

**Voices of Feminism Oral History Project**  
Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College  
Northampton, MA

**MARLENE GERBER FRIED**

Interviewed by

JOYCE FOLLET

August 14 and 15, 2007  
Amherst, Massachusetts

This interview was made possible  
with generous support from the Ford Foundation.

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### Narrator

Marlene Gerber was born June 6, 1945, the only child of Max Gerber, a Russian immigrant, and Ethel Kalinsky of Chicago. Her parents, who had grade school educations, owned and ran a small women's clothing store together. She grew up in a middle-class Jewish family of shopkeepers in Philadelphia.

Marlene graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls, a public college-preparatory school, in 1963, and attended Northwestern University for two years before entering a brief first marriage and moving to Ohio. She earned a B.A. in Philosophy (1966) and an M.A. in Philosophy (1968) from the University of Cincinnati, where she was the only woman in her graduate program. She earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Brown University in 1972, then taught at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (1971-72), Dartmouth College (1972-77), and Bentley College (1977-86). Since 1986 she has been Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program (CLPP) at Hampshire College, where her areas of specialization are reproductive rights and feminist philosophy. She has been married to William (Bill) D. Fried since 1970. They have two sons.

Fried considers herself an "accidental activist" initially and attributes her politicization to the vibrant social movements of her college years. She has continuously combined social activism and academic work. In the 1960s and 1970s she engaged in anti-war and civil rights protests and was active in the New American Movement. She and her husband Bill lived in a communal household in Boston. As one of the first women in philosophy, she struggled against sexism and other hierarchical practices in higher education and became a founder of the Rhode Island Women's Union and the Society of Women in Philosophy.

By the late 1970s, Fried was devoting her energies to socialist feminist reproductive rights work. She was involved in the Abortion Action Coalition and in the Massachusetts Childbearing Rights Alliance. She became a local and national leader in the Reproductive Rights National Network (R2N2), co-founder and board member of the Abortion Access Project, founding president and board member of the National Network of Abortion Funds, and co-founder and president of the Abortion Rights Fund of Western Massachusetts. Fried is a member of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective and is currently participating in the Hyde—Thirty Years is Enough! Campaign to reverse the Hyde Amendment and restore public funding of abortion.

Fried's board memberships have included the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, the General Service Foundation, Raising Women's Voices, and the Committee for Women, Population and the Environment.

From her base at the Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program, Fried continues to teach, organize, and write about abortion and its place in a comprehensive plan for reproductive health and social justice. She is the editor of *From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming a Movement* (1990) and co-author of *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice* (2004), which won the 2005 Gustavus Myers Book Award.

### Interviewer

Joyce Follet (b.1945) is a public historian, educator, and producer of historical documentary. She earned a Ph.D. in Women's History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is Coordinator of Collection Development at the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

### Abstract

In this oral history, Fried recalls the loneliness of growing up as an only child and details the conventional class, gender, and racial norms that shaped her world in the 1950s. She describes her involvement in cultural and social movements of her day, with telling anecdotes of political experiences in New Left and women's liberation groups, personal life in a communal household, and professional challenges as a pioneering radical female academic. Her story highlights setbacks and breakthroughs in the struggle to sustain race- and class-conscious reproductive activism over the last 30 years. Fried also assesses her role as a white ally in a movement increasingly led by women of color and as a mentor to younger activists. (Transcript 110 pp).

### Restrictions

None

### Format

Interview recorded on miniDV using Sony Digital Camcorder DSR-PDX10. Six 63-minute tapes.

### Transcript

Transcribed by Susan Kurka. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Sheila Flaherty-Jones. Reviewed and edited by Fried and Follet.

### Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

#### Video Recording

**Bibliography:** Fried, Marlene Gerber. Interview by Joyce follet. Video recording, August 14 and 15, 2007. Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection. **Footnote example:** Marlene Gerber Fried, interview by Joyce Follet, video recording, August 15, 2007, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, tape 5.

#### Transcript

**Bibliography:** Fried, Marlene Gerber. Interview by Joyce Follet. Transcript of video recording, August 14 and 15, 2007. Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection. **Footnote example:** Marlene Gerber Fried, interview by Joyce Follet, transcript of video recording, August 15, 2007, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, pp. 75-77.

Voices of Feminism Oral History Project  
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Transcript of interview conducted August 14 and August 15, 2007, with:

MARLENE FRIED  
at Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

by: JOYCE FOLLET

FOLLET: Okay. We're doing it, we're rolling.

FRIED: It's okay, good. Do you need a pen, paper, or anything?

FOLLET: I'm pretty well set. Do you want anything?

FRIED: Do I need anything?

FOLLET: No, unless you feel like you do.

FRIED: No. I'm all right.

FOLLET: So we've got two parts to this, right? So my thought, as I wrote to you, is just to take it more or less chronologically, although I know that's not how we live our lives, but we sort of do.

FRIED: We sort of do. (chuckles)

FOLLET: If today we could kind of begin at the beginning and get you through your childhood and education, formal and informal, and maybe into the beginnings of your teaching. And then tomorrow, the reproductive rights focus?

FRIED: That sounds fine.

FOLLET: How does that sound?

FRIED: That sounds perfect.

FOLLET: Okay. So this is Joyce Follet with Marlene Fried, at Hampshire College on August –

FRIED: Thirteenth.

FOLLET: Thank you.

FRIED: Or fourteenth.

FOLLET: It's summer, what can you expect?

FRIED: It's summer, exactly.

FOLLET: – 2007, for the Voices of Feminism Project. So, thank you for making the time for this.

FRIED: It's an honor to do this. This is great.

FOLLET: Good. So let's begin at the beginning. Childhood.

FRIED: Born 1945, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the only child of Max and Ethel Gerber. Max was an immigrant to the U.S.; had come, when he was 13, from Russia, from a large family, but only — you know, I think only five or six made it to the U.S. Typical immigrant. All of them had small businesses. Uncle Benny had a tap room, which I think was a bar, but no one ever said bar, they said tap room. Uncle Sam had a candy store, and my parents had a ladies' clothing store.

My mother was from Chicago, and my father had been a salesman and had met her when she was 18. My mother had gone only to the eighth grade, and my father's education was not discussed.

It was interesting. They were so into assimilation that they never, almost never, talked about the past, although in our household they spoke Yiddish with my aunts and uncles. One aunt and uncle lived around the corner, and they would come over every night after work, every single night, speaking Yiddish, which I then absolutely refused to learn. I could understand it a bit, but I would never speak it because it was the language that the kids were not — they were talking so the kids won't understand.

So I grew up in Philadelphia. My parents worked together all their years in this store. They owned it first with my aunt and uncle, and then themselves.

FOLLET: What was the name of the store?

FRIED: The Ann-Ette Shoppe. I have, in my basement in Somerville, the cash register, the sign. My mother actually had it for almost 50 years. She sold it the month before she died.

FOLLET: You mean 50 years after your father died?

FRIED: They owned it together 50 years. She lived 30 years past him. He was much older than she. He was in his fifties when I was born, 54. So she was, like, 22 years younger. They always lied about their ages. I never knew how old my father was until he was in the hospital when he was

dying and I saw the chart. So he had the big lie — like, people thought he was in his fifties when he was actually 75. And my mother was, like, petty lying, you know. We don't know, five years maybe, something like that.

So I think a lot of the vanity was not vanity. I think on my father's part it was vanity, but also that he was so much older and that he was an older parent. They were married for 16 years before I was born. And again, I couldn't quite get the picture; and then at one point — I actually started an article with this once — my mother said, "Well, the doctor was giving Daddy vitamin B shots." So obviously they were having infertility problems, but they never articulated it in that way.

My mother worked the whole time that I was growing up, and always worked, her whole life. I think she loved working more than she loved being a mother. My father was the parent who came to eat dinner with me, and then go back to work or go to the school play. Officially the story was, well, it was a woman's clothing store, so she had to be there, and he was more negligible. But as I get older and look back on it and see how much work actually meant to her, I think that was only part of the story. That's what I would say.

We lived in a, kind of a — I don't know what you would say. At that time, it was the outer suburbs of Philadelphia. Like, the next street was — when they [my parents] moved [into the neighborhood] — was a farm. But if you went there now, you would say, Oh my God, this is such [an urban neighborhood] — And then these sort of typical Philadelphia semi-detached and row houses was the neighborhood. So sort of solidly middle class, totally Jewish. A lot of first generation, some people who had come from — some of the shop owners had been in the camps in Germany and still had [numbers] on their arms. So, you know, there was a lot of — Being Jewish, Israel, the Holocaust was all very prominent, even though my family wasn't religious at all but they were very culturally into it. So, you know, I was raised in this [Jewish ghetto]. We say if I hadn't gone to college, I would now just have, like, teased hair with tons of Spray Net in it, which was how I was growing up.

I was thinking I should have brought you a picture of me in high school with my little — I always wore a bow in my hair that matched whatever outfit I had on. (chuckles)

FOLLET: In high school?

FRIED: Oh yeah. I mean, I was the most conventional person. My family wasn't political but they were Democrats, because the Democrats were good for the Jews. So that's why you were a Democrat. That was the extent of the politics in our family.

FOLLET: Really?

5:00

FRIED: Yeah. And because my parents had been married for so long before I was born, I had no cousins and I didn't have brothers and sisters. All of my first cousins were a different generation, so the family that I related to were second cousins, and I had some who were my age. Everyone else on our block had brothers and sisters, and sort of being an only child was unusual. Having a working mother was unusual. I think it was very sad. You know, I had a little imaginary family that lived in my closet.

FOLLET: Did you really?

FRIED: I did. I think I had — The composition would vary, because that's the beauty of an imaginary family, you could ax someone and get new ones. So I think sometimes I had two brothers and sometimes had a brother and sister. So I think that was all kind of hard.

I was also primarily raised by an African American woman who came to work for us when I was nine and worked all the way until I left the house at 18, and continued to work for my mother until she died before my mother did. Her name was Isabel Gibbs, but we called her Bell.

FOLLET: She lived in?

FRIED: No. She lived somewhere else, in north Philly, but she would come every day when I was there, when I was growing up, and then after that she and my mother came to some — you know, she would come certain days a week.

FOLLET: So [who cared for you] until you were nine?

FRIED: There were other caretakers who would come but not — no one who was really permanent or as [much a] part of the family — in that way that many people have written and talked about — as Bell was. Bell would refer to me as *our daughter*. She would say to my mother, "Our daughter is coming home," when I would go to college and come home.

So it was this very enmeshed kind of thing. She had her own son. There were just a lot of overlaps. He was in various trouble, my mother would try and bail him out. But, you know, all the power and everything about race and class was there, but at the same time, so was [love], this incredibly intimate and connected relationship, and certainly to me — I mean, she was [like a mother]. She was the person who was there when I came home from school. She was the person who played with me. She was the person who talked to me about life, et cetera. So, you know, in that way very complicated as well.

I was [in my 40s] I guess — I can't remember when she died. My mother and I went to her funeral. We were the only white people at her funeral. You know, just quite a thing, and something I never have quite sorted out. It's clear to me how I felt about her; and it's also clear

10:00

to me that in some ways this is part of sort of who I am now in terms of thinking about race and class and privilege and everything else. But it's not anything anybody talked about. I mean it's just sort of in your DNA in a way.

FOLLET: And was this unique in your family because your parents both worked, or did other people in the neighborhood and your other second cousins also have –

FRIED: People would have, like, people who cleaned their house, but most of the moms were stay-at-home moms, I think, or, you know, mothers' hours kinds of things. So it was somewhat unique.

Our street was — it's sort of hard to get the [picture] — but we had a driveway in the back, and the kids played in the driveway because, you know, it wasn't like a major thoroughfare. So the kids — there was a lot of in-and-out of each other's houses and yards. You know, a lot of entrepreneurship, kids selling lemonade. At one point I was running a little day camp. A free day camp but a day camp nonetheless (laughs) for kids on the block, younger kids. So there was a lot of that kind of thing in our neighborhood.

It was also, I think, a neighborhood where you were — it seemed to me it was fairly stable. We had the same neighbors for a really long time; but also people aspired to move to the next level. And so another real feature of my growing up, and I don't — it can't really be true that it was every weekend, but it seemed to me that it was every Sunday, because my parents worked every day except Sunday — is they would go looking for a better house in a better neighborhood, and there would always be something wrong. So we'd go, and sometimes they brought money to put a down payment on, but they never did it. Or they would do it and then on the way home they'd decide it's too far from the store, it's too this, it's too that. So it was just kind of interesting in terms of a dynamic.

They really were trying to live the American dream as the way you were supposed to live it. You know, they took me to ballet school — even though I was an unbelievable klutz and got kicked out — because, you know, you were supposed to do that. They were really trying to [be good parents]. I had piano lessons because good middle-class kids should play the piano. You know, all of those things. But they never did, they never could leave that neighborhood, and I think that was okay. It was certainly okay with me, but I think it was okay with them as well.

FOLLET: It was just part of the –

FRIED: I think they were incredibly at ease. We had really longstanding, close neighbors all around.

FOLLET: So who were you closest to?

FRIED: My aunt Rae and uncle Benny, who lived around the corner, who came every night. And then there were a lot of boys in the neighborhood. Both sides were boys, and in the back were boys, and then there were a few girls on the street. Basically, as a young kid, friends were defined as who lived on the block. You were friends with the kids across the street, but even that was something of a stretch as opposed to kids right on your side of the street [and abutting the driveway].

We went to a neighborhood school, you know, we walked to school together, and went to the neighborhood junior high school, but it was — it was really a rough ride there, and so I then — I went to junior high for two years and then left to go to the citywide public high school, the Philadelphia High School for Girls, which is a public school but you could go from the whole city. It was a college prep school and it was a very diverse school for that time in Philadelphia.

15:00

I remember when I was a kid, the swimming pool near us went through a huge desegregation fight to integrate the pool. So even though it was a northern city, there was a lot of segregation, not of the de facto kind that there is now, but of the overt kind. But our high school [was integrated].

It was interesting, at our last reunion somebody said, You know, we were a high school of Jewish and black girls. And it's true, that's what it was. It's quite fascinating. And I think it was, like, for both families who didn't have the money or who wouldn't think to send their kids to a private school. And we also learned at that reunion, quite to our astonishment, that at one point the vice principal had called in the black girls in our class and basically really tempered their college aspirations. We were all supposed to go to college, everyone; but they were basically told, You should apply to this junior college or to Temple or whatever.

It was interesting, the way this came up. Shirley Franklin, who is the mayor of Atlanta, was in our class. We were — you know, I was class president, she was the secretary. And so a friend of hers was telling the story — because I guess Shirley then went to Howard [University] — but basically the vice principal was trying [to hold them back]. No one was supposed to go to Howard. No one was supposed to go anywhere. None of the African American girls were supposed to go anywhere. This was invisible to us [the white students], but I guess really it's to say that the racism was so deep, even in a place where the surface of it was that this was an integrated school and it really didn't matter.

FOLLET: And it didn't come up at the time? I mean, Shirley didn't mention it to you at the time?

FRIED: No, no, and here we were. I mean, we were all friends and thought we were equal friends. So it was a very startling — And we said to each other at the reunion — you know, here we are, like, old ladies. It's like,

Why didn't you tell us? We would have done something. Because it was a time in high school when some kids were going south for voter registration. Some of our peers were quite plugged in to the politics of the day. I wasn't.

FOLLET: This was in the late '50s?

FRIED: Yeah, right.

FOLLET: No, you graduated in '62, right?

FRIED: I graduated from high school in '63. Nineteen fifty-nine to '63, I think. So, you know, it's sort of an unsettled time. Is that right? Yeah, I think that's right.

But I wasn't political at all. I was always in leadership positions but not, I wouldn't say, a political person until — and not even actually in college, except sort of I would be drawn into things. When I was a freshman, one of our teachers was being fired — I don't even remember why — but we did a demonstration. There were some issues around gay politics. I was in some — we were picked to be — what were we called? New Guard, Northwestern Guard. I think we were supposed to, like, take new students around, and this one young man was my friend; he turned out to be gay, and it was this huge scandal.

FOLLET: This is college?

FRIED: Yeah, so we defended him. So it was politics in that sense, you know, like close-up politics but not particularly [ideological] — not a [calculated] politics. But certainly some of my peers had it — were much more in tune with things.

FOLLET: But as a child, it sounds like the neighborhood was fairly homogeneous.

FRIED: Oh totally. And now it's interesting. It's now a [neighborhood] of immigrants still, but now the immigrants are Asian. So all the things that were Jewish delicatessens are now Asian markets.

FOLLET: In this neighborhood?

FRIED: Same neighborhood.

FOLLET: In this very neighborhood?

FRIED: Yeah.

FOLLET: Is Philadelphia the mailing address or does it have a —

FRIED: No, it's Philadelphia.

FOLLET: It is Philadelphia.

FRIED: It is Philadelphia but it's about 40 minutes out of Center City. So Philadelphia sprawls, kind of like Chicago.

FOLLET: In which direction from Center City?

FRIED: Northeast. So it's towards Trenton and Newtowne. There are spiffier things out there, which was a little bit the trajectory of where one was supposed to move. Well, not that far out. Our closer relatives lived either there or in Germantown, which is a bit closer to the city but not very far away. None of us was very far away from each other. It was a very — no, there were not books in my house, but the library was [walking distance] — I went to the library every day.

20:00

FOLLET: Every day?

FRIED: Just about. We'd go after school and we'd do our homework. No one ever told me what to read, so I would just, like, start at the A's. It seemed like a plan. (laughter) The Bushrod Public Library. Whenever I see it now, I think, I've got to give them money. It was, like, a little funky neighborhood library.

FOLLET: And you went on your own, you were drawn to it? Your parents didn't steer you?

FRIED: No, no. Education was important. It's just that they didn't have any, and they weren't discriminating about it. So you were supposed to do your homework and you were supposed to get A's, and that's pretty much [it] — those were the directives. But anything in between, you kind of had to fill in on your own or get it from your peers. And I was a Girl Scout.

FOLLET: You were a Girl Scout?

FRIED: Not a very good one. I didn't have a lot of badges, but I was very good at selling cookies. (laughs)

FOLLET: Did you try and fail, or you just didn't care?

FRIED: No, no. I was really a good girl. I cared. You know, I just couldn't make [it] — my fire wouldn't start. You were supposed to get your fire-making badge. I wasn't a very woodsy girl.

We took our vacations in the Jewish part of the Catskills. It's very funny, because we had our CLPP [Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program] Summer Leadership Institute in a place in the Catskills, a Buddhist retreat center, but it's the non-Jewish part of the Catskills, and

I thought, Oh my God, I had no idea there was such a place. So you know, we would do that.

My parents took two vacations a year with me: one in the Catskills at those resorts — Grossinger's, et cetera — and one in Lakewood, New Jersey, which, for reasons I don't understand, is a town where now, I think, there are a lot of Hasidic Jews. But it was, again, a place where there were a lot of resorts and [Jewish] people would go. So we'd go to this lovely hotel, Laurel in the Pines: a skating rink, a swimming pool, nice things for kids. And then, just like those movies. People are going to eat and they're sitting at the table, and Joyce is there and Joyce is single. Oh my God, well! Sarah and Hyman have a nephew in the city who is also single. So we're going to call him. Are you going to be here this week, Joyce? Okay. Up he comes. So there was just a lot of that. I mean, it was just like a joke, but that was what it was. Actually, as a kid, I didn't even think it was funny. It just —

FOLLET: It just was.

FRIED: It was the way it was, yeah.

FOLLET: So this is the '50s.

FRIED: This is the '50s.

FOLLET: By and large. This is the postwar years. This is your family's version of middle class, aspiring to be more than middle class.

FRIED: Right. And just, you know, sort of like it was scripted. My first cousins — the older generation, but my first cousins — most became doctors and lawyers. You know, out of these candy stores and women's clothing stores. And then the next generation of second cousins, who were my peers, was a bit more mixed in terms of achievement and aspiration and also level of economic resources, which I think was also fairly standard at the time. But in that group, I think my mother — I'm trying to think about — It may be though — and I never really thought about this — but among the aunts and uncles, that maybe the aunts all worked with the uncles too, which is kind of what you see.

It was interesting. I interviewed Eveline Shen for *Undivided Rights*, and she's a first generation too, but totally different, right? But so much was the same. It was so familiar, you know, when she was talking about her family and her parents and their aspirations; which is so bizarre, like across these chasms of culture and years and everything. So I think a lot of this is in part — at least half — an immigrant story of how you try and move your family. An immigrant with resources. They all came and my mother, one of the few times she talked about it, she remembers going to Ellis Island to get the next one.

FOLLET: Now she was —

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FRIED: She wasn't.

FOLLET: She was not an immigrant?

FRIED: No, and she had a sort of sad, hard upbringing, and she really wouldn't talk about it. I know only the bare bones, that her mother died and there was a stepmother who was not very happy with the kids. I think my mother was one of five children, and so some of the kids were sent to live with other people, and she was sent to live with somebody else. She started working when she was in the eighth grade, so that's her highest level of education. She had a doll collection as an adult. She traveled a lot after my father died, and she'd always bring home dolls, and she once said, "Well, I didn't have any toys when I was a kid." But that's it. So I don't know why didn't she have toys, what was this?

But both of them, I think for different reasons. I think for my father's family, they had left. I mean, they were sort of fleeing the czar and the pogroms and wanting to be assimilated. And I think my mother was a very [positive person — negativity was threatening and unproductive]. You know, Why should we dwell on that? Whatever it was, anything negative, you move on about anything, throughout her whole life. Just go forward. And even while I can be critical of that, I have a lot of that in me too. You know, just keep on dancing.

But I wish I knew more. I realize I have almost no documents. When she died, we cleared out her store. There were just boxes of — before there were computers, there were hand receipts for everything. I still have one box. I just could barely bring myself to throw — so I moved them from Philadelphia to Somerville and finally get rid of them, but it's because I have hardly anything.

I have some book where they — they had a Gerber family — the Gerber family club they called it. They would all give and they would meet periodically. I sort of remember this meeting in our basement, and if somebody was having a birthday or got an A or something, they'd put a little money in. I don't know what they did with the money. So I have the book that's the records and that's, you know, it's so precious when you realize you have nothing.

FOLLET: It is.

FRIED: Which is why it's very good that you're documenting things, Joyce.

FOLLET: But you mentioned photos, like there's photos. Are there any photos?

FRIED: Yeah. I have a lot of photos. I was thinking that I should have brought some. I have photos all sort of thrown together. I mean, my mother was not a sentimental person. She would clear it out, throw it out, get rid of it. So, you know, I have the boxes of photos, but barely in an album. Some things stuck in like that.

FOLLET: You mentioned that they were not political, that they were in favor of things that would benefit the Jewish people, but otherwise not political.

FRIED: Well, at least not harm. It was really the politics of fear. It was like paranoia, you know, They're out to get us so you really have to always be –

FOLLET: On guard.

FRIED: Exactly.

FOLLET: So the events of — the boundaries of your world. Growing up in the '50s, the boundaries of your world.

FRIED: Well that's interesting. I was just in New York with my closest friend, who's a historian, who grew up in a very different constellation, a more progressive family. She remembers the McCarthy hearings and watching them with her mother. That was not part of my existence. Rosenbergs [the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg]. You know, it just wasn't discussed, so it wasn't really on my radar screen. So the boundaries were pretty narrow.

Actually, I remember the Cuban missile crisis, this I remember. I remember I was driving in my car. I went to a program called Gratz College while I was in high school, to become a Sunday school teacher. So I am a licensed Sunday school teacher. This is a fact that not many people know about me. I never taught Sunday school, but I was sort of into it for the social life. But I remember I was driving to it, and the Cuban missile crisis was happening, but I don't really remember discussing that with my family or anything like that.

My closest friend in high school, her mother, who I was very close to, worked at the — There was a huge naval depot in Philadelphia near our house. I don't know if it still exists, but it was a huge employer. So her mother worked for that. You know, the sort of fluctuations of the Cold War probably impacted all of us in terms of who was laid off and who wasn't, but again, it wasn't in that context at all.

So I would say that in high school, it was the politics of civil rights that were the first thing of thinking beyond your little sphere. But even then, I wasn't very engaged.

FOLLET: So the swimming pool, for example, the local swimming pool.

FRIED: It just was happening. It was something that was happening.

FOLLET: And you were aware of it?

30:00

FRIED: Right. And my family wasn't very progressive. I mean, I can't remember what they thought about the swimming pool, but I can't imagine that they thought anything very good about the swimming pool. [And we didn't go to that pool. I always went to camp — day camp and then sleep-away camp. I now understand the class nature of this]. I don't think they would have been in favor of integration.

FOLLET: Did Isabel bring any of this up?

FRIED: It was really that double standard. So you could have friends from your high school, or at one point — We graduated in the middle of the year. They still did that, so we graduated in January, and then you had to wait until September to go to college. So I worked at Strawbridge & Clothier department store, in their billing department, and quickly was promoted without a raise because I had a deep voice. So I was promoted from sending bills to calling and harassing people on the phone for \$39 a week. I had a friend — I think at that job or when I was in high school — who was South Asian. I can't remember how this happened. She used to come to our house, and somehow my mother gets on to the fact that — her name was Nafisa — that Nafisa wasn't getting lunch. So my mother starts packing two lunches.

So that's all fine at that level, and then there's the macro level of race politics where the opinions were not very good. And that's what I think about Bell, and her relationship to Bell is, you know, they were like this, "our daughter"; but it didn't seem to them to have anything to do with what was going on outside of that. It was kind of like, Well, so-and-so's gay and they're fine because I know them, but gay rights, forget it. Yeah. So I think for me, politics probably began with the Kennedy assassination and, again, not very political. I really didn't become an engaged person, in an engaged way, until graduate school.

FOLLET: What about gender messages growing up? Implicit, explicit.

FRIED: Again, it was really interesting. I think having a mother that worked was much more important as I look back, and who loved her work and for whom work was really important. It was much more important than anything else. The overt messages to me were: I was supposed to be a teacher because — I was supposed to get married and then be a teacher, so that if anything happened to your husband you could make a living.

I also remember — When I was in high school, I was fond of announcing to everyone that I was never getting married. I was going to go to law school, and I was not getting married. Now I have no idea where this is coming from, and then we go to this girls' high school where achievement of women [is supposedly paramount, yet] we were girls, we weren't women. No one called us women. So achievement of girls was very important.

I think we were on the cusp, so I think in our graduating class, there was maybe one person who became a doctor, a couple of people

35:00

became lawyers. Only one other person and I have PhD's, and I really wasn't the top of the line there. Some of the most brilliant people [did not actualize their potential] in terms of work. You know, not writers. And then there was a whole cluster — And I think Shirley [Franklin] was the only one who went into politics at that level. Then there was a whole group of African American women who became part of the Philadelphia public schools — the superintendent, that level of achievement. But I think people were really held back in what they could achieve, not by their own image of what they could achieve, but the real barriers of what was possible, probably to some degree.

Our high school for girls was right next door to a high school for boys, only it wasn't called the high school for boys, it was called Central High School. And so we were like the ladies' auxiliary. That's where the real serious stuff was going on. (gestures in the direction that represents the high school for boys) So I think that clearly the messages are that you're supposed to achieve and you're all very smart and you're supposed to be good girls, but, you know, [don't go] too high.

FOLLET: Right. Now the African American girls, you said, were told explicitly, that they were given explicitly negative messages. What explicit messages — were you as the white girls taken aside and given explicitly different messages?

FRIED: No, but they were trying to control who went where. Again, it's like, how did it look then and how does it look now? Then, we were all just terrorized by, you know, if your SAT scores were not — They were deciding, you're going to Swarthmore, you're going to Fisher Community College if you don't shape up. So we were all kind of in that thing. My scores had me lower than I should be, but then I'm the class president so they'd like me to get it up a little bit. A lot of threats. I don't know that we were told very much [else].

Also, there was this bizarre thing. I remember being taught how to serve tea. You'd have these teas. You're supposed to be a proper lady, that's what you were supposed to be, an educated lady. I think we were supposed to be well-educated, well-bred appendages.

I remember being a freshman at Northwestern [University] during convocation or one of those things, and the dean welcoming us. I forget what he says to the boys — you know, You'll be here and you'll get your future career. But what he says to the females is, "And most of you will meet your future husbands here."

FOLLET: You remember hearing that?

FRIED: Absolutely. That's what you are doing here. I also remember people being panicked if they were seniors and not engaged.

FOLLET: College seniors?

FRIED: College seniors.

FOLLET: What about messages about sexuality?

FRIED: Oh God. Needless to say, this was not a topic in my household. It was something of a topic in our peer group, trying to figure things out. We didn't have sex ed. We had sex ed when we were seniors in high school, that's when it came. We were taught by the gym teacher, Ms. Weisenhoffer, who was tall and foreboding. She passed out pictures. They were teaching reproduction, not really sex, and so she'd pass out pictures of the sex organs. I am told — I don't remember this, it may be an urban myth — that I then fainted. (laughs) So probably it's true.

Also I was bulimic when I was in high school, which I think is related. I didn't know what it was. I had no idea. People knew. My family had to know, my best friends knew, but it was totally not articulated, and I don't even know how or why I got over it. There was never a discussion, there was never therapy.

FOLLET: Was it ever reported at a doctor's exam?

FRIED: No, but I think it sort of had something to do with burgeoning and repressed sexuality and achievement, from what I now know and from the cottage industry about eating disorders, but I didn't know any of that then.

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FOLLET: And it was just overlooked completely by friends, by mother, by Bell?

FRIED: I mean, it was a huge thing in our house in terms of weight. Being thin was very important, and more from my father even than my mother. It just was a huge value. I'm not even sure where that was coming from. Now you see it — you know (inaudible) all these little size-2 models — but I don't know where they were getting it from, but somehow that was part of their image of what a proper person would be like.

So there was a lot of that, and then a lot of my father being much older, his instincts about dating and all were very conservative. So my parents had a lot of fights about what would be permitted and what not. Even when I did successfully manage to get engaged before graduating college, could I go to my fiancé — maybe he was just my boyfriend then — could I go to his house in Ohio over Thanksgiving and visit? My father considered that improper. I mean, we're not talking sleeping together, we're talking, could you go visit with his family? Those were the messages around sex: don't have it period, end of story.

FOLLET: As explicitly told, or you picked it up somehow, or cautionary tales?

FRIED: No, no cautionary tales; that would be too close to talking about sex. We weren't actually discussing this. Close to our high school graduation, one person just disappeared — an African American girl —

and they wouldn't tell us. First they said she was sick, then they said she transferred somewhere. You know, obviously Joanne got pregnant. So you couldn't even articulate it at that level. Or if people were, they weren't telling me. And even in college. You know, I know people — I mean, of course we know now how many people were having illegal abortions, but I never knew anyone overtly who was pregnant, who said they were pregnant. So there was just like a total repression, even of discussion.

I dated from the time I was 13 or 14, and a lot of heavy petting, but I was a virgin when I got married. I was very scared. I didn't like [intercourse], it wasn't fun, but, you know, I sort of bought into the whole picture, or tried to. I was desperately trying to. When I, a year later, got divorced, I was just like, This was — what a failure. I had managed to marry a medical student. The other unbelievably strong message is you had to date and marry people who were Jewish, and then they had to be professionals of some kind or you were just a failure. So there were a lot of restrictions.

FOLLET: And you more or less played by the rules and didn't test the limits.

FRIED: Until I went to college.

FOLLET: And discipline was not a big issue.

FRIED: No. I played by the rules, and then I was kind of crazy when I went to college — drinking, and I had a non-Jewish boyfriend. It was so exciting. I joined a sorority. A Jewish sorority but a sorority nonetheless.

FOLLET: Now is this Northwestern? I'm thinking Cincinnati [University], but where does Northwestern come in?

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FRIED: I went to Northwestern for two years. That's where I went to college. Again, this was the early '60s. Northwestern still had quotas on Jews, African Americans. We had to submit a picture with our application, which we thought was just a friendly little thing. Guess it wasn't. I went there for two years and met a man who was a senior when I was a freshman, and he then went to medical school in Cincinnati, and so after my second year, I transferred. I followed the man to Cincinnati, married the man [Richard Wolf], left the man, left Cincinnati

Northwestern was just a crazy place. I kind of loved it. I just remember being a freshman and, you know, all my little awkwardnesses. And next door lived the Junior Miss from Wisconsin and a real debutante, someone who had had a coming-out ball. They were, like, drop-dead, classic gorgeous. We didn't have phones in our rooms, we just had buzzers. Their buzzer was ringing off the hook, and because Northwestern was anti-Semitic, they would put the Jews together. So I had this, like, insane, crazy roommate from Florida who

was depressed all the time and setting her hair on fire; and then we have the Betty Boops next door, who were just going out all the time. (laughs) So it was kind of a strange scene.

I mean, this was a real breaking-out thing to go there, you know, out of the ghetto, out of the Jewish ghetto, and out of the little middle-class ghetto. The only reason it worked at all for my parents — I had gotten accepted to the University of Pennsylvania, which is where they wanted me to go. Stay home, they tried to bribe me with a car. But my mother's family was in Chicago. So that was the only way it would seem like it was okay. I really — I can't remember seeing them hardly at all, but it made them feel like — otherwise, it would be like sending me to Mars or something.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: No, I mean we drove there, and we drove through Indiana and we were all like, Oh my God, Indiana. Where are we?

I think it was very important to be there even though it was kind of this snotty, you know, Big Ten school, football, whatever. There I had some friends who were kind of beat, beatniks. It's funny because my close friend went to the University of Chicago at the same time, and she said, "We used to go out and interview them [students at the University of Chicago], and they were, like, all into their — like they're so cool and smart and intellectuals." She said, "We would come to Northwestern and we would interview people, like, Are you happy?" And she said everyone at Northwestern would say, Yes, we are. We are totally, ecstatically happy. (laughs)

FOLLET: Unlike the students in Chicago.

FRIED: Exactly, exactly. But even for me — it was a very conservative place, but for me it was a way of breaking out into something that was, you know, out of my little ken. Also just for me, education was, you know, it just was the great eye opener.

FOLLET: Eye opener, what do you mean?

FRIED: It just transformed my life. I studied philosophy and just became interested — I was just interested in the broader experience of the world and being with people that were different from me.

I went through this phase of — I don't know, maybe everyone does this — I forgot my Jewish phase — but after that, you know, I went to all these churches. When I got to Northwestern, I'd go to different churches just to like — like an anthropologist. It was like, Wow, look at that. When I was a young teen, I went through a very religious period. I made my parents close their store on the high holidays and go to the temple. It didn't last very long, but I think that's what got me to the Sunday school thing as well as the social life of it.

I think, again, the Northwestern thing was, you know, fraternity parties on boats in the Chicago River. It was a whole different world. I stopped wearing bows. [I met intellectuals and went to underground films and learned about the civil rights movement. I was tutoring low-income kids of color in Lawn Dale.]

FOLLET: You stopped wearing bows. (laughter)

FRIED: But I'm not sure when.

FOLLET: Or they stopped matching.

FRIED: I mean, it took a while. They might have actually stayed in until almost graduate school [—replaced by madras and loafers.] Then when I went to Cincinnati, then education became much less [important in its own right] — you know, the idea was to get through. So I was there and I went summers and I finished in three years, and then I got a master's. And then I would say the bigger transformation came in going to graduate school there, and then hooking up with people who were smoking pot. We were studying philosophy, we were deep and listening to crazy music and going to the John Birch Society meetings to find out what they talked about and things like that. And then it was a very political time. I was in Cincinnati when Martin Luther King was murdered. So this is when Betty Boop [really] started to go away, and become more of the person —

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FOLLET: (inaudible) do you mean?

FRIED: Yes, and become more of the person that you would recognize. I mean, some of the things are always there, but more of the deviating from the path.

FOLLET: So the early '60s were, well, finishing high school, a couple of years in Chicago.

FRIED: Finishing high school. But see, Evanston really wasn't Chicago.

FOLLET: Evanston, right.

FRIED: Especially then, but you know, even that — I had never been to an art museum, and so I went to the Art Institute [of Chicago] — My first husband, he was into culture. We went to the opera — in the zoo in Cincinnati, but it was opera. So things like that, which had not been part of my childhood. I took piano lessons but I had never been to a concert except the ones my piano teacher organized of all of us playing. So all those kinds of things. You know, it was the time of those independent foreign films that we would all go see in auditoriums, not in — there weren't movie theaters, so you would see them in an

auditorium somewhere. Those parts of alternative culture and counterculture were beginning to seep in, even to the most conventional of us.

FOLLET: And a little bit in Evanston, and more so as you moved to Cincinnati.

FRIED: Much more so, yeah, as time moved on. In Cincinnati, I mean, even when I was married — and I have such a distinct memory of this and you'll see why. I went with my then husband, who was in medical school, and his two friends. So there are four of us white people. We went to a church to hear Stokely Carmichael speak, and we are in this huge church, it's sweltering hot, and we are the only white people in the church. The bodyguards are up there and the whole thing. And somebody faints, and they say, Is there a doctor in the house? Right. It was just one of those moments.

FOLLET: So he volunteers and —

FRIED: And off we go. I think he actually went on to do — I had had almost nothing to do with him since we divorced, but when the Panthers in Chicago set up health clinics, I think he did that. He also wasn't very political, but somehow we were drawn to what was going on in terms of a burgeoning black nationalist and civil rights movement of the time.

FOLLET: While you were in Illinois.

FRIED: In Cincinnati.

FOLLET: In Cincinnati.

FRIED: Yeah. This happened in Cincinnati.

FOLLET: This is in Cincinnati.

FRIED: And then I remember as graduates — Part of our growing away or — you know, we weren't together very long — but as I was connecting with these graduate students [and professors] with sort of a wilder streak. So it was kind of like there were two strands. So I was married and lived in this garden apartment in the suburbs and hung out with other medical students and their wives. I ironed his underwear. I didn't know how to cook. My mother hadn't taught me how to cook. She was a great cook but she hadn't taught me. I mean, in addition to working, she had certain things down. She would cook dinner before she went to her store in the morning so that the dinner was there for us, but somehow the teaching eluded me. So when I got married I had — someone gave me the *Betty Crocker Cookbook* and the *Good Housekeeping Cookbook*, which were very similar, and if I was going to make, whatever — beef stroganoff — I would just open up the recipes.

55:00

I still really, I'm very much — my instinct is to cook it by the recipe. But I love to cook, so I take liberties now, but for years I was just, you know, look at the cookbook.

So that was one part of my life, was living this very nice, staid life, and even if it meant that we were going to hear Stokely Carmichael, it was still pretty [conventional]. As a medical student and young intern — or I guess still a medical student — they were working in a hospital in Cincinnati that had a rather poor population, and he was very impacted by that. He would tell me about people who would come in, and they don't come until they're so sick that they're losing their breast or their whatever. So again, it's like, that's how these things were entering our minds.

So that was on the one side, and on the other side I have my philosophy friends and so we're, like, going out. We had a young professor who hung out with us graduate students, so we'd go to his house and we're smoking dope and we're listening to rock music and we're going to loud concerts. Kind of like having a, Who am I?

FOLLET: This is as an undergraduate initially, right?

FRIED: Initially, but I was only an undergraduate there for a year, and then a graduate student getting a master's for one or two years, and I worked in a bookstore.

FOLLET: Now this marriage was short and sweet, or short and not so sweet?

FRIED: I think it was short. I don't know, was it sweet? I think for me, it was like a bridge (inaudible). It was the way of getting out. I didn't know that, but I think it was the way of getting out from my parents and trying to become more of an independent person. Once I was married, then I was — I mean, I was still under all of their thumbs in a way, but then once I was divorced, I was my own person. You know, I ruined my mother's life. (chuckles)

FOLLET: Did she say that?

FRIED: She said very disturbing [things] — to her they were not disturbing, but in her effort to counsel me. I went home and stayed with her the summer that Robert Kennedy was shot — because I remember watching the Democratic national convention with my mother in her house — and she's trying to get me not to get divorced. His mother and everyone is trying to get me not to leave this man, he's a very lovely man. I said, "Well, I don't think I love him." And she said, "Well, you don't have to." And then I think she said, at least this is [how I remember it] — she said, "I don't know if I always loved your father, but I respected him, and he was a good man." That's the deal. Not enough.

But I also was having, I should say, for the historical honesty record, that I was having a torrid love affair with one of the other graduate students when I was married.

FOLLET: Aha.

FRIED: And it had a lot of, like, ridiculous Sturm und Drang. This thing about, you know, being a medical student. At one point the man I was having an affair with — somehow I go to his home and he's not there, or he's there, or I think he's there, he's not opening the door. I get the landlord to open the door and he's lying on the floor and he's taken all these pills, he's tried to kill himself. So I get the ambulance, go to the hospital and of course, who is on call? There were just many things like that. It's like, [there was] an accident once and part of the lover's finger's getting off, and there's my husband fixing the finger. So, you know, it was like a very small town, I think, but could it have been this small? Could these things all just be coincidence?

There was a lot of soap-opera kind of drama, and a lot of this being nurtured, I think, by our peers, by my graduate school peers, some of my young professors. [And very few females]. I was just so straight, you know what I mean? A lot of them were nuts, as we all are as academics, but in various states of this and that. So I must have still had my bows then because I just appeared as kind of a normal person who just happened to like philosophy or something. Somehow I was like a little mascot or something, that's what it feels like a little bit. So there was a lot of that going on, but I think to me, it just also said there's a bigger world here. I didn't really want to be married. I mean, that's my most prominent memory of that, is that I didn't want to be married. I wanted to just be free and to do all these nutty things. It seemed like a good enough reason at the time.

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FOLLET: So you took the initiative and ended that relationship.

FRIED: Yes, but you know, it had its own ugly [aspects]. We didn't have much, you know, no kids, no whatever, but you know, the dividing of the properties. I remember at one point, I then move out into this apartment. He shows up, takes a painting off the wall. You know, it's not like a Picasso, for God sakes. It was something somebody had given us. Off he goes.

So he was very angry and very hurt and, you know, should have been. I think I wasn't very nice, and he had done nothing wrong. He'd been a really good guy. At that point, the divorce laws — this was before people like Catharine MacKinnon. So, you know, basically he had to divorce me, not me divorce him. Something about cruel — or alienation of affection, something. It's like when you go to the doctor and you get bad news and you can't really hold it in your head. But I remember that. I remember sitting in the court thinking, This is really

not nice. And then going to the elevator, and he's at the elevator, and it was the longest time ever for an elevator to come. But then it was okay.

FOLLET: So at that point you are free to begin living another stage of your life.

FRIED: I was free to be kind of a nutty person and transferred to Brown, which is where I got my PhD. You know, I can't remember how much longer I was in Cincinnati. We had a very tight group of graduate students, and then I was with this other man. I don't think we lived together, but we were together until I left Cincinnati. So it must have been some period of a half a year or something like that. That's when I got involved in politics for the first time. I always describe this as accidental activism.

FOLLET: You know what I think, is there a red light? It means that we're winding down on this tape.

FRIED: Oh, fine. We're just at the right place.

FOLLET: We are.

END TAPE 1

## TAPE 2

FRIED: [discussion of Fried's papers]. It wasn't just put the pictures in. I have not been able to — I don't know where. I think I hid it [an album of wedding photos from the first marriage] in the basement. I have not been able to part with it. And she [my mother] saved my wedding gown, and she saved it for, like, 35 years. No, longer. Now it's like 40-some years. So now I keep thinking, Well, if she saved it all these years. It was hanging in her store, in the back. It's like, how can I get rid of it?

So here I am with this wedding gown and these wedding pictures. It's weird. And so the other day — and you'll hate this as an archivist — I found a little album that had pictures from that wedding, and I threw it out. I know, I'm sorry, but I just thought, I don't want my children to find this. You know, I don't want them to think I kept —

FOLLET: Do they not know that you were married?

FRIED: No, they know but, you know, they know and they don't know. You know what I mean.

FOLLET: Yeah. It's not part of their lives and so therefore —

FRIED: They don't like to think about it, so whatever. But it's interesting, the things you can't part with, but you don't know — They don't have a lot of meaning, and since the dress was in my bulimic period, there is no human being I know who could wear it. It is so small. (laughs)

FOLLET: But what to do with that stuff.

FRIED: But what to do with that stuff. So I will give it some good, hard thought.

FOLLET: Yeah. You know, there are ways of — it's not all or nothing and it's not — it's also whenever.

FRIED: Whenever, that's the thing, right.

FOLLET: You know, as I said, we can make copies of the photo album or something, and you keep the actual thing, or vice versa, or you can just make it clear that, at some point, this is where you want stuff to go.

FRIED: Right. I mean, I have my scrapbooks from when I was — some of them. Even though my mother threw most things out, my room she kept sort of like a shrine. It was completely pink, top to bottom, and it stayed pink always, and with all the things. So I have a lot of those things too, and I also inherited some of the lack of sentimentality, so I tend to toss things, but there's things that I keep.

FOLLET: Okay. Do you want to move to — We've pretty much gotten you to Cincinnati and to the beginnings of a new stage of your life, where you have moved beyond parents, moved through a marriage that wasn't working, and when you just want to be free and do your own thing. And it's — ?

FRIED: '66 to '68 was when I was in Cincinnati.

FOLLET: Now you got your bachelor's from Cincinnati [University], correct?

FRIED: My bachelor's is from there, my master's is from there, my PhD is from Brown. So I stayed there, got a master's and I taught. I was a teaching assistant. I was a graduate student on the National Defense Education Act, so the federal government paid, because it was in the national defense to teach me philosophy.

FOLLET: What were the — I think you said that it was, well, teaching and philosophy. What were the givens of philosophy at that time?

FRIED: Well, it, too, was very conventional. There was a pretty conventional side. There was, in philosophy, a split, which I believe continues to this day, but at that point there was sort of the logic-analytic philosophy, which is where I was situating myself, and then there was continental philosophy, existentialism. The guy who — my first political demonstration, the guy who was being fired from Northwestern taught existentialism, and I had taken it [his course in existentialism]. You know, at that point we were all in the grip of it.

But the other thing in philosophy — there were these two women friends of mine who were from New Jersey. They were sophisticated young people. They were from a very different background. My friend Wendy, her parents had been very — like, intellectual German Jews who had left because of the Holocaust. For reasons that I don't understand, but like many people from that experience, they had a chicken farm in New Jersey, which was one of the things my father always said he wished he'd done. It was a trajectory of highly educated — You know, you go in the middle — you're in this God-knows-where in New Jersey and you go into their home, and beautiful music is playing, and there are beautiful things all around. They're eating elegant foods and they're completely lovely, relatable people.

So some of what happened in breaking away was not exactly becoming a hippie, but, you know, sort of getting the *New York Times Cookbook*. Oh my God, I can cook beef bourguignon. It doesn't have to be beef stroganoff from the *Good Housekeeping Cookbook*. And getting a coffee grinder, things like that, which were, again, you know, some of this is kind of like class things, because not only was I pretty narrow conventionally in that way, but sort of a solidly middle-class

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person. I am aware of how much privilege there was in that, of how much ease. My whole life growing up, there's like the leit motif out of my parents' mouths, We were working so hard so you won't have to. You must have every advantage. But it was within parameters. It wasn't lavish, although certainly by some standards.

So in the Cincinnati thing, a lot of it was just, it was sort of coming out of, away from that in many different ways. Wearing different kinds of clothes. Not hippie clothes necessarily, but not, you know, every single thing didn't have to match, didn't have to be an outfit.

FOLLET: The bows.

FRIED: Exactly. And I had not traveled. One of the things that I did with this man Bill with whom I had an affair is we went to a philosophy institute in Calgary, Canada, for a summer, and this was very exotic. I don't know if you know Calgary. I've never been back.

FOLLET: No.

FRIED: It was kind of like a cow town, but to me this was the most exotic thing in the world. We drove across the country. We were in love and studying philosophy with these important people who we'd only read their names, and now there we were in their little institute. So that was a totally different life experience. And also, just focusing around sort of being an intellectual. You know, studying for your prelims and that sort of thing.

FOLLET: In a master's level.

FRIED: In a master's and then sort of the carry on into the PhD level, but then that was happening at Brown.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: But just going to a philosophy institute. Nobody I knew ever had done anything like that.

FOLLET: Did you write a master's thesis?

FRIED: I must have, but what was it on? Isn't that bizarre? [Actually, I didn't because I was going on to Ph.D. work].

FOLLET: Do you remember anything about the content?

FRIED: No, and it's funny because I remember my friend Wendy wrote hers at my table, which I still own, my kitchen table. What was mine about?

That's a good question. I better go check. That's so weird, not to remember.

FOLLET: So you went from the master's program in Cincinnati to Brown.

FRIED: Right. Both I and this man Bill were encouraged by our teachers at Cincinnati to get to better graduate schools. So he got into Cornell and I got into Brown, so we were going east. We were still a couple at that time.

One of the things that happened when we first got there, I went to visit him in Ithaca. My now husband, also named Bill, who I met as a graduate student at Brown, had a girlfriend in Ithaca. So Bill Fried is visiting his girlfriend in Ithaca; Marlene Wolf is visiting her boyfriend Bill in Ithaca; and we run into each other buying the *New York Times*. Because we knew each other, we say hello, whatever, we leave. And Bill Fried's girlfriend says to him, "That's the woman you're going to marry." Don't you think that's weird?

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FOLLET: Seriously?

FRIED: I guess she was right. So, you know, it's kind of strange. I don't believe in things like this at all.

FOLLET: But –

FRIED: But.

FOLLET: – he later tells you this.

FRIED: Exactly, exactly. So we go across the country and go to Brown, and my mother comes and helps me move, and I move into — This was really, even more than Cincinnati, it was a very big experience. I lived in a house, in an apartment in a house where there were several other graduate students, two of whom became very close friends [of mine] and one a lifelong friend. And so we each had our own apartment, but we did a lot of exchanging. There was a lot of up and down and a lot of closeness. They weren't all — you know, they were people in history and English, but it was very close to Brown, so it was kind of like a student ghetto kind of neighborhood. There we're now getting even a little more unconventional, taking LSD, which I did adore. (laughs) You know, again, totally being into it, very intense. I loved graduate school. I loved it. I loved everything about it, just the whole scene.

I can't remember if it was — we were there from '69 to '71 or '68 to '71, and so somewhere in that, we then became part of this radical political group called the New University Conference.

FOLLET: You being you and your graduate student friends?

FRIED: Exactly. I'm not sure what the precipitating moment was. I'm not sure how to fill in the blank of how many things had to happen, but it was also that's when there was huge things going on in terms of the antiwar movement.

FOLLET: Well, I think you said that you, when Martin Luther King was killed, which was April, '68, you had been in Cincinnati, correct?

FRIED: Right, and that's when we had done this thing of being in these — There was a black parent boycott of the public schools in Cincinnati after King's death. They called the philosophy department and said, Would some of you come and teach? We're setting up this system of alternative schools, will you come and teach in them? So we said yes, and we did them.

To me, that really did transform me in terms of consciousness. I thought a lot about unfairness, but I — God help me — taught math to seventh graders, you know, these tough girls. It was a wonderful experience, even though they had to learn math from me. It was a scary time in Cincinnati. There were tanks in the streets. Cincinnati thought of itself as a southern city, and it felt like a southern city. And so, you know, the politics of the world were coming right down, right in front of my house. So I think there was that.

And then at Brown — so '68, '69, the big student strike, the bombing of Haiphong was '71, '70? You know, in that period of time, major developments, the huge student strikes. By that time, I was really part of this political group, and I'm chairing meetings of five thousand people, and we all got expelled because we tried to block the [military] recruiters at Brown, and then the philosophy department all stood behind us in their inimitable way.

FOLLET: The New University Conference was the name of a group.

FRIED: Yes. It was a socialist group of people who worked in education or were graduate students. One of the prime aspects of the politics was to transform education. It was a class critique of education. So, you know, like the [Samuel] Bowles and [Herbert] Gintis work at UMass [*Schooling in Capitalist America*], we were all reading this. *Radical Teacher*. We're experimenting with — We're all sitting in a circle in our classrooms instead of lecturing, and things like that. And also open up the schools in terms of get rid of testing and just have open admissions. So all of those sorts of struggles. That was really the politics of that organization, and then also the antiwar work and then the burgeoning feminist movement.

This group, this New University Conference, was very sexist in a way that many of the groups were. So it had this charismatic man, who was sleeping with most of the women — not with me, I might say. I don't know why I was never asked. I can't say I would have said no [but I like to think I would]. (laughs) So then we form a women's

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caucus, we were fighting back. And then we created a women's consciousness-raising group, which I think for all of us was, you know, it really was the moment when we understood that the personal was political, you know, just like people write about, in terms of people saying, I thought it was just me, I didn't know. So this was a formidable group, our women's group. And then the men created a men's group because they were kind of scared about what are we talking about, are we talking about them.

We had a lot of leadership in the activism, but still the leadership of the group was very male. We were struggling against that, and we were struggling against the identifying roles that women were supposed to play.

When I think of going to graduate school at Brown, I think about being in this political group with all these people. I don't remember too much going to class. I did go to class. I know I was a teaching assistant. But really, the vividness of the period was characterized by politics and creating relationships. There wasn't a lot of distinction between your political group and your friends. We were all in the same political group. The women were all in the women's group together, who lived in our house or close to it or close by. Everyone lived in the neighborhood. It really defined us. We took LSD together, we stayed up all night together, went to the beach. It was very fluid. We'd write leaflets and have a party.

FOLLET: And go to class sometimes.

FRIED: Yeah, exactly. I think we did go to class but it just didn't make a big dent. I liked it, I remember class, but at that point then, I had broken up with the other Bill and was together now with Bill Fried. He was evading the draft. I mean, that was another big part of our experience, is that there was a draft. So all of the guys either had student deferments or had tried to get something else. My husband got a 4F. He had to pretend he was crazy. He had to get a psychologist to –

FOLLET: This is Bill Fried?

FRIED: Fried, yeah. That happened before I met him, but he talks about going to the draft board and to the interview and dressed really peculiarly and acting completely oddly so that people would think he was — So that was a huge part of our experience as women. I can't remember, in one of the films there's a picture of a woman holding this sign that says, Women say yes to men who say no. Where is that?

FOLLET: Yes, yes.

FRIED: Right.

FOLLET: Yeah.

20:00

- FRIED: Those politics then were completely what we were about. That and having fun and being sort of in the safe part of the drug culture. So nobody was really going to get in trouble or get arrested.
- FOLLET: So maybe the emphasis on the draft and its focus on men. Is there a cause-and-effect relationship between that and some of you breaking away into a women's group?
- FRIED: No. I think it was really the overt sexist politics.
- FOLLET: Do you remember a precipitating moment, a particular encounter?
- FRIED: Well, I remember the particular man, the one who was sleeping with most of the women and who was, you know, just larger than — and so full of himself. Oh, please. I'm not sure what was the moment at which we all said, We're not doing this any more.
- Also, there was women's organizing. We organized the Rhode Island Women's Union, which was one of the first — It was a time when there were women's unions in the country. This was one of the first, but then there were a lot. It was an amazing scene. It had no class politics at that point, so people would come to the meetings in mink coats, people would come who were cleaners.
- FOLLET: This is not just a university-based —
- FRIED: No. This is the sisterhood-is-powerful moment. We organized it — it must have been '69 or '70. It actually lasted for a pretty long time, too, in terms of that. So that was going on.
- You know, it was all very exciting. There was always something like that going on. Exciting and challenging, really challenging who you were and what your relationships were. The women's group was — I think everybody was related to Brown in some way or other. A couple of people were wives of young faculty and, you know, one woman didn't drive a car. She was totally living in a different era, so this women's group was huge in terms of people sort of holding out to her the possibility that she didn't really have to just be in her house and never driving a car and just only supporting her husband.
- Philosophy was a very male profession at that time.
- FOLLET: Right.
- FRIED: English a little bit less so, history was. So all of us were also struggling in our graduate schoolness, and there was a lot of sexism there as well in terms of how we were treated, how seriously we were taken. I think there was also a lot of sexual intimidation or hanky-panky, however we want to call it. I think it was — you were sort of struggling in your personal professional life. You were living it out and struggling for

your place, and then to have that be in your political group was just too much. I just couldn't take that.

FOLLET: What did that group end up meaning for you? What role did you play in it?

FRIED: What I can't remember is whether we were officers or what, but I remember that I was chairing the meetings when we went on strike, so I must have had some leadership role. Partly because I am really a good facilitator, and even then people could see it. I don't think I was a convener. I think all the officers were men, but I'm not really sure.

FOLLET: In the larger group.

FRIED: In the New University Conference group.

FOLLET: The New University group.

FRIED: That's right. And in our women's group, it just was like a consciousness —. It didn't have a hierarchy; or if it did, it wasn't an official hierarchy. I think we were all in it until we left Brown.

FOLLET: What would you say the — You said it was a socialist group. What were the politics of that group?

FRIED: It was socialist, maybe socialist feminist group. I think it morphed. I don't think it actually directly became NAM, New American Movement. Many of the people who I had known from New University Conference, then we all went into NAM as our next frontier. So it was like a New Left group. We were trying to bring Marxist politics to have a class and a race and a gender aspect to more traditional Marxist politics. So we would, like, distinguish ourselves from what we'd call the sectarian groups — the Progressive Labor Party or Young Socialist Alliance or all of those — and same thing with New American Movement. We were kind of the more gender-conscious, less uptight, sense-of-humor Left, less rigid. Trying to blend in some of the counterculture and some of these other ideas about what it meant to be political and to change society.

So, you know, the whole critique of higher education and the hierarchy in higher education, it had a Marxist analysis to it but it wasn't conventional Marxism in that way. But we were also learning Marxism. I remember carrying around the *Grundrisse [der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie]* one whole summer. I never did read the goddamn thing, but just schlepping it all through Europe; it's a huge tome. But we were all reading *Kapital*, we were in a reading group. We had a group at one point with the microeconomists, you know, the kind of capitalist economists — I'm not sure whose insane idea this was

25:00

— so that we would all go and yell at each other for some period of time every year.

FOLLET: Is this all in sync with your philosophy of education? You're doing this in class as well as in your group?

FRIED: No.

FOLLET: Or you're a counterforce?

FRIED: No, no. That's the other thing, is that for most of this period I'm studying, and Brown was then the most abstruse, conventional philosophy — philosophy of language and logic — which has very little to do with anything that's going on in the world. The people who were doing it were — well, there was one person who was a political activist but the others, you know, they did stand by us when we got in trouble, so they obviously were good liberals, but they were doing this kind of abstruse stuff.

The more I got into politics, the more what I was doing philosophically seemed very abstruse to me. So I decided I would change my thesis topic. Instead of doing philosophy of logic, I was going to write about historical materialism in Marxism. So I go to my committee, which has been tailored to do logic, and they say, Okay, we'll do that with you. Because nobody knew much of anything, right? So there we go.

That at least was — that's how the politics then impacted what I was doing, but really, the thesis that I wrote, I mean, the theory of historical materialism, wasn't very grounded in real world politics either, but at least to me it was closer to what I was engaged in then, this other kind of philosophy.

FOLLET: You mentioned that you were integrating race and gender into the class politics in your political groups. How did that happen? Was this built into the composition of the group or —

FRIED: Well, gender. Let's say really gender, in terms of these groups were not at all racially diverse, except one of the things that was going on, which used to really drive us nuts, is the charismatic, sexist male leader's wife — yeah, I guess she was his wife — was this unbelievable African American woman who was quite a persona in her own right. So there was that.

FOLLET: Was she involved in the women's liberation group?

FRIED: Yes. She wasn't in our consciousness-raising group. She was a figure nationally in this New University Conference and in other things. I bet she's someone that Loretta [Ross] and those people know, and she was quite a force. And I think it used to drive us nuts that she would put up

with this guy. You know, it's like Hillary Clinton, it's like, What is she doing? Leave the son of a bitch.

So there's that, but in terms of the rest of the composition of the group, almost all white. The way that the race politics was part of the analysis of the elitism of the education system. So there was a critique of that, and the call for open admissions was all around who was getting in and who wasn't. I think for all of us, that was also a bit abstract because you're in this mostly white group, right? Whereas the gender politics, we were just, like, living them. We're experiencing sexism and we're organizing.

30:00

FOLLET: What kind of organizing were you doing?

FRIED: Well, I was just remembering one of the first — and I think it was under the auspices of NOW [National Organization of Women] — it was a Mother's Day demonstration, you know, what Mother's Day really should mean. We were doing that. We were doing this Women's Union work. We were also doing a lot at Brown. We did a lot of the anti-recruiter. The spring of the strikes, I think the idea was, we organized a lot of community meetings and then, like, community dinners. People would come and eat and talk politics. They were huge. I remember this because when Bill Fried and I got married, the next night was our turn to make the community dinner. So that's what we did, that was our honeymoon, is we made chicken for 100 people. Various demonstrations around women's wages. Not, at that point, any abortion politics or contraceptive politics, or at least not that I'm remembering. It was more around pay equity, power, that kind of thing.

FOLLET: Any rape crisis stuff?

FRIED: I wasn't in it. I think even that was a little bit later.

FOLLET: That makes sense.

FRIED: Maybe like '72, '71, I think.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: So it was really the very earliest part of second-wave feminism that was going on for us, but we didn't know we were in the second wave. We had no knowledge of the first wave, and we sure didn't know there was going to be a third and a fourth wave.

FOLLET: Do you remember any moments that were particularly important for you in that group? I mean, given your gender socialization and everything that has come before, were there any particular — any aha! moments, any particular texts that you read, any issues that just became critical?

FRIED: We were reading — and I don't know if we were doing this in our women's group or not — there was something called the New England Free Press at that time, and a lot of the early women's movement writings were coming out of the Free Press. So there were things about sex roles or the psychology of women or the orgasm. Oh my God! [Also Shulamith Firestone and *Lesbian Nation*.] So we were reading all of that, and that was all very important to us. Again, as part of the, Oh, it's not just me. And then those *Notes from the First Year*, the radical feminist things which were kind of creeping out. I'm trying to remember; maybe that was a little later. I can't remember when that was. Maybe '69 or '70 was the first one. So all of those things were very important to us.

I think really it was being in this consciousness-raising group. I think it was really dramatic. I can't remember any particular moment of it, but the fact that we were doing it.

FOLLET: Now Bill came into your life at this point. You had been divorced not so recently, right?

FRIED: Well, not quite as long as — for somebody who said she didn't want to be married and never wanted to be married.

FOLLET: Yeah, right.

FRIED: It took a while to get divorced, but we were really only together for barely a year, living together as man and wife.

FOLLET: You and your first husband.

FRIED: That's right. Richard Wolf.

FOLLET: Bill number one. Richard?

FRIED: The lover was Bill [ — not Fried, a different Bill].

FOLLET: Oh that's right, sorry.

FRIED: The husband was Richard, a.k.a. Dick. He was called Dick, that was his name. I'm sorry, what can I say? And to show you how naïve I am, I didn't even know that was funny then. So you see, I really have come a very long way. (laughter)

So we were apart. Bill Fried and I got married in 1970, so maybe within two years. And I took a lot of grief for it. I mean, this was the time we also were into the critique of marriage.

FOLLET: Yes, right.

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FRIED: You know, It's an oppressive institution. We had that critique down, nailed. So my women's group, which many of the people in it were married, but that didn't matter. We were really taking a lot of grief for this.

I think for me, it was really still about my mother, who officially didn't know what we were living together. I don't know if she ever knew. She wasn't a stupid person. So I think for us, we were still pretty much — well, we were happy to be stepping away and political and everything else. We still wanted the approval of our families and wanted to feel like we were in that. So we did get married amidst a flurry of critique.

We have a wonderful poster — I'll make a picture of it — So our friendship-political group — and there are like six or so people, men and women — they shopped for a wedding present. We don't know this, except by — we weren't there. I wish I had been there. They go to, like, sort of toward the beach in Rhode Island, down that part, and they pass a store where it's just selling totem poles, and the guys decided this would just be the perfect wedding gift, and the women say, No, we're getting them dishes, which we still have to this day.

FOLLET: You still have. No totem pole?

FRIED: No totem pole, but they did give us a walrus, because one of our teachers, we always joked, looked like a walrus. We won't say who that was. He was a very esteemed philosopher.

It was kind of a strange moment. Our apartment — we had several single friends — people were in and out all the time. You know, being married was not a very — in contrast to my first marriage — was not a very exclusive relationship. I remember our bedroom. We had a porch right outside our bedroom, so if we didn't answer the door, people would — they'd just come and knock on the window. (laughter) We're coming in now.

FOLLET: Did you give any thought to taking his name? Was that a conscious decision? Was that controversial too?

FRIED: I just was still so conventional. I remember the year after we moved to St. Louis. We lived in St. Louis for a year because I taught there, and serendipitously lived in an apartment building with someone I had gone to camp with. She was married to this guy and she was trying to change her name back. They weren't getting divorced, but she was trying to take back her maiden name. She went through 12 or 13 judges who wouldn't do it. You know, it was still the time when it would have been a bigger deal than I could do. If you sort of look at — A lot of my life is like that. It's like there's a sort of public way in which I'm happy to be challenging authority, but in my personal life, you know, it's pretty staid. At one point, my kids — I started using Gerber Fried.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: And the kids' names are Gerber Fried. So it's my Daniel Gerber Fried and Michael Gerber Fried. At one point the kids say, Well, what about Bill? He has to be a Gerber Fried too. So they kind of unofficially named him a Gerber Fried.

FOLLET: He doesn't go by that though. It's not hyphenated.

FRIED: He doesn't.

FOLLET: Now when you finished at Brown, you went to St. Louis and taught there for a year.

FRIED: I taught there for a year. We lived there for literally the academic year. We went in in the end of June and –

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: The earlier years of our marriage had a lot of bumps in it because Bill Fried, he was much more affected by the '60s in terms of not really being on the track. I never really fell off the vocational track. A lot of my friends, it's a mixed bag in terms of people who really took the politics to heart and said, I'm not going to be doing this.

40:00

So Bill just kind of did a lot of different things. When we went to St. Louis, he was writing a book on, at that point, what was known as ecology, because it was before there was an environmental movement, and he just did it on his own. But this was really not a left issue at that time at all. There was no left politics around it. I remember he would come to the political group and he would try and engage people in it, but not at all.

FOLLET: But it was a political issue to him.

FRIED: Yes. So we went to St. Louis, and I taught at the University of Missouri in St. Louis for a year. We were in this funky little political group. I don't even remember how it got configured, and it was people who taught at the University of Missouri. And then we lived right near Washington University, so we were connecting with them. Leslie Kagan, who is the head of United for Peace and Justice, she was in our political group then, and then we had this guy from the Progressive Labor Party who was just completely over the top. So just kind of an odd lot of people who came together, and again, you know, it was like a social group. I remember Thanksgiving was with this odd lot of people who [were] also a political group.

We were doing a lot of work then around the University of Missouri, trying to get open admissions. That was one of our political things, but we were also doing organizing against the war. Maybe that's

when the bombing of Haiphong was. I can't exactly remember, but one of our political actions — completely insane. Somebody in Missouri, a businessman, had bought a mine-sweeper ship that had been used in Vietnam, and had the damn thing trucked on the Mississippi River and docked. He was going to make an amusement park out of it. So as a bit of guerilla-theater political action, we decided we were going to occupy the mine sweeper. (laughs) So Leslie and those people, there was a group of them, they're the occupiers, and then I'm in charge of not occupying, but calling the press and making sure people come. So we're kind of doing things like that, kind of guerrilla-theaterish things.

What I was going to say about Brown is some of the political work that we did was directed towards elections. I was never doing that. I didn't believe in electoral politics, but a lot of people were. A lot of the energy was going into that, working for [Eugene] McCarthy at that time.

So we did this political work in St. Louis. I think both of us just felt very far away from the East Coast. We were kind of just like a fish out of water.

FOLLET: But you've clearly opted to go the academic route at this point. Was that a conscious decision? Was that just a line of least resistance?

FRIED: Well, I really liked teaching. I still love teaching. I didn't particularly like the academic part of it. I really liked studying and learning these things, but I began hating academic writing and having to write to get tenure.

Maybe this is after I went to Dartmouth. I wrote this paper called "The Invisibility of Oppression" about women. I was a little bit trying — I wrote some about Marxism — so trying to integrate it, and this was about women's inequality. I remember taking it to — this was the world before computers, so you would take it to a typist. So I take it to the typist, a young woman. She says, "Oh, this is so exciting," you know, she was so enthusiastic. And then I go and pick it up. She's not enthusiastic, she's read it. It's like completely impenetrable. You know, it's like academic babble, and I just felt like, Oh, what are you doing?

Always I loved wherever I taught. After Missouri, I went to Dartmouth and taught there for six years. A completely different student body

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FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: Completely. University of Missouri, it was somewhat racially diverse. The main campus was somewhere else and it was much more white, et cetera, but this was more diverse. Dartmouth, pretty elite. Especially then at Dartmouth, but even at the University of Missouri, there was tremendous pressure to do regular, proper academic things. To go speak at philosophy conferences, which are awful experiences. I remember

my first year at Dartmouth, you know, they're kind of trying to promote me at the same time as they're undermining me, right? So I was the first woman to ever teach philosophy there.

FOLLET: At Dartmouth?

FRIED: Yeah. No women's bathroom in the building, because why did you need one, there were no women. So I try one of my small political acts, is I say, "Okay, well, here," — thinking I was being so reasonable — "there's the bathroom." I said, "Let's get a sign, and we'll say male on one side and female on the other, and when males are in there — " they just couldn't do it. Could not do it, had to convert the janitor's closet in the basement to the women's bathroom. So there's that.

There's a kind of — very patriarchal. When I went for my interview, so I drove from Boston to Hanover — it's like two hours — and they were all, You came without your husband? They treat me like their daughters or their wives. They don't know quite what to do with me. They are trying to be nice, and they also were completely undermining all junior faculty.

Then they were also trying to get me — so they got me this plum thing, to be on a panel at the eastern division of the American Philosophical [Association]. That's like, you know? So I'm having a complete breakdown, throwing up just thinking about it. It was fairly traumatic but I did it, I had to write these things.

Then I remember going with them all — this is what I remember more than anything — to another philosophy meeting. So I'm with all these men and I'm young and I'm wearing one of my long Indian dresses. I don't even know what I was doing. I step out of the cab at the restaurant, and it had like a zipper from your neck to your butt. I hear it. I just hear the zipper go. Here I am with all these men and I'm, like, 26 years old, trying to be a serious professional. There's my entire body. So I had a raincoat and I quickly put it on. They have no idea what's going on. I say, "Excuse me, I'm just going to go to the bathroom." I somehow threw myself on the mercy of the women in the bathroom, who pinned me together or whatever, so that I could make it through the dinner.

It's things like that where you just felt like, What are you really doing here? Are you going to make it in this way? So I never really liked that aspect of it, zippers notwithstanding. I found it sort of excruciating, and I wasn't a very good — I would go through a lot of trauma trying to write a proper philosophy article.

FOLLET: Having to do with what you didn't like is sort of — but the whole culture, the academic culture, the gender dynamics, the class.

FRIED: Well, I think all of that made me very insecure. I think teaching at Dartmouth, for me, was a very ego-destructive experience. I mean, the friend I was visiting [this week] is someone I had met at Dartmouth, and

she didn't have that. She didn't teach philosophy, but she just did not have the same experience. Or it didn't have an impact on her, but it took me years, I think, to get over this.

You know, I had come from Brown, I felt quite secure in who I was, and had been nurtured as part of this group. And then at Dartmouth, first of all, we just felt odd in every way. There were very few women. It was the first year of coeducation. So they had looked around and realized they didn't have any women faculty, except somebody who would teach language for 14 years and never got promoted. So they hire about a dozen of us. We're in the minority. There are 3,000 male students and 300 female students, they're in the minority. Any time you walk around in a group of two or more, people are looking at you like, Oh my God, what is that, a demonstration? We're the only leftists, you know, so we're all antiwar activists.

It also was at that time — I don't know if it still is — it was a very waspy community and athletic. I just always have this memory of driving into Hanover, and it felt like every single person we saw was blonde and bouncing a ball very well or hitting a ball very well.

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So you just felt out of it in every way, and I think that, together with the older faculty were really on us about publishing, and we were also resisting. I was trying to organize people. They didn't have any proper standards for what you needed to do to get tenure. So I was like, Okay, we have to make them tell us. And then they would say a stupid thing like, If you write a textbook it doesn't count. One of the only people left is this guy who was not a very interesting guy but, you know, he's getting fucked over and he's writing a textbook. So we went to the mat, we fought for textbooks to be counted. He's got tenure and the rest of us are long gone. (laughs) But it's kind of perfect. It is kind of perfect.

FOLLET: What about the content? In an interview you did in fact when you were in St. Louis — it goes back to 1971 — that I dredged up, somebody interviewed you, and you were about to start teaching, and you were hoping to apply your Marxist ideas to, as you put it, "To the women's studies courses that are cropping up everywhere." You were about to teach a course on women in America, I think.

FRIED: Yeah, women in philosophy. I think that's what it was called.

FOLLET: You mentioned the article about invisibility, women and invisibility. So it seems to have something to do with the academics, the style of writing that's considered appropriate, but it also is about content. How are you bringing these things together at this point, and what does that have to do with your comfort or lack of comfort at a place like — (coughing)

Let me just take a break here.

[pause]

We're back.

FRIED: I think there are a couple of different things. I think for one, the activism was always much more important to me than the academic understanding of oppression, but I was also intrigued by learning and learning about that. So at Missouri, I taught this class. I don't actually remember what it was called. It was a philosophy class and it was on women. So that was kind of my idea. One of the women came into the class one day and she said that her biology professor had told a sexist joke in the lecture. I can't remember what it was. So we decide — the class and I — that we will go to the biology lecture with hundreds of people and we will confront the teacher. So we all go to the class.

FOLLET: You and your students?

FRIED: Right, because the teacher did it very unthinkingly. Again, it was a period where people would just say things that were racist or sexist and didn't apologize. That was just how you would speak about it. So we all dutifully march, and I can't believe we did this now. When I think about it, because it was so improper in a way. You know, it's one thing to be, like, politically organizing outside, but quite another to invade somebody's classroom. But I didn't think twice about it. I just thought Okay, there's a fire burning, we better — here comes the cavalry. We used to joke, "Lenore Goldberg and Her Girl Commandos," which were in this comic book that we had all read. So off go Lenore Goldberg and Her Girl Commandos, and we went into the back of this lecture hall and we disrupted the class. We said that he had told — I don't remember what he said, I don't remember anything else, but it was a very empowering moment, I think, for the kids and for me. It was also somewhat a little embarrassing and a little whatever. But I think it was things like that, of trying to do something in terms of content.

At Dartmouth, I taught the first class on women. It was called Women in Philosophy. The philosophy department had a meeting to discuss whether Women in Philosophy was really a philosophy class or not, before I could teach it. They decided that it was, but they had no idea what — What would you teach in a class called Women in Philosophy? What's to talk about? So there were things like that.

Also when I was in St. Louis, we formed the Society for Women in Philosophy, which continues to this day. I'm not part — I pretty much, I think, mostly when I came here [Hampshire College], kind of got off the philosophy track, off the academic part of the track.

All of these things were a mixture of trying to find peers, struggling to have subject matter that was relevant to your experience as a woman, or even as a person, as a human being, in a field which seemed so abstract and so remote. Like even ethics would seem very abstract. You had people like Robert Paul Wolff, who used to be at UMass, writing about the draft. You know, that was like a real breach.

55:00

Ethics is supposed to be about ethical theory, not whether you should go be drafted or not. So it was in that vein.

I mean, there was something of a traditional — though not much for women. The generation before us, of women in philosophy, were really, they were very small in numbers, they were quite a battered group, and they were quite a mixed — I remember one of them lecturing me when I had a baby, and she said, “You just have to [make time to write] — if that baby takes a ten-minute nap, you should be working on your articles then.” That was the image: you have to be just like a man. So there was still a lot of that, being just like a man, so we were all trying to figure it out. Could we be? Did we want to be? How would you be?

So the Society for Women in Philosophy was both a support for people, and then also a support for new kinds of thinking and theorizing. And there wasn't any — we didn't have any books. There was no body of literature. There is now but there wasn't then, in terms of the things that people were writing about. This was obviously happening in every discipline, but it came later to philosophy than it came — I think it came first in English and then in history, or maybe the other way around or simultaneously, but philosophy was pretty intransigent in terms of opening itself up — that life of the family, that personal life, that sexuality, that these are all appropriate areas for philosophical thinking. That was very important to me, even though I evolved away from it, but in terms of being able to be in the profession. It at least gave you a place or told you that there were a few other people who were also in that place with you.

FOLLET: So you were in on the formation of that?

FRIED: Yeah. It's called SWIP. It was formed in the Midwest, and I think now there are ones on all the different coasts, but I believe we were the original group.

FOLLET: Their records are at the SSC [Sophia Smith Collection] by the way.

FRIED: That's excellent. Virginia Held, also one of the founders, a generation above me, spoke here at Hampshire this year. I wonder if she has papers. She spoke at — it was part of Lester Mazor's retirement series. She's an old friend of his. She, for a long time, was the editor of *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, and I bet there's some interesting things like that. She was a real pioneer in terms of writing about caring. You know, just like these were not proper philosophical subject matters.

FOLLET: So would these groups, like SWIP and the new group that you were part of, of the new female faculty at Dartmouth, did these become important groups for you as far as changing ideas or doing any collective work together?

60:00

FRIED: Totally, because you needed a base. We were all fairly isolated, especially in philosophy, in our departments. So your department could not be your intellectual or personal home. It just wasn't going to work in that way. So I think that it's struggling for place, and I also think that the impact of the way that we all had navigated politics in graduate school was that we didn't want our lives to be so compartmentalized. So we're always kind of trying to find the place that brings it all together.

What's interesting is at Dartmouth, the group that we started wasn't just faculty. It was administrators and secretaries because there were so few women. It couldn't be women faculty, there was so few of us. It also made you, to a certain extent — and then class divisions were pretty hard — but it also made us look at, you know, Well, why is so-and-so the secretary, and how come the only woman vice president is treated like she's the secretary?

I remember at Dartmouth — We lived in Dartmouth housing, and on our row — these little lovely white houses with green shutters — was this woman who had taught for a very long time in the medical school. She's quite much older than we were, probably 30 years older. She told me — and she was, now, no radical at all — but she told me that when she got promoted, they had a party for her and the men all assumed she was the waitress.

It was things like that that were very, you know, you don't have to really drop a nuclear bomb in that kind of atmosphere. Things just ring very loudly. I mean, why do I remember this thing about the bathroom? Because it's such a message about how you don't belong here. I mean it's funny, but it's also is —

FOLLET: It's powerful.

FRIED: It's really powerful, and so you're just always struggling for a way to be in that. Interestingly, in St. Louis, you know, people were always very — it was always this mixture of nice and here comes the rug being pulled out from under you. So when Bill and I went to look for an apartment, this older colleague had us stay in his house. So here I am, this young colleague — also first woman to ever teach there — and they were so generous and so nice and we're staying in their house. And then, his idea of proper dinner conversation, "Marlene, why do you think there have never been any great women mathematicians?" You know, and then the whole discussion is about, from his point of view, how women are intellectually inferior of men. Welcome to the University of Missouri philosophy department. So, yeah. And you know, I had other colleagues who were just like, Oh, Peter is just so impossible. But nonetheless, you know, you get the message.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED:                   Somehow we started on this trajectory all about how undermining — I mean, this all really did get to me, and I also think that, you know, I had never really seen myself as an intellectual or somebody who would write. You know, I grew up in a house without books, so I wasn't going to be writing books.

FOLLET:                 You know what, is it [the camera] flashing?

FRIED:                   Yeah.

FOLLET:                 You know, hold on.

END TAPE 2

## TAPE 3

FOLLET: Okay. You never had grown up with books. You had never really seen yourself as an intellectual, so this undermining –

FRIED: Also, I just had a lot of fear. I think I said this before. I wasn't the smartest person in my high school class. I wasn't in the advanced science class. I was the political person. I was always the class president. So, you know, I had a different role, and I was much more at ease with that role and some of what it meant to become a graduate student, and then the politics. So the politics spoke to the part that I — it was much more something that I was comfortable with, even though I hadn't grown up around politics, but taking a role, speaking up in that way was fine.

I think I also had a lot of real insecurities about writing and whether I had anything to say. I had done this paper that got a lot of attention, that was my job talk — you know, you had your job talk. It was really abstruse philosophy and language, and I had worked on it with not Bill Fried, but the other Bill, and I think I always felt like I could never have done that by myself. I don't know what the truth of that is either, in terms of how much was what, but I just was pretty scared. I really would procrastinate a lot and just go through a hell of a time. I mean, I wrote my thesis in a respectable amount of time, but I have no idea why or how that was. But after that, the sort of trying to get the products out was very uncomfortable.

And so I think in a way, the evolving to Hampshire, which took quite a while, and creating, you know, being a part of a program that has an educational side and an academic side but a political side — finally, a survival thing happened, but I don't think I would have survived. I quit Dartmouth, but I don't think I would have gotten tenure. I think it's very clear that when we finally made them say how many pages you had to write in peer-reviewed, refereed journals, that I wasn't going to make it. We left because we were moving to Boston and Bill was going to graduate school at MIT, but it also was very clear to me that that was not going to be my life path.

FOLLET: So you didn't push — you didn't try to publish your dissertation?

FRIED: I wrote an article afterwards, but I didn't try, no. I didn't want to make a book out of it. I don't think it was that good, quite frankly. I learned a lot doing it but I came to it late. I've never been able to look at it again. I have the original copy. My mother had had it, and I have it now.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: No, I didn't aspire in that way, but I did, from the beginning, love the teaching. So to me, it was like the medicine you had to take in order to do what you cared about. At some point that was going to wear thin.

I also, in terms of the politics having an impact on career — coming out of that New University Conference and critique of higher education experience — I really wanted to teach in a public institution. I didn't want to teach in private institutions. And I never have succeeded in that. I had some interviews, and at that point there were some major philosophy departments at public institutions, but I was just not going to get a job. I remember having an interview with Ohio State, but mostly where I was getting opportunities was not that.

So Dartmouth — it was not the place I wanted to be, even though it was in some ways — in terms of personal life — it was an easy place to be, and the life was sort of — it was pretty. My closest friends were [made] there, and we could spend hours [together]. But just in terms of, you know, do you fit in here at all and do you want to be part of this community? No.

5:00

FOLLET: Were your children born there?

FRIED: No. My older son was born in Boston. We'd moved to Boston, but I went back and taught two more summers. Dartmouth's on this year-round thing. It was some complicated thing where I had had a sabbatical and so then you owe them that, you have to come back, but I was — by that point, I didn't want to come back and so I went back two summers. I had him when I was on my sabbatical from Dartmouth, and then I started to teach at Bentley after that.

FOLLET: So a combination of your sort of disaffection with Dartmouth in particular and that type of academic life, and Bill's desire to go back to school takes you to Boston?

FRIED: Back to Boston, and also to not live in an academic community. I think this is why I don't live here [in Amherst, Mass.]. Even though this is a very different community than that one was. But you know, that was such an insular community, and your students were everywhere. I remember at one point — I had two miscarriages before I had my son Daniel.

FOLLET: Do you want some water?

FRIED: Yeah. Excuse me. Thank you.

FOLLET: If you need a break —

FRIED: I think there's something in the air now and again that gets into your —

FOLLET: Well, we're keeping you going pretty straight here too.

FRIED: But at one point, I'm walking along the street, and I am having a miscarriage. I didn't know then, you know, but I'm cramping, and I'm

kind of like this, and a student is talking to me, and he's just talking to me. He's now a man in his fifties, and he just took me out for a drink, but all I could think of was, How could you have done this?

But you know, they were everywhere. You just couldn't get away, and it was not a very — you know, to us, there were a lot of marriages breaking up. It seemed to us young people that everybody was sleeping with somebody else's wife or husband. It just seemed like a pretty dysfunctional community, and too close.

So between that and it was a very bad place to be if you were a faculty spouse, male or female, because the college was what there was. It's what people talked about. We used to call it the teapot. It's just people — they didn't ever talk about *the president of Dartmouth*, they said *the president*, you know, like, Is it the president of the United States, or the world?

And it was also a lot of people who were there because they didn't want to live in cities which, you know, translates into a lot of bad attitudes and politics, and who didn't particularly like students either. The values of Dartmouth were really around publication and being an important academic, and teaching wasn't valued in the way that it is today and in this area. So for all those reasons.

So it was a very hard place for Bill to be. He did a lot of different things. He worked on a garbage truck for a while. He taught logic at UConn. He wrote a book on prisons with someone who was a friend of ours, who was a sociologist teaching at Dartmouth. So he found things to do, but it was not for us.

I should say that I think of the group of women [hired with me], that most left. There were just a couple that stayed through. I think it was just a hard time for all of them. We were each struggling with that in our respective disciplines and with the whole place.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: So Bill then decides that he's going to go to graduate school in urban planning at MIT, and for a year he commuted, and then we were back at Dartmouth in the summer. Then we went to live in Cambridge while I was pregnant and on sabbatical, and then I got the job at Bentley.

10:00

FOLLET: So does Bentley become the tenure-granting institution or does that never come to —?

FRIED: Well it did, but it was — Both at Bentley and here [Hampshire College], it was almost written into my contract, You will not get tenure, or here, You will not get a ten-year contract. The Bentley thing, I can't even remember why, but it was something about that the dean was sort of telling me, There's not going to be a career path here, philosophy isn't going to be the big — I don't even know what it was, but for whatever reason.

And Bentley, it was interesting in that it, too, had been all male or mostly male. It had been a business school, and then it became a liberal arts college, but really, it was kind of like a business school still. So the liberal arts were really the weak sister to the real stuff, which was accounting and marketing and everything else.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: So the overall place was totally inhospitable, but the philosophy department was, like, leftist and people of color and, you know, it was kind of radicals. So it was really an interesting little niche that we had. We used to teach all these classes which we would call business ethics, because that's what you had, but we were teaching Marxism. You know, I'm teaching a class called the Philosophy of Work. What's that about? But it's Business Ethics, colon, Philosophy of Work. So we kind of did a lot of those sorts of things.

We created the first interdisciplinary course at Bentley. It's so funny to be here now and to think of that. I remember going to the dean. So it was going to be eight of us, four people from the business side of the house and four from the liberal arts. And we would go to the dean because we'd have to let him allow us to do this and, I forget, to count for — whatever — one or two courses. And when he says, "Well, when you're teaching the class, Marlene, what are the other seven doing?" It was just the concept of interdisciplinary education. But they did let us do it, and it actually became a very important class at Bentley.

And Bentley has changed a tremendous amount since those times. It was also, for me, a place where, you know, it was kind of a mixture of — I think when I had my first son, I was trying to prove that you could be a mother and still be everything else. So I believe, in the first year he was born, I gave nine talks in different parts of the country. I was just kind of like a wound-up, whirling dervish. Bill stayed home with him, and we lived in a commune, and so the commune — I was just staying with one of my sister communards [earlier this week]. So the commune had two children and seven adults, and everybody took care of the kids for a half a day each week. So between Bill staying home and the commune, made it possible for me to be a wound-up, crazy person. I was over that by the time I had my second child. (laughter) Exhausted by the effort.

FOLLET: I'm trying to think whether we should stop now for the day. Are you exhausted by this effort? I'd love to talk a little bit about the communal living.

FRIED: No, that's fine.

FOLLET: And then move into the — not that that isn't also politics, but do you want to talk about that? How did you decide to do that?

FRIED: This was the most unconventional thing I've ever done, okay, is live communally. We moved to Boston. It's all a very small world. So when we were at Dartmouth, my closest friend, who has remained my closest friend to this day –

FOLLET: And this is who?

FRIED: Her name is Carolyn Eisenberg, a.k.a. Rusti. She's a historian. She had gone to kindergarten with someone named Judith Liban, who was part of this communal house in Boston. So when Bill started commuting to MIT and needed a place to stay, Rusti introduces Bill to Judith, and he goes and stays in the commune one night a week and becomes friends with all of them. So then when he and I move to Cambridge, these were our friends then, the commune people.

15:00

For those people who think that communes were always happy, loving places, this one had its divisions and splits and difficulties. They were recruiting us to come live in the house because there were some people who weren't getting along, so we could be the bridge of peace. Everyone got along with us, everyone liked us, so if we would come, it would be a good thing. So we just thought about it a lot. Obviously we must have had misgivings, but decided what the hell, we would give it a try.

FOLLET: You hadn't done it before.

FRIED: Never, never. There are some ways in which I'm a very good communal person, and then there are just some ways where just, like, not. I can relate to being the mother of the whole commune.

FOLLET: The president of the class.

FRIED: Exactly, exactly. So we moved in when my son was eight months old. The commune had another couple. The parents of the other child were Frank Ackerman and Kathy Moore. Frank had been the founder of *Dollars and Sense*, the magazine, and Kathy, she was a singer and a designer, and I can't remember what she was doing for work at that time. And then our friend Judith, who was in law school, and David Hanks, who was a carpenter and who is also still our friend and my tennis partner. Oh, and Melinda, my friend Melinda, who is from New York, who was David's girlfriend but then wasn't. There was a lot of that. And she was my piano teacher too.

So there we all were. You wouldn't say that these were hippies, people were not defining themselves in that way. Some of the people were political. David was one of those people who actually dropped out as a result. He had been at the University of Wisconsin and had gotten totally involved in working against the war, had basically dropped out of college and did not finish college until he was, I think, maybe in his forties. Like Loretta [Ross], you know, in a way.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: So you had him. My friend Melinda was a musician, dance accompanist, sort of marginal, and then Judith was going to be a lawyer. So you had this odd constellation of people for whom this was political. It was also economic. It was an affordable way to live, but it was also part of creating an alternative way of living, and so that was the idea of we'll all share in the childcare. We did cook together. Everyone had one night a week when they cooked, one night when they cleaned up. We'd shop communally. I was the fruit and vegetable shopper, and Bill was the Star Market shopper. When I talk to my students about this, it's like telling them I lived on Mars for a while or something like that.

FOLLET: But you did it for a good while.

FRIED: Until my son Daniel was almost four. The commune then broke up. At one point the other family moved out. I mean there were just tensions, especially among the women.

FOLLET: Really?

FRIED: And then very good friendships. Judith, Melinda, and I are like this [gestures with crossed fingers] to this day. So you know, it was everything. It was both of those kinds of things. You know, just very hard, and then you clashed about all sorts of things.

I remember at one point — We had a back sink. These are the things you remember. So if you were cleaning up, and my friend David — and I think he'd die if he ever heard this — but when he would clean up, say you'd cook chicken and the pans are icky, so you put it in the back sink to soak it. And so it would soak for days. One day I was just, like, That's it. I take the dirty pans, I trot them up to his room, and I put it in his room. And he's in a rage because he doesn't know he does this. He just thinks I've just done some completely hostile act, but he doesn't know that he's doing this.

So there was just a lot of that, of people not quite — you know, not being mean spirited. No one's mean spirited, people are all trying. We were going to get a dishwasher. He prepared a five-page, single-spaced memo, because the issue was would you use more water with a dishwasher or not?

We devoted a lot of energy to communal living. We had house meetings once a week every week, where we would talk about the big things and, you know, what grade of ground beef are we buying? Do we need cheap toilet paper or expensive toilet paper? I don't even know how we had time to do this but we did. We had one housemate for a while, when that family moved out, she moved in with her daughter. She was a graduate student in psychology and so she had to go give her

20:00

job talk. So we had no idea what it was about, but we very dutifully gathered in the living room, and she gave us her job talk, and we tried to make interesting critiques of it.

So it was kind of — it was a really important experience for all of us. For me, I really couldn't have done what I did and be without that. The house next door also was a communal house. They were, in our eyes — I think they would say it too — much crazier and much more of a revolving door. But the two houses had a lot of — There was a fence between the two properties, and there was a big deal about the tearing down of the fence, and we shared the yard. A lot of in and out, especially with the kids, and there were a lot of communes in Somerville.

So to us, we were also part of a movement because Somerville was the place that was next to Cambridge, but you could afford to live there. At that point, it was a lower-middle-class, working-class city. It isn't now, it's changed quite a bit.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: It's interesting because our street that the house is on is a mixture. Like the people across the street, she was born on our street, and her family — I don't know if they were Irish. They owned several different houses at different times, and her grandfather used to be a greengrocer. The woman next door, she was a cleaner at Tufts, and her husband was a postal worker. So that was the kind of neighborhood it was, so anybody moving in is from a different thing.

About six years ago or so, we started having block parties. The two communal houses, of course, organized the street to have block parties. One of the people from up the street said, "You know, you have no idea how scared we all were when you all moved in." It was like, to them, this was such an assault on their, you know — and probably they had all these images of what communes were. Some of them were true of the house next door.

But we all went together to see — there was this movie about communes in Sweden about ten years ago. I can't remember the name of it. It was this commune where everyone is having sex with everyone. We all went, or who was left from our communal house, and we were just, Was this going on in our house, or did I just miss all of this? But it wasn't.

FOLLET: It wasn't.

FRIED: But you know, there were very funny things. I remember my son Daniel, I think he learned about sex in the following way. He was, like, two or three, and somebody's door came open, and two people were sleeping together who were not — whatever — and Daniel comes screaming down the hall yelling, "Two Irvings are sleeping together." Because it was Irving Street, the Irving Street commune. "Two Irvings

are sleeping together.” So everybody was like, What? (laughter) But I don’t know if my kids even remember it.

FOLLET: That was going to be my question, was there impact from that?

FRIED: I don’t know.

FOLLET: Really? Your older son was four when it ended?

FRIED: Just about. It ended just before. We lived there three-and-a-half years; he was eight months old. Yeah, just around four. I mean, the people are still in his life, some of them, but I don’t know what he remembers of it.

But it’s interesting. When we moved in, there was a little girl who was just Daniel’s age. When her family moved out, this other little girl moved in, “Becka Boo,” who is now a graduate student in anthropology. She still relates to our house and to us as another family, even though, you know, they moved to California and we hadn’t seen her in years. But when she graduated from college and she was moving to Boston, she called and asked if she could live with us until she found a place to live, which of course she did. You know, it just seemed appropriate to her to do that, and it seemed appropriate to me to have her do that. So it’s kind of interesting. One of our other housemates just came through — I wasn’t there — this summer. Again, people turn up.

25:00

FOLLET: People keep coming back.

FRIED: Who knows? We were a trust. It was called the Irving Street Trust. We have no idea if this was a legal thing. A couple of people had down payment money on the house, and then anyone who had lived there for more than six months would accrue shares in the house. Everyone paid equal rent. So when we bought the house, we then had to calculate [the shares]. There were like 30 people. The profits were then to be shared by all the people who had ever lived there. I still have the little notes. People wrote us notes because when you would call people, it was like that old show, The Millionaire. “Hi, didn’t you live in Irving Street? Well, you have a thousand dollars.” “What? Really? Whoa.” We have no idea. We went to get our second mortgage at this bank in conservative Somerville, so we all go — seven of us, the two children — go up to discuss with the guy — I can’t remember — we needed a roof or something like that. So you just don’t know if these things were — it was of that period. It was an entity of its time.

FOLLET: So you moved there in –

FRIED: Let’s see, Daniel Fried is born in 1977. So we moved there. He was born in February and we moved there in September, 1977. Then Michael Fried is born in 1982 — is that right? He’s 25, yes. So I was

pregnant with him. We must have bought the house in like the fall of '81 or something, right around then.

Part of what happened was that it had been a pretty stable house, even though this other family had moved out. It had been a pretty stable house, and then people started to graduate. Like the person who was in psychology got a job at UCLA. So people started to move, and I really found that very disruptive. So we went through some cycles of people living for shorter periods of time, which was okay but not great.

So we decided to move, Bill and I, with our kids. Everyone but two people were moving, and we all decided — we had a collective decision — that if they wanted to re-create a house, it should go to them. So they tried for a while and then they decided they really didn't want to. So we bought the house, and one of them, our friend David, then we made the third floor into an apartment and he lived there until he got married, and then our other friend who moved out lived very close by. So we're kind of not too far flung in the ones that stayed around.

FOLLET: And you're still in that house.

FRIED: And we're still in that house. Some days I think, God, do we have to re-create the commune now and call it assisted living, have all the same fights? The founders were the Ackermans and their friend Judith and somebody else from Northeastern Law School. I think there are still a couple of the communal houses in Somerville that existed at the time. They're smaller, that still exist. Not so many people involved. I'm very glad to have done it. I found it — I mean, as the only child who had the family in the closet?

FOLLET: Yes.

FRIED: Okay. So finally the family is out of the closet and there they all are. I also think for me, a lot of the women's movement organizing and political activism is about that. It's about trying to create family, you know, tight women's relationships, sisters, wherever I'm going.

So I think there's a lot of that in it for me, but I also had a lot of trouble not — like if somebody's parents were coming and their room was messy, I wanted to clean their room because I didn't want their parents to think that people who lived in communes were flaky people. You know, people had very different boundary issues. So the way the house is laid out, the first floor, that you have been in, was the public space, and then everyone had a room. People felt very differently about if you had guests, you know, are they all of our guests or just yours? I always felt like we should retreat and let you have your guests, but other people didn't feel that. Especially for people who didn't live communally, who were visiting or coming for dinner, and weren't friends of everybody, it was hard.

30:00

Then I also remember once I had somehow invited my department at Bentley, and one of our housemates, who was just kind of nutty, was upstairs. There was like a little hole in the ceiling and he's dropping paper clips or something. You know, just people acting out. (laughter) You know, I'm just trying to be professional here, okay? I'm just trying to have a career.

So while I was very happy to do it, I came to a point where I couldn't really sustain it.

FOLLET: So it was okay that it kind of fizzled out.

FRIED: Yeah, it was fine. I think in some ways it had some kind of lasting impact on us in terms of our house being a place where people can come; or, you know, when our next door neighbors' house had a fire, they came and lived with us for a while. You just kind of — that kind of openness, in and outness of the house. The guy who lives upstairs, when his mother comes to visit — because his place is a mess — she stays in our house. You know, you just don't think of that as weird. It's just kind of the way it is. Just another way of living.

Even though it was challenging, I'm very glad to have experienced it. I don't know that it's any more difficult than living in a family. It's just that since you're choosing it, you get to be more intentional about it. Maybe you have a lot of expectations and demands on it.

But we would go places together and we would do yoga in the third-floor hall. We'd have these crazy seders, you know, alternative radical seders. So you'd have, like, 35 people who are having a seder in the dining room, and ten people are in the kitchen fighting about the seder. "Should there be a seder?" "Why should —" (laughter) "Why can't you be more traditional?" "No, it should be more radical."

FOLLET: Was it an all-Jewish group?

FRIED: No, no. I think it was, you know, atheists. (laughter) A mixed bag, I would say.

FOLLET: Okay. Well, unless there's anything else you can think of adding to this piece.

FRIED: I don't think so.

FOLLET: I've made note that you moved there in 1977, and I've heard you identify 1977 as the point at which you really began your reproductive rights activism.

FRIED: Yes, when I was pregnant with Daniel.

FOLLET: So maybe that can be our taking-off point tomorrow.

FRIED:                Yeah, that's good.

FOLLET:             Okay.

33:47

END TAPE 3

## TAPE 4

FOLLET: Okay.

FRIED: How are we?

FOLLET: We're good, we're good.

FRIED: We have a student coming by. She spent the summer with Charon Asetoyer as an intern [at the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, Lake Andes, South Dakota].

FOLLET: Oh, no kidding?

FRIED: And apparently had a life-transforming experience. I mean, not just with Charon.

FOLLET: But the whole — oh, no kidding. What do you mean she's coming by?

FRIED: She's not going to be here today but she's coming back. She's been in South Dakota since —

FOLLET: Oh, I can't wait to hear about it.

FRIED: So if there's anything good in the written reports — their final reports, we tell them, are not confidential — we can send it on to you.

FOLLET: Oh, the students' reports?

FRIED: Yeah.

FOLLET: Oh, I'd love to hear about it. I went out there in August to interview Charon, so there were students there.

FRIED: Probably our Ellen was there.

FOLLET: This was maybe two years ago.

FRIED: No, no. She just went this summer.

FOLLET: Yeah. And they were crackerjack.

FRIED: Well, this was a great student. She works in our office and she's unbelievable. You never know with Charon. She could be reducing you to tears in one moment.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: I was impressed. When she went, what Jael [Silliman] said is that she, speaking from her experience as being from India and being all over the world, that it was the poorest place she had ever been, which I was just so — and that when she thinks about what they do in that context, it's just amazing. Okay.

FOLLET: It is amazing, and the ripple effects are huge.

FRIED: Huge.

FOLLET: In part because they –

FRIED: I didn't even ask you about your film.

FOLLET: They make themselves known, but also because of the reports they do. Their records are at the SSC. They have never thrown anything away. They are beautifully kept, beautifully organized.

FRIED: Isn't that interesting. Is that Charon or is that somebody else who's –

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: Wow!

FOLLET: Yeah. I mean, I think there's maybe 30 boxes.

FRIED: Oh my God!

FOLLET: It's really a fine, fine collection. So in terms of their story getting lost, that's not going to happen.

FRIED: This is fabulous.

FOLLET: I mean they're ready. They came in in good enough shape that students can use them.

FRIED: Oh, this is wonderful.

FOLLET: So, you know, if you have students looking for projects.

FRIED: This is great, oh my God.

FOLLET: You know.

FRIED: Yeah, definitely.

FOLLET: Whatever.

- FRIED: Oh my God, fabulous.
- FOLLET: And at this point, I think there's probably something called like a box list, an initial list. They sent one. Charon had her son go through and –
- FRIED: And what was in each box?
- FOLLET: What's in each box.
- FRIED: Oh my God. What a keen eye to history. A good woman. I don't know why I'm surprised, because none of the rest of us is like this.
- FOLLET: Yeah. There's kind of — The balance between activism and record keeping is not always, it's not a 50/50. You know, you're too busy, and even if it gets saved, it doesn't get saved for the long haul. It gets tossed when the office moves, or a new leader comes in, or something like that.
- FRIED: Yeah.
- FOLLET: Oh good. I want to hear more about it. So here we are back on — I know what day it is today. It is Wednesday, the fifteenth of August, right?
- FRIED: Yeah.
- FOLLET: We've both had a swim since yesterday.
- FRIED: We're happy.
- FOLLET: So this is good, this is good. So what's the surprise thing you've thought of since?
- FRIED: I'll say what it is and also why I think it's important, which is that I was a cheerleader in high school. Of course, at the Philadelphia High School for Girls, it doesn't mean it's like the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders. But to me, it really is to say that I became a political person, engaged in radical politics, not because of what I did before but because of the political times and the movements. That's why I think I keep emphasizing how conventional my upbringing was, and how conventional was my view of the world. And had I not existed in that time, I wouldn't be who I am. I think that that's partly why building organizations, creating movements, hooking individuals to movements is so important to me, because I don't really think that you're just a political activist because it's in your blood. I think it's because it's in the air.
- FOLLET: I'm so glad you said that, because I was wondering the same thing after our conversation yesterday and the things that you emphasized. And I

5:00

was going to ask, you know, if you could pinpoint one source or rank the sources of your becoming an activist. Was it a traumatizing or enlightening experience? Was it existential philosophy? No. You said yesterday it was not. Was it a religious tradition? No. Was it a family tradition? No. Was it something visceral that you can't explain? Was it social in the sense that that's what your cohort was doing?

FRIED: It really was that's what they were doing. Obviously, you bring your own self to it, so I had who I was in the world, but, you know, who I had never been was a question-authority person. I don't see that I would have been a question-authority person or, you know, go against the institution in the ways that I did if it hadn't been that I was in the grip of the movements of the day. They did speak to my experience. I mean, certainly the feminist politics did, and the antiwar spoke to basic ethical things. So there are things to hook yourself into, you know, my own experience, in our family, around race. So you know, it can all get in line or it can just sit there and go nowhere.

FOLLET: A seed that never sprouts.

FRIED: Yes, exactly.

FOLLET: A thing that never happens.

FRIED: It's interesting, in the *Jane* book that Laura Kaplan wrote [*The Story of Jane*], one of the things she says — I always remember this — is, "We were ordinary women in extraordinary times, and we did extraordinary things."

FOLLET: But this speaks to privilege.

FRIED: Yes, it does a lot. Because privilege alone doesn't move you, right? It's very comfortable; your instinct is to protect it. So you really need, from somewhere, a challenge to that privilege.

For four years, I sat on the board of a progressive foundation, a very wealthy family, a family foundation. The older generation that had started the foundation really tried to instill in them that because they were so privileged, they owed something back, and this is how they were going to do it.

But in the absence of that, or feeling people saying, Why should you have it? I think all the time, Why should I have these things and other people not? Or when my kids were screwing up, and we're spending a fortune educating them, and I'm thinking, There are kids in other places who can't be educated. Why don't I just take this money and give them tuition? It does kind of challenge you.

Doing international work has challenged me enormously, just in terms of traveling and seeing what it means to be even a political activist in a different context. You know, I feel like my job has been

pretty easy, my politics have been easy. There was always a cushion, there were always people around. And I'm working with people in this country and elsewhere whose activism comes at a really huge cost personally, just what it was to get there, to do that work.

This summer I met a young woman from Mexico. When she was 20, she organized this great group in Mexico to challenge the abortion law. You know, I'm just thinking, God, when I was 20, I was just nowhere like where she is. Or I work with someone from the Philippines who joined the underground when she was 14. You know, it just — So we come together. She's now a middle-class professor, a doctor, but you know, what she's bringing to the table is quite different.

So I do think all of that is important as well. It's partly why it feels depressing now in terms of younger people. I don't think younger people now are less radical. I think there's less — (door closes)

10:00

FOLLET: Let me go fix that. So you were saying you don't think young people —

FRIED: That I don't think that it's sort of like a generation is or isn't radical or caring, et cetera, but that it's what's surrounding you that then calls to you. Can you afford to do a political job, or are all your friends doing that? Or are all your friends trying to make as much money as possible, and so that is what you should be doing no matter what your personal ethics are? So somewhere in between obviously, but I really do feel that I am the person who I am because of that, and then because of people that you meet along the way who nurture what you're doing, who say, Yeah, that's the right thing, and who then become role models for you. The role models I had before were very different and were really in the realm of what a proper, middle-class Jewish girl would do.

FOLLET: Can you track your trajectory from that beginning point of fairly conservative socialization with an ethical sense —

FRIED: Well, and also the gender role. I do think my mother was very critical in this. We always locked horns quite a bit. She wasn't the most nurturing of people, and she was a controlling person. If my husband were here, he'd just be laughing, but so am I. I like to think some of the edges are smoother. I couldn't see that. I couldn't actually see — really, I think, almost until she was dead and I wasn't so enmeshed in the struggle — how much who she is and was is who I am, just in terms of defining yourself by your work. Her much more extremely than I even, but you know, sort of having something that's beyond your small sphere. So even though it wasn't political, she wasn't living out the gender role that you were supposed to live out. So I think that was a very important piece of it.

FOLLET: The struggle? You were no longer —

FRIED: Oh, between her and I. On the surface, it was a struggle over power, control, who's deciding what here, but much more nuanced than I ever saw. She was my advocate vis-à-vis my father when I wanted to do things that he thought were not proper. So I could see that.

I also think my life began to not make sense to her. My life wasn't like the lives of her friends' daughters and her relationship to me was different. Many of them didn't leave the town where they grew up and saw their mothers all the time and, you know, were much more in the mold. She once came to our house in Somerville and said something like, This could really be a nice house if it were not so old and [you] fixed [it] up. You know, I was supposed to be in some new split-level, everything, fine.

So I just think it wasn't materialistically — because her life had been very oriented around material comfort and having proper things and, really, money and things were a sign that you were a successful person and that you were providing properly for your family. So getting a PhD was almost too much, and she really never did know what philosophy was, and to the extent that she did, I don't think it made sense to her that somebody would spend their time doing this. [It's not that I wasn't materialistic. We did buy a house and obsessed about fixing it up. But we had very different tastes from my mother. I also love shopping for clothes, I tend to go to small stores with the same feel as my mother's shop — people know you, etc.]

She liked that I was a professor, and she was always very proud of that, proud of the books, but not quite her thing. It was devastating to her that I would not stay married to a doctor. I mean, this was sort of the highest level of personal achievement. So I think all of those things were very hard, and when I was embroiled in just feeling the judgment and the disappointment, I couldn't really stand in her shoes.

15:00

FOLLET: How did she express that?

FRIED: She was very passive aggressive in ways that I was sort of inured to, but my friends would — you know, that's what your friends are for. I can't believe your mother said that! And sometimes she would just say it outright.

The other thing that was a great source of tension was the extent to which I did alter my life around my children, something that she had not done. I think she would often be very overtly disapproving of it, even though I think I was very spoiled in many ways too. [It was also easier for me as someone with an academic schedule, not working retail 6 days and week and several nights too.]

So it was this constant — You know, it's a very Jewish-mother thing. It's like, give you a red tie and a green tie, and you wear the green tie, and she says, "Didn't you like the red tie?" And really, life was like that. It was very push/pull. She would be sort of over-the-top generous with us and with the kids in terms of money and gifts, but if

you were spending all your weekends going with your kids to do things, that was excessive to her. So that was a very hard thing.

I didn't see her as a good grandmother. When my first son was born, she broke both her arms. And I know it's not a person's fault but — And she couldn't come and be helpful; it was all about the arms. My mother-in-law, who had been difficult as a mother, was a great grandmother. So you know how you kind of — probably your kids are reconstituting you all the time and mine will me. But to me, it was a very different phase of life and it just didn't work well for my mother. I think she was bored a lot, and I read into that how she must have been as a mother.

FOLLET: Bored as a grandmother you mean?

FRIED: Yes. Bored with kids. Bored with the activities of children. And so, you know, then I thought back a lot to, Did she really need to be as absent as she was? And I don't think so.

FOLLET: Isn't it amazing how you just revisit these things based on the stages of —

FRIED: Exactly.

FOLLET: It is astounding.

FRIED: Right.

FOLLET: But you're saying that her passing — and she passed away when?

FRIED: In 1995; on Mother's Day was her funeral. It somehow opened up the space to sort of see what she had given to me in this other way that was much less direct but really significant.

FOLLET: The affirmation of your work.

FRIED: Yeah. And being a connected person to work and politics really, which I almost — I don't have any boundaries so it all seems the same to me. But yeah. And her energy. Many people remark that I seem to have a great deal of energy. That's how my mother was. I mean, she was really a whirlwind almost all her life until her last few years. You know, the getting up early to do the cooking, and the here and there and running this business. She was always up for something.

And also she was incredibly social. Her store was — it was like a little hub. There were people who would just come and hang out. It wasn't like a busy shop. It had a lower-middle class, working-class clientele. It was a neighborhood store, just a few blocks off the beaten — the place where the really busy stores were — but it would have all these people who were part of the store culture.

20:00

FOLLET: Interesting.

FRIED: Very interesting.

FOLLET: I didn't pick that up yesterday.

FRIED: I don't think I said it. So the store was really, you know, that is was what it was for her. It wasn't just buying and selling. Also it was having a clientele that you knew. You know, like it used to enrage her — if you take her to a store where nobody knows anything about what they're selling, it would just put her into a state.

By the end of her life, she actually was not making money from the store. She was putting her own money in it. Her accountant would call me and say, "She doesn't know what she is doing." I said, "You know what? [She knows exactly what she is doing.] It's her money, it's her life, it's fine." But really, that's how it sat for her. [The store was at the center of her life]. It wasn't really — it provided a very good living and degree of comfort for a long time. And then for a long time, it didn't, but it provided sustenance.

The other thing which is kind of interesting, I loved being around the store. Once, when she was sick, I went and ran the store for three weeks. It was very easy for me to just step into this role with the people who worked in the store and, you know, who were nothing like my present life, but it really didn't matter at all. It was fun, people were funny. It was like family, it was.

So I think that is also really important in terms of some of the threads that have turned up later in terms of communal living and political groups. It's interesting, like within NNAF [National Network of Abortion Funds], I experience the board in that way. We're not a board like a show-up-and-rubber-stamp-things board, and we're quite connected, and some of us have been together on this board for now over a decade, and we've really become friends through this. It doesn't even matter if you agree politically all the time. There are some of us who are so far apart, but we're really connected now. I think all of those things are very important too.

And then as I said yesterday, I really do think that education and seeing a bigger world and being challenged. When I was at Northwestern as a freshman, I took a class in philosophy of religion, and honestly I couldn't at all tell you what was the content of this, but I remember storming out of the class, and I don't know what it was that pissed me off, I just can't remember — that I was a traditionalist of some kind. But just having experiences like that. Or the first time arguing with people — staying up all night — about whether God exists or doesn't exist. You know, we really did those things.

FOLLET: Right.

- FRIED: We really did them. My friend Rusti and I, we traveled to Europe together in 1974 with our husbands. It was when Nixon was resigning or being impeached, the whole thing. We had a seven-hour fight, she and I, about whether you should feel sorry for him. She made the mistake of saying she felt sorry for him.
- FOLLET: Oh boy! (laughter)
- FRIED: And I was, like, in one of my most doctrinaire periods. But we would do that all the time. When she left Dartmouth, she had — I hope no one from Dartmouth ever listens to this. We had what were called watts lines then — this was before the time of free long distance — and we all didn't have kids, and we would talk on the phone for like three and four hours a day after she left Dartmouth. I don't know what we were talking about, but, you know, a real kind of — you know, all of those sorts of things were really critical to me.
- FOLLET: And it resonates with how you describe your graduate student experience —
- FRIED: Yes.
- FOLLET: — as a cohort of people who just kind of traveled as a crowd and did everything together, and the communal living and the family in your closet, your childhood closet.
- FRIED: I guess it's all the search for family rather than justice, huh? (laughter)
- FOLLET: Are they so different?
- FRIED: I don't know. It is very interesting to me. I see it in my older son who, at this stage of his life, is not very political, and some of his politics I don't love. He's a very mixed bag but he is the center of his social group, and I can sort of see some of the same — which I think has just seeped in. I don't think he sees that at this point but, you know, when I was 30, I sure didn't see it from my mother either.
- FOLLET: Right.
- FRIED: It's interesting, my father's been dead since I was 21. So I don't really remember. I don't have that much of a sense of his impact on my adult life. He died six weeks before I married Richard Wolf, and Richard Wolf's father had also died that year. So we were sort of in this shadow of these fathers dying, but I don't really have a good sense of him except for sort of his particular ways. He was very caring in our family, and it's [somewhat] replicated in my own marriage. He was the quieter, more gentle, [laid back] person, he was. So these things I absolutely remember, but you get your qualities from where you can get them.

25:00

FOLLET: From where you get them. I want to keep this idea of where your political bent comes from and how you express it and how privilege feeds in over time. Keep that on our radar screen. But in terms of specifics, we left off yesterday when you had bid Dartmouth goodbye and were moving to Boston for a variety of reasons. You made some decisions about the relative importance of academia versus other things in your life, although you took another academic position at Bentley.

FRIED: Yeah. I would never have left. I mean, you could say I actually never have left academia.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: I've figured out a niche, but I would not have had the courage to leave. And I also have been the major breadwinner in our family. So it's courage but it's also pragmatic. For example, when I took this job, I took a three-year leave of absence from Bentley. You know, I really was like covering my — just to make sure it would all work out fine. While it was very clear to me that I didn't want to do the straight academic route, I didn't really have an alternative conception until I got this job.

So what I had was that I was an academic and a mother and a political activist, and they were each somewhat discrete. The politics and the work were quite disparate, even when trying to integrate some — especially gender politics and radical politics — into the teaching. So you know, even in our — we all had to teach — At Bentley we had to teach like a zillion courses, eight courses a year, and you had to teach many sections of Introduction to Philosophy, because that was our bread and butter at the time. So a few of us, we had sections on sex roles and gay rights, you know, all of these things as part of Introduction to Philosophy. There were also, blessedly at the time — because of the time — there were a few, even, textbooks, compilations of books that you could use as intro to philosophy textbooks, that had these social and ethical questions in them. So even that, but it still felt pretty disparate.

I never thought of teaching as a political activity. I thought you could do it in a way that was shaped and informed by your politics, but I never thought just having your class sit in a circle and not getting grades was really my political [work] — it was what we had to do.

One of the things we did at Dartmouth that got us in a fair amount of trouble is that we decided to challenge the grading system. This was also from this early politics of, you know, you're trying to operate in the academic institution and change it. So we did various things, including sometimes we had people — we'd make grading contracts, so if you just did what we said. Sometimes we had students grade themselves, which was actually hilarious. I mean this all would just piss everyone off, as you might imagine.

30:00

FOLLET: Yes.

FRIED: At one point, I had a student who was going to graduate magna cum laude but he gave himself a D in my class because he felt he hadn't worked hard. So all this time [the Philosophy Department] has been, like, lambasting those of us who were engaged in this, including I might add, the now president of Dartmouth, who was part of our little group of whatever. Well, he was part of signing on to some statement. I don't think he actually did these more contentious things. So the philosophy department holds a meeting to try and get me to raise the student's grade because they want him to graduate magna cum laude. I mean, it was just perfect, the contradictions abounded.

The best was that one year, we decided we're giving them all A's, that was how we would deal with it. I had my little philosophy classes, but my friend Rusti taught this intro history class. It had 300 students and she gave 300 A's, and this just, like, brought the house down. So things like that, which were always going on.

That really was getting more — in terms of being political — that's the way to get at an academic institution, because that's where they live and they would write us letters: Grading is part of your job, you signed on, you have to do it. It was all very interesting, but I still never thought that that was enough; that really being a political person had to be about changing the society and not just the place where you were at. I can't remember how we got to that. Oh, Bentley.

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: At Dartmouth it was easier to sort of be more integrated, but Bentley was pretty — it was a really conservative institution, had been a business school, very male. So we were, like, our little outpost. We did what we could, again, within that. I was doing my own little version of sabotaging grading. We just weren't making a whole thing of it. At Dartmouth we had a manifesto that we got people to sign on to. We weren't doing that here. But, you know, operating within our own little world the best we could and bringing politics into it.

For these students — and I don't think this is Bentley's cohort now — but at that time, we had a lot of first-generation kids who were from the suburbs that ring Boston. So there were white Italian and Irish kids. This man who was one of my students then, he was from South Boston, this big, Irish Catholic family, and he was pretty conservative too, but he was gay. He wasn't out to anyone and he came out to me, and he then decides he's going to start a group — this is at Bentley — and he'd go to the dean to get funding. He wants it to be a proper student group. The dean says to him, Oh, there's no need for a group. I'm sure you're the only person like this here. (laughs) It's just such a charming, ridiculous thing. So those of us who were political and radical were refuges for the people like him. He's reconnected. He's married, under the Massachusetts law, to his life partner, who is African

American and, of course, in a twist of fate, his entire white Irish Catholic family comes to the wedding but the African American people don't come. It's just like –

FOLLET: Did you go?

FRIED: No, I didn't. I wasn't reconnected then, but now I [have]. He talked to me about how important it was to be in my class. You had those sort of personal victories of people. Hillary Goodridge [plaintiff in same-sex marriage case in Massachusetts] was my student at Dartmouth.

35:00

FOLLET: I remember that.

FRIED: You don't really know. You hope you'll have some sort of lasting impact in someone's life, or be the person for them that that philosophy professor was for me at Northwestern. But you only know it anecdotally, if you ever find out these things.

FOLLET: Right. So if the politics and the teaching remain somewhat discrete, what did the politics look like when you moved to Boston?

FRIED: When I moved to Boston, I joined the New American Movement, and I also, I think the very first thing I did was there was a women's center in Boston and it had a women's school. You know, like a community school, you'd offer a course. So I met with my now longtime colleague, Margaret Cerullo, who I didn't — you know, I just met her then because she was running the women's school and said I could teach a course. When we moved to Boston, I knew the commune people, and some of them were political, but my instinct of how you get rooted in a community was you find the political people. That's kind of what we had done in Dartmouth and it's what we had done in St. Louis. So I did the women's school and I joined the New American Movement.

The New American Movement defined itself as a socialist feminist organization. R2N2 [Reproductive Rights National Network] started out of New American Movement, but out of a sense that that's where — reproductive politics was where really exciting organizing was happening. So I was kind of looking around for where I should be putting my energy and was getting the message that I should go work with abortion politics.

So I really came to it from this much more kind of socialist politics, where-are-things-moving place, and I joined something called the Abortion Action Coalition, which was a group in Boston that had — some of the members were people who were in the Combahee River Collective as well. It was kind of an eclectic group of Boston feminists.

FOLLET: Do you remember names? Who had been in Combahee?

FRIED: I'm trying to think. Beverly or Barbara, I always mix them up. One of them was in it.

FOLLET: [Barbara] Smith.

FRIED: Yeah. Margaret was part of it. [Sue Trotz. Marla Erlie (Margaret C's partner, I think). Their records are at the Women's Center in Cambridge. The Cambridge Women's Center has an archive, and it was kept for many years by Libby Bouvier, B-O-U-V-I-E-R. I've never tried to use them, but she was very persistent about getting people's records, and I think there are probably things there that would be really great for people to look at.

FOLLET: The Combahee records are there?

FRIED: I don't know if the Combahee River Collective is there, but our Abortion Action Coalition is.

FOLLET: Aha, okay.

FRIED: Out of the Abortion Action Coalition, people went in many different directions. So after the Abortion Action Coalition came something called Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom, which was Ana Ortiz, Renee Scott, and Donna Bivens, Milagros Padilla. Oh my God, who else? A few others. That was a very exciting formation. It didn't last very long but it was there. And then something called the Massachusetts Childbearing Rights Alliance came out, and they were the kind of Marxist-Leninist feminists and they drove us all nuts, even though at some point I became part of it. And then our local R2N2 group. So people went in various directions at a certain point in '78, '79, right around there.

FOLLET: Were you part of the emergence of R2N2 out of the New American Movement?

FRIED: I wasn't part of it originally, but then I was on the national steering committee for several years.

40:00

FOLLET: Of?

FRIED: Of R2N2. So I wasn't the very first, but then I was on it. So for a very long time, from that point on, my reproductive rights politics was defined much more by activity at the national level. I was always in a local group, and this is exactly how it's been here with the National Network [of Abortion Funds] and the local abortion rights fund. I was always in a local group, but I was always doing more at the national level than I was doing at the local level, with brief periods of flurry, like when the clinics, you know, clinic defense and all that.

FOLLET: We recently had a slide show arrive at the Sophia Smith Collection, a slide show that was –

FRIED: About population control.

FOLLET: It was from the Boston Committee to End Sterilization Abuse. Boston CESA.

FRIED: Wow.

FOLLET: It comes with a script. They mention some guidelines having been adopted in 1979, so I know it's later than that that this group exists. Were you involved with a Boston CESA group at all?

FRIED: Are you sure it's Boston? Because R2N2 had a slide show, national. There's a lot of blood on the floor over this slide show, but it was about sterilization abuse and population control. I had it in my basement for a long time, and I think I gave it as part of my records. So I'm not aware of a Boston CESA.

FOLLET: We should check, because that's how it was described to me, as what I was being handed.

FRIED: Well, the content is that, but I have a feeling it's the R2N2 one. So I'd love to know about that. We could check that out.

The politics of all of these groups — the Abortion Action Coalition and all of them — we were like the radical part of the pro-choice movement. We didn't call ourselves pro-choice, we didn't want to be that. It wasn't working for us either. But for the most part, the Abortion Action Coalition and the Massachusetts Childbearing Rights Alliance and Boston R2N2 were predominantly, overwhelmingly white groups. We worked with Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom, and some people were in both, but it really did shake out [mostly by race].

There was a lot of organizing. At that time, there were a lot of murders of black women in Boston, and so we joined with Combahee on protesting those. So there was a lot of crossover. We weren't just single-issue abortion people, but I think the race politics that we write about in *Undivided Rights* were really quite sharp in these groups, unwittingly. R2N2 always at least connected abortion to sterilization abuse, but we weren't a community-based group. Like, for a long time, we met at the Harriet Tubman House in the South End, which is embedded in an African American community. No one in our group lived in that community.

FOLLET: Now this is your local R2N2?

FRIED: But we were desperate to be connected, so okay, we'll meet there, but no one ever came from the community. We weren't part of the community. And there was a lot of discussion in national R2N2 about race politics, racism, diversifying the movement, but it really was from the place of diversified inclusion as opposed to creating something new and different.

FOLLET: Why aren't all the women of color joining us?

FRIED: Because we're the good people. We are the people who talk about access. We are the people who talk about race and population control. So I think it was so limited and ultimately — I mean there really are different stories and understandings about what happened to national R2N2, because yes, it was true that there was a sectarian group in it that had women of color in it that was trying to sabotage it. That is true.

FOLLET: Does that group have a name?

FRIED: Line of March, and the women's group was the Alliance Against Women's Oppression. There were a few very leading people. Vicki — God, what's her name? She was a doctor.

FOLLET: Alexander?

FRIED: Yes, Vicki Alexander. I can see the other one now. She's in a film, smoking up a storm in one of the early women's movement films. I met her recently. It's a core of people who — they were also genuinely committed to reproductive rights. They were in these sort of Marxist groups who really didn't have much of a minute for gender politics. So they were sort of like the outs of their [organizations] — but they were also really bringing with it those politics, and trying to create a little havoc in our organization.

45:00

But nonetheless, our organization was just not there in terms of understanding — not just understanding that there were racial dynamics, but that you actually had to deal with them before you would deal with other things, that that was political, dealing with them. It went through a series of things like, you know, the whole steering committee is white, but we hire somebody to work in the [office] — you know, just classic, classic. And then she feels unsupported and we just think, Oh, she's a pain in the butt, or we just can't deal with that, we're busy. Oh my God, you know abortion rights are under attack. How can we talk about what's happening with her? You know, every possible mistake that you could make.

FOLLET: Do you remember the group, the Alliance against Women's Oppression, that is part of R2N2, right?

FRIED: Yes, and they are a part of Line of March, although they don't say that. They don't, we just knew that. I don't know if we knew it all the time. Then they formed a women of color caucus in R2N2. So national R2N2 actually had a women of color caucus that was relatively small but much larger than anybody's local group did. So the Alliance was actually almost all women of color, and so they had a very big footprint in the caucus. Not the only footprint, but the biggest, most organized one.

FOLLET: Do you remember moments, at board meetings or anywhere in the organization, when push came to shove on this issue? Was there a particular proposal that had to be hashed out, a particular confrontation? I mean, can you describe in detail any example of this lack of consensus on this?

FRIED: So here's sort of the most public and worst. Worst in the sense that it's the most public and highlights the clueless nature. We have a national R2N2 meeting of 300, 350 people. We were big. At the high point, we had over 100 groups in the Network, and it was this hodgepodge. It was everybody who didn't feel that they belonged in the mainstream choice movement. So you had clinics, you had left groups — every left group had a little piece of it. And then you would have local grassroots groups that just, you know, felt like they were more radical. So we had this big conference, and the focus is racism. That's the focus of the national conference. We hired facilitators to come and do all this work, blah-blah-blah.

FOLLET: Do you remember when and where this is?

FRIED: No, but I could.

FOLLET: It's okay. That's not the important part.

FRIED: The first thing that happens on the Friday night of the conference is a performer has been hired. I believe she is a woman of color. She does a one-woman show of the history of birth control. That's good, sounds terrific. So she's performing and we're all sitting there, and it was racist, it just was. Just the portrayals of people and the characterizations. And we all knew it, we're the steering committee. Vicki must have been on the steering committee then, because nobody says anything. We just can't imagine what to say and we're also — who knows. Finally Vicki stopped it, but it was fairly awful in the sense that why did she have to do that, which she was quite pissed off at, and I think we all felt completely mortified. And also that we had seen it. It wasn't like we hadn't understood that, but we just couldn't do that.

So we get past that really terrible moment, not very far past it, and then the next day, I remember we're in this huge room, and the facilitators put little signs up all around the room, each describing an

50:00

ethnic or racial identity. I can't remember what all the others were, but I remember that one was white. And then they say at a certain point to the 350 people, Okay, go stand under the identity that describes you. No one is standing under the white sign, because no one wants to say they're white. (laughs) Yeah, exactly, because we're all paralyzed with guilt, and it's just an unproductive morning.

I would say that that was really emblematic of where the consciousness around race was, is that we knew that there was racial oppression. We felt that by being white you were part of it, and so how do you deal with it? You just deny it. You know, you desperately try and find one of your other identities.

FOLLET: Do you remember where you stood?

FRIED: I don't. I just remember being so blown away by the whole thing. Maybe we were the steering committee and we didn't have to stand anywhere. Maybe we were rushing around to make sure everything was fine. [Or maybe I was evading the truth like everyone else.]

FOLLET: You were serving coffee.

FRIED: Right, exactly. Can I get you a cup of coffee while you go to the blue sign?

FOLLET: And the organization is predominantly white. Is that true?

FRIED: Overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly. Of the 350 people, at least 300, if not more. So, you know, you had a good chance to get some people. (laughter) There was that. I'm saying it now and, again, in a humorous way, [but] these politics were devastating to the organization.

Then there was a lot of fallout after that, a lot of bruising things happened. We then had a smaller meeting to discuss what was going on. Part of what was going on is the woman of color who was in the office was expressing a great deal of dissatisfaction, and the steering committee just was quite divided on whether it was — you know, we were just too busy. You know, we had to get the grant proposal out, we've got to get the — And we just didn't deal with it. And within that, then, you had the kind of Line of March stirring the soup and really kind of jumping into this void, but it was a void. [Otherwise] they couldn't have made a mess.

FOLLET: Then how did they jump in?

FRIED: Well, it's different ways. It's interesting, because I think if you interviewed — Margie Fine is someone who feels really strongly they wrecked our organization, and is much more on that side than this side. She had been the original R2N2 staff person. She was very young when she was hired, just out of college, and she was just this dynamic — a

person who comes to your interview, she's completely made up, cleavage, the whole nine yards, but she's like a powerhouse. And here's, like, people in their Birkenstocks. (laughs)

But you know, she was great, but she really had a sense of what it meant to work in the office, and you have a steering committee who's not there. You know, to feel unsupported. So I think she felt some of the things that the person, the African American staff person, was feeling was just — that came with the territory. But you know what? It's different, right, when the race dynamics are cooking. I think there's some things that are suspected, that were behind the scenes, that were not overt.

And then there was at least one person who was white on the steering committee, who was much more into trashing her white [sisters] — where she's the most antiracist, we're just impossible. Again, she was a really good soul, Maxine, but that was her way of coping.

Everyone had put a lot into this organization, and it was rather devastating when it fell apart. We kept trying to try and find ways.

Oh, I know what happened. And then, the women of color all decide they're leaving the organization. That's what happened. And they say, But it's fine if you all want to keep your organization and reconstitute it. So then there was a huge discussion, so you know, Do we want to be the R2N2 white people who were left by the women of color? I don't think so. But probably someone like Loretta [Ross] would have said, Yes, get your shit together and be that. But we just couldn't do it. So that was the official demise. Those of us who were left just said, We're not doing this, we can't do it.

55:00

FOLLET: And was there an office that folded? Did you cease having board meetings?

FRIED: We had part of an office in New York. I think maybe we shared it with CARASA [Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse] or something. That's why the records ended up in all these different houses. It must have taken a while. We didn't have too much. I'm trying to think of whether we even had a 501C3. We took in a lot of grant money, but I don't know if we had our own 501C3. So we didn't have things to close down, we didn't have debts. We had a lot of bad feelings, and then there were a few groups like our own in Boston which survived despite the demise of the national. There was one in California, and obviously CARASA was still — And then people moved into somewhat other spaces.

So, you know, I still encounter people from that time, who are still doing the work or something related to it, so it wasn't like everyone cut and run. There were a couple of other incidents, like the one about the slide show, where there was a lot of political debate around it. Again, sort of around how negative — what's racist, what isn't. I can't even remember the specifics of that one.

There was also something around Ana María García, who made *La Operación*. She had come to R2N2 early on when she was doing the film, and we were kind of helping her get it around, raