth, such as it is, on your own. And a sense of learning as a shared and collaborative process, in which the faculty member doesn’t know everything and the student knows nothing. So that the notion of a kind of collective learning process, which those of us who were ’60s and ’70s feminists were very committed to– and it did also shape the foundational documents of Women’s Studies– I thought were better served within a home setting than within a classic university classroom.

SATTER: Can you speak a little bit about– and I don’t know if it was like this in the early stages or not– about the perhaps, transition between the Women’s Studies courses that you were teaching as being more specialized and then their transitioning into more quote unquote “Gen[eral] Ed[ucation]” requirements?

BERKMAN: Originally, we were part of the Bachelor Degree of Individual Concentration [BDIC]. We identified as a special program. And there was a kind of umbrella organization called Special Programs under the Dean. And then it– we were– I don’t think it was around the same time– roughly around that time there were– a few years later– we became a degree granting, through the Bachelor Degree of Individual Concentration. We then began to lobby, campaign through the senate to have our own major and minor.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: And that was a two to three year campaign to convince faculty of its legitimacy. Lots of resistance. African American studies was doing the same thing, Social Thought, [and]Political Economy and the– I think one of the major reasons we ultimately did get enough support was not that so many of the faculty senators believed in feminist approaches to questions or in gender as a salient category. But because they believed strongly in reaching out to students’ interest where they are and also inter-disciplinary– because the 1970s was really an enormous impetus for inter-disciplinary in various ways on campus and we expressed a great deal of support for inter-disciplinary undertaking. So I think that helped us a lot in ultimately gaining legitimacy outside of BDIC as a separate minor and major. But it was a long fought battle.

SATTER: Did you perceive a shift in terms of the conversations in classes, or the gender make-up- or the class make-up– as this program picked up steam?

BERKMAN: When I began teaching Women’s History, my classes were almost totally female and an occasional male would take the course. But, even twentieth-

century US Women's History, when I– originally the course was a one semester, colonial to the present, and Comparative Feminism: England and US, at another point. When I was able to gain the concurrence of the department for two semester sequence, through the Gen Ed program, which by the way Gen Ed was a, a major factor in enabling this. And I want to step- I want to take an aside there. There was a great deal student unrest. Not just in the '60s, but in the '70s, with the nature of their education. And there was a lot of grass-roots. Student requests for courses that would address gender and sexuality. That would address social class and race. And increasingly diversity issues, by the late '70s, had become a prominent issue on campus for course offerings and curriculum offerings. And the Gen Ed council, it was Gen Ed designations, came out of that and out of some incidents following– and I may be jumping in time, you have to check this–, there was a riot following one of the World Series, games. It was a racial riot. And that led to demands for courses dealing with racism on campus. And similarly there were so many incidents of sexism and violence against women that there was a ground-swell of women, whether they were feminists or not, that flock to address these issues. And Every Woman's Center could not address the reasons for the persistence of tenacity of sexism and how do we understand this as a phenomenon. Ok, that puts the Gen Ed comes out of that. As well as ways of thinking about liberal arts education in face of critics who say there's too much specialization.

Ok, now getting back to the next question. Class change. So there were very few men and the classes were all wholly white, women. By the late '70s the increasing numbers of lesbian women were very upset that we were not addressing issues of lesbian experience. And more and more effort was made by Women's Studies initially to deal with sexual diversity, even when we were dealing with social class and ethnic diversity, racial diversity, though that was being addressed somewhat. But the demand was powerful that we were dealing with sexual diversity. The- and I think the fact that the stereotype of the women's movement that it was filled with lesbians was a deterrent for some students-

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: - to enroll in Women's Studies courses or even in courses like mine which were not double listed with Women's Studies, but were women's history. By the mid '80s, more men were enrolling. There had been sufficient consciousness change mostly in the twentieth- century half of the course than the course to 1890, or was originally to 1900 then was to 1890. The student population had become more ethnically and racially diverse too. So I was beginning to see a few women of color and occasional men of color, enrolling and Gen Ed that got– that met American History requirements, met diversity requirements with this one course you could take care a lot of your Gen Ed requirements. Now the twentieth- century course may have a third or more male students, a number of men of color, I– and a number of women of color. The course to 1890 that I'm teaching right now has a surprising number of men for the first half of the course. I– certainly, up to a fourth if not a third of the class is male, maybe a little more even. And quite a few men and women of color. So there's been a

steady growth of interest in women's history. I don't know what the population of other courses are, except that I suspect that many of the other Women's Studies classes have followed the same pattern. The department of Women's Studies has made an energetic effort to address issues of race and ethnicity. Hiring policies have been– in fact over half of the faculty in Women's Studies are women of color. And that was a very determined you know, policy by us in Women's Studies to do that.

SATTER: I know that in the Five College system– especially in the last you know, ten years or so there's been a kind of shift in these programs to thinking more kind of gender as a basis as opposed to just a Women's Studies program. And I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit about– I mean obviously UMass has kept that kind of title-

BERKMAN: Mhmm.

SATTER: - and I know that kind of the theory maybe the counter argument to that is well now the curriculum in general has those issues being discussed. And I'm wondering in you know your experience at UMass over this long duration, did you see that trajectory coming. Or where-

BERKMAN: I'd say the trajectory came essentially in the last ten years.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: Up until that time it didn't look like transformations were taking place in your departments. But within the last ten years, Sociology leading the way, you can see course after course that either explicitly addresses gender, and women's lives and race too. And once– while it may not have in the title– but in which some of the faculty in the department have had enough background and interest in gender as to integrate it into their teaching. Again, Sociology has been at the forefront in doing this, at UMass. The School of Education as well. The – let me think this through a little bit. We in Women's Studies were reluctant to do what Amherst College did, which was to define their program as Women and Gender Studies, WAGS.

SATTER: Mhmm.

BERKMAN: Because we feared that a focus on gender would eclipse women's lives and their experience. That more and more it would become a study of masculinity, or in the theory of gender or methods of gender analysis and not being able to recover the documents and recreate narratives of women's lives. And US and– or any country's history in terms of whole new ways of seeing that history, as a result of studying women's experience. So we held off doing that. It's just this past year we have now changed our name.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: And we are Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, which is an effort to come to terms with yet another development that's opened up the field and that is trans-sexuality and transgender. I mean what is a woman? What is a man? Who are they? I mean is a person who has begun female, become male, now a male and no longer– and therefore, doesn't belong in a Women's Studies course? In terms of what subject matter–do we only treat the men that become women, as part of a Woman's Studies or Women's History course? So this has been exciting and challenging to the ways in which we've thought about women's lives. And as a result, we have just renamed our program: Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. And you'll be seeing that in time– since we've just made that decision. I've had a lot of experience over the past years to see how easily a WAGs program or a Gender Studies program does eclipse the study of women. And I have held strong to teaching women's history. But because I want to deal with the relationship between definitions of masculinity and femininity, because of gender relations being crucial to understanding women's lives, I'm very comfortable now doing for example, topics– for example my graduate course, Topics in Women and Gender History. The undergraduate course is still US Women: 1890 and US Women 1890 to the present. I'm not yet ready to yield that. I fear the consequences of doing that.

SATTER: Hmm. I'm wondering as someone who's been in the department for so many incredible years if you feel (coughing) excuse me, some sense of a position of being a mentor to some of the newer faculty members-

BERKMAN: Sure.

SATTER: - certainly the female faculty members, who were not part of the so- called Second Wave generation?

BERKMAN: (sighs) I am formal and informal mentor– see if I can be a little clearer about that. As it happens I have not been assigned as the quote unquote "Big Sister" or whatever to junior faculty. Laura Lovett, for example her mentor is Joye Bowman. And there's been– I don't want to speculate on what these reasons are– but I've not been assigned a formal position as mentor for someone. I have– I'm sorry, with one exception, and that was Alice Nash. I was asked to be– but it was kind of backhanded– I was asked at one point not to serve as a mentor but just to go in and observe her classes, and talk with her afterwards. We had not developed a formal mentor program until five, six, seven years ago. So I mean, I did a lot of what I would call informal mentoring. The other, formal mentoring is that I've been a Lily mentor– do you know what a Lily– program on ci– on campus. This is a program for untenured faculty, relatively new faculty, who are given a course release time to meet weekly with the other Lilies– this is a competitive application process– to discuss pedagogy.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: I was a Lily mentor for Aviva Ben-Ur in Judaic Studies. Her fields of concentration are Sephardic history, Jewish women in Sephardic history. So she

has an interest in Women's History, as well as in Sephardic Jewish history. And that was a very exciting experience and that was formal. And we've become very good friends. And I continue to mentor her, but informally. I have been informally mentoring a variety of faculty members on occasion. As need arises, or they seek me out. I try not to be overbearing in any way. So somewhat. There, there seems to be some reluctance to establish certain obvious types of mentoring programs in the department. And I could, you know, hypothesize on these reasons. The other area in where a do most of my mentoring is with graduate students.

SATTER: Sure.

BERKMAN: And ex- graduate students, post- people who have completed their doctorates or masters here and then I keep in touch and read their manuscripts. And assist in making possible for them to give talks or other kinds of professional opportunities. And I've been centrally involved in some of whom I've become very good friends with during the period after they completed their programs here.

SATTER: I'm wondering what you see are the biggest challenges– now taking a step back– to the newer generation-

BERKMAN: Yeah.

SATTER: - to kind of the quote unquote "Third Wave" or this– the women of my generation. What do you feel we are going to face? Are we going to face new challenges or is it kind of the same ol' same old, coming up again?

BERKMAN: I think it's different. The only way to explain that difference for your generation is to step back again. And to maybe answer a question you have not asked. And that is, what was it like within my department– unless, you were planning to ask that question- in the 1970s and '80s to be a product of women's history and to press for attention to gender and women's lives throughout our department. Whether it's in the politics of the department: the hiring and the firing, the– who's appointed to committees. Hiring especially. There was nobody in the department until (pause) the late 1980s, who would ask– other than me– at a– let's see so it comes to be hired at the search committees, the finalists, or someone is a guest speaker who would ask, "So what would this mean for women? Or if you include gender in your analysis, how does what you've said for the last thirty minutes, alter?" and they were usually dumbfounded would not respond. And the faculty members around, looked at me as a monster. For, you know, in my mind– well in their mind- humiliating our guest. Where I was only trying to educate the department as to the importance of these kinds of questions. But anyway, it didn't exactly endear[me] to a lot of my colleagues. The– I had to fight over and over again to have the issues of women and gender addressed. I think I was regarded as a trouble-maker. Most of the faculty who were very, very difficult have retired, some have died. There's a whole new

department now. So the uphill battle that I faced is not the battle that I think current faculty have.

I think where the issue is the same is what I'd call the double day and the double standard. Meaning, that it is never an issue for the men in the department to have a family. And to do their scholarship and get tenure. And take on the civic roles within the department. It was never- their wives handled it, or they weren't married and their didn't have children. That was never an issue. For me and for few– we had very few women in the department, until the late '80s or the early '90s. For me it was always an issue. And not just for me. I could see it in the world around me that women who had any ambition were being thwarted by the professional definitions. By the inflexibility of the tenure system. The unreasonable idea that people could take– go to meetings from 3:30 to 6 [p.m.], when they had families. These kinds of practices really were upsetting and they impeded the development of many female faculty, faculty on campus and part of the faculty committee on– senate committee on the status of women that formed also in the 1970s was to identify what were those problems, that the double standard of professional performance that seemed to be going on. Or rather the single standard of professional performance that did not take into account that women lived different lives and had different needs, as a result. And that you cannot use the same tenure clock, and the same tenure expectations. What I observed happening is that women just deferred child bearing. And they still do, until they get tenure. I mean, I'm even looking at the immediate faculty in our department and how many of them waited until they had tenure before they got pregnant. And this is not– never an issue for men. And so that's still an issue for your generation. How that will be managed? Shared parenting is an option. There's a lot more daycare provisions. And those typ– kinds of programs, university has taken- union has taken a very aggressive role in promoting a family friendly university. But it's still much, much harder for women to combine the– having children and meeting the demands of full participation in the department, its civic life and in its scholarly expectations too, tenure, promotion the like. Or taking up administrative positions.

SATTER: You talked a little bit about those, but I'm curious of how kind of you handled that double day and your experiences with that and getting tenure?

BERKMAN: I did not publish very much when my first child was little, very, very little. For several reasons. One was because I had a very strong and passionate commitment to parenting and– and even if there had been daycare provisions, which there weren't at that point here– I don't think that I would have been happy to yield my parental influence in that way. Nor my husband's and so we both wanted– took on the commitment to shared parenting. And to doing it with minimal baby-sitting, minimal institutional care. At the same time I was involved in the creation of Women's Studies, so that was a huge commitment outside of my 4-4 what then became a 3-3 teaching load-

SATTER: (Chuckles).

BERKMAN: - throughout the ’70s and other responsibilities. And being involved in schools here, the K-12 program. So I was very busy and I had no time to write. And I was also of the mindset– and I can– I’ll trace this back for you– that publications shouldn’t matter than much. What really matters is good teaching. In the 1960s, the faculty members– one of the faculty members, most responsible for my going to graduate school, was Paige[Page] Smith– who wrote by the way, one of the earliest histories of women in the United States. A book that’s totally forgotten– he was, he was one of the– I now, now– can’t think of what the word was– not provost, but it’s a word like provost– of the first college at Santa Cruz, which is a composite of various colleges, UC Santa Cruz. And he ran up against all this publish or perish stuff when he was at UCLA, where I was. And was determined that Santa Cruz would not hire and fire on the base of publications, which was a commitment that we shared. And in fact I was drawn to Hampshire College to teach there because I felt I would not be subjected to that kind of stress. I could write when I wanted to write, but that I would put my heart and soul in teaching and program development, and those sorts of things. That’s not the outlook of our department. Or our university. Nor was there any sense that you could have plural approaches. Like maybe some faculty members would emphasize their scholarship and would maybe teach a little less. And some would teach mostly and do a little bit of scholarship. There’s no sense of a kind of diverse, plural definition of professional life.

One of my first little adv– advocacy tracks was on that. In any event, I kept– so I think when Jeremy was born– no when Zak was born, our younger son was born, I went on first, one- third time, to avoid a tenure decision, in part. But also because I wanted to, in order to have time for parenting. But then I moved into like a two- thirds time. And when theoretically I could have returned to full time I chose to be on four- fifths time in order to avoid a tenure decision. I was working time a half, by that point. But the department chair in 1979, I forget 1980, whenever it was, um, was a very reasonable individual. His name was Archibald McGleish[McLiesh]– not McGleish [McLiesh]that’s the poet– Archibald Lewis and he is now deceased. And Archie was an exponent of a more family friendly approach of having flexibility. But after his leaving chair, I don’t remember whether it was Rob McNeil, who took over– I was given an ultimatum. More or less. You return to full time, because you are such an anomalous position and we just can’t manage this with the university or, you know you just can’t continue. And then when you come on full time, you’ll be coming up for tenure. Well, fortunately I got a contract for a small book at roughly the same time this was happening. This was a book on Olive Schreiner– and I have two books and this was the first book and this was called *Feminism on the Frontier.* And this was basically a study of Olive Schreiner’s feminism. On the basis of that book and my teaching record and the ardent support of Women’s Studies and because I got a [the] University Distinguished Teacher Award thanks to one of my teaching assistants, who had initiated that whole process the department supported me for tenure. It had a very rocky time, at the provost level. I was supported at the Deans level. The provost was convinced I had not done enough publication, I did not deserve tenure. I was called in to justify my tenure case. Part of me was to say well you know we just

have different values here, putting emphases. In any event after Women's Studies went in force on my behalf. This again is of course one of the advantages of being part of a collective, like Women's Studies. And the department reiterated its support. It did go through and went up the, the channel. But during that time I was very unhappy that I was not considered tenurable by the university, given all I had done with program development, my teaching record, all that. And granted it was not a distinguished scholarly publication record, at that point, I was teaching new course after new course. So I was doing a lot of scholarship of another kind. In the decade following that, my kids are older, I had more time and I do begin to publish, a good deal more. But I remain angry and it's very easy to recover those feelings of the inflexibility of using a traditional male model of professional performance on women.

SATTER: Can you-

BERKMAN: (Coughing)

SATTER: - remember a similar frustration or a similar kind of difficult process with fac– female faculty members in the years since?

BERKMAN: Somewhat.

SATTER: In the years since your frustrations?

BERKMAN: Yeah, somewhat. And I have seen women leave academia. If not here, at other institutions for that reason. But I've also seen women fight collectively for this. Since that time, somewhere in the late '70s, early '80s, we formed the Five College Women's Studies program. I was one of the early chairs of that. Ultimately, we had in 1990– whenever it was– the Five College Women's Studies Research Center. But when we formed as the Five College community of feminist scholars, and the word Women's Studies was really a disguise. We were all doing feminist scholarship. We knew that the word was so charged for the ol' boys that they would not be able to accept it, whereas if you were teaching Women's Studies it was somehow more palatable. In any event, we were– but we were doing feminist studies and as the– as a consequence of the Five College community of women arguing the problems all kinds of new programs were instituted in terms of maternity and paternity leaves, which I never had. None, I mean this was not even possible. Daycare programs, you know all of these things are the result of very systematic ongoing, unrelenting pressure of female faculty in all– on all five campuses.

SATTER: Hmm. Interesting. I'm wondering if you could share kind of your, your proudest moment as a, a feminist that you, as you look back on your career both within the department and community. Can you point to an event or an experience that just kind of filled you with some pride?

BERKMAN: Yeah, I will do that. Though, I want to also return the question you asked about the current generation of Women's Studies and gender focused faculty. I'll get back to that. It's– there've been many, many moments. And it's hard to prioritize. What immediately came to mind when you said that, is when I got the Margaret Sanger Award. Let me explain that. As a result of graduate teaching, of David Cline , Chris Whol[Woll] and a host of others and my graduate courses in women's history we were able to develop an incredible collection of documents of reproductive rights activists in the Valley between 1965 and '75. Which then David Cline edited is Creating Choice. This he did, not only in my course work– and he also did other course work with me as did other graduate students, who were involved in this project– he did it under the egis, as well of the Valley Women's History Collaborative. And so, both my graduate teaching and the Valley Women's History Collaborative were interwoven and out of this came this wonderful publication: Creating Choice. And the Margaret Sanger Award was given to us by Tapestry, which is the principle organization we have on behalf of family planning and the like, in the Valley– was given to me and David and to Susan Tracy, because Susan and I were coordinating the Valley Women's History Collaborative and it was a very exciting moment. Because not only did it recognize our activism, scholarly activism, on behalf of women's reproductive rights, but it– for me brought together so much of my teachings, scholarship, activism out– as a you know, as director of this collaborative and so forth that made it a very special moment for me. To be recognized and what I think helped even more is that Tapestry's director, Leslie Laurie, Bruce Laurie's wife, and– so there's that further connection to bring parts of my life together. And as I told you last time we talked, my work on reproductive rights goes back decades. So that is– that is a very key moment for me, I think. And that came immediately to mind. But there have been an array at times. And sometimes it's a student completing a dissertation after enormous struggle. And to finally see how the gender features or the gender dynamic worked within that dissertation after long effort to understand that. So there have been those kinds of moments. There are the– I guess publications of books. When I finally could open a book and say oh my god it's there. You know it's hard– the cover's on it. I have a book. It's book signing parties. Those are wonderful moments in one's professional life. And– oh gee it's really hard– there are many. I've been very blessed. I've been very fortunate that although there've been many moments of intense aggravation. And I will mention one to you, so as you can appreciate the opposite. And there've been many times that I've felt totally side-lined by the department. Because of my feminism. The fact that there's this plethora of wonderful experiences helps off-set all of that. (phone rings).

TAPE 4 ENDS

TAPE 5

BERKMAN: The kind of– many of the negative experiences, about ten years ago I was interviewed because one of my books had been published and that same reporter asked me about my experience teaching you know women's history in

the department and how it became accepted as a course. How did the graduate course get established? And I described the opposition in the department. The fact that faculty members spoke of it as a fad, that some of the brightest members– male members of our department scorned women's history or gender as anything of importance relative to class and race. And saw it as a threat to their focus. I'm not– in class, they were looking at race– their neo-Marxism was suddenly in jeopardy. And the opposition and the resistance was so, so great and so I felt the battle to win over something of an accomplishment in light of that and I worked very hard at making that happen. But there was a lot of resistance. Well, the reporter wrote some of this into his newspaper piece. I got a phone call from one of these men, now very much retired, absolutely outraged. Went into a tirade about my airing dirty linen of the department in public. How dare I do that sort of thing? Don't I have any loyalty to my department? Look how wonderful we've been to you after all you have these courses, blah, blah, blah, blah. And the next day I come on campus and all the chilly looks at me and no one wants to talk with me. Tho– that typifies, the kind of diffidence [difficulties]there may be many, not of that magnitude, but made being in the department in the '70s and early '80s very uncomfortable.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: I gravitated toward Women's Studies as a community, instead of our department. Other than students, I always felt very comfortable with the students. But Women's Studies began to have problems of its own in the mid '80s, and late '80s. And by that point there had been something of a rethinking going on– at least among the younger members of the faculty as they began to feel again more comfortable in the department. But that's really key.

But now to get to the other issue that I wanted to get back to. And that is the new faculty. From I would say the 1980s on, when we began to get more women in the department, I was struck by a huge generational contrast.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: I really, honestly did not worry about tenure. When I was an activist and I, you know made all these awful comments that might have been seen by our department about why are we talking about women and gender, antagonize this person or that person– I just didn't think that it would jeopardize my tenure. I had this kind of ultra confidence, naïve as it might be that my teaching was so strong, and it was being recognized as so strong, and the work I was beginning to do as a scholar was of such significance that they, they didn't dare do that with my– taking it to all the newspapers in the world. They're not going to deny me tenure. I was willing to take any risk. And certainly as a junior faculty member– not any risk– but many risks, as a junior faculty member in the late '60s I was involved in all kinds of protests and anti- war stuff. And I was- it just didn't seem to me that one sacrificed one's strongest principles for the sake of tenure. Even though I had two children. I had the privilege of a husband who got a job in 1970 at Smith, so I have to admit there was that security blanket. But I felt, ok well if I'm fired I'll get a job someplace else.

SATTER: Hmm.

BERKMAN: It's not the end of the world. I'm not so invested in being here. The faculty– the women and men faculty of the mid-'80s on are far more insecure than I was. They don't have– it doesn't seem– that kind of confidence. Or something is lacking and an unwillingness. I remember one faculty member, who's now at Penn State, not here, saying, "I don't want to be in any kind of political battle in the department or else I'm going to run under the table. I– I don't feel comfortable speaking up and out about anything I believe in. Don't expect me to do that." I remember explicit– there were other faculty members who just simply hid their feelings and played it cool and didn't speak up. I felt so isolated by my female colleagues, who presumably are committed to women's history and gender, who were not there for me. And saw me maybe as really of, a threat to their getting tenure and their getting approval. I tried not to interfere with them or to ask them to support me. But they did not seem comfortable with my history in the department. They courted male approval. And they both as faculty members– this is the mid-'80s–no longer teach at UMass. They have gone up the academic ladder and they're in prominent positions at other institutions. And that generational shift is been recorded by my generation of feminists across the Valley. There are others who I know very well in my generation, who, who resent junior faculty members who are so job security conscious. So anxious about protecting their professional lives, so fearful of not having a position, of alienating people. That they're just not willing to take the risks that we did. And that's been really, very, really disappointing. On the other hand, course I am heartened and excited to see how much work is being done now on gender and women. And couldn't be more pleased about that and wanting to support those activities. But I do carry a resentment based on the contrasts in generational experience.

SATTER: I feel that we live in a very unique environment, here in the Valley. And I'm wondering as we start to close today if you could speak a little bit about– if you have any thoughts regarding kind of the, the interconnectedness between the Valley community, and environment of being a fairly liberal place. As well as kind of the development of your feminist politics, and your more academic life– how do you see those two communities really working together or, or not?

BERKMAN: They work together. This is home. When I visit my quote unquote "home," in California, I don't feel home. I can be with like- minded relatives or friends in Los Angeles or any number of places but I don't feel the area as the kind of nourishing milieu that this is. I, I feel such a sense of (bird clock chirping) connection to Emily Dickinson. just to put it on that level, and Sojourner Truth and the history of women, who lived have here and have been pioneers in one way or another, or the Underground Railroad was here. That we have Mount Holyoke and Smith Colleges here. That we have such a wealth of libraries– first rate libraries, organizations. All kinds of– all kinds of things that stimulate intellectual life –

(voice interrupting)

TAPE 5 ENDS

TAPE 6

BERKMAN: So the– could you watch it Lenny [inaudible response]– ok thank you. So I, I this is home. And I feel no place has as many bookstores– even though Jeffery Amherst Bookstore is closing. I remember the first women's bookstores that opened up in Northampton. And there, and there was one, and then another that lasted a number of years. And then, in the process of assimilation you know the regular bookstores started having their shelves in Women's Studies, and integrating– but those, those bookstores also signal a kind of women's community that was very special and unique here. And I think our Valley Women's History Collaborative is very intent on keeping that history, and you know, finding and keeping it and sharing it. The– there's definitely a symbiotic connection between the work I do and the community in which I live. And I would never want to leave this community. Except when I go to teach, as I have in various [two voices] other places. Because you need perspective. I think it's very important to get the challenges of new locations, with other peoples orientations to life and to professional experience and such.

SATTER: Well, thank you. Do you have any final thoughts before I turn off (two voices)

BERKMAN: You were interested today primarily in tracking the professional development.

SATTER: Sure.

BERKMAN: Is that right? Let's see if I thought there's something major– and that wouldn't already be in what David had interviewed me. [Long pause] nothing right this minute. And I don't– I feel the consciousness as I should always remember that when I'm doing interviewing myself. Of the problem of not having the ideas immediately in your head and not being- wanting to have the recorder go on and on. And this is where probably having a questionnaire ahead or some sense of the topics, more explicitly the questions would help. And I have to remember that when I teach my oral history course in the spring to discuss this very reality. I'm sure after you turn this off and leave there will be many, many professional moments. Or aspects of my professional life that I wish I had talked about. What you can do– and what I have done– what we've done with the softball league interviews is suggest that if something really important was left out, you know, let the person know, let the interviewer know.

SATTER: Well, I thank you for all that you've said.

BERKMAN: Well, you're welcome.

SATTER: It's incredible.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Lori Satter, December 2008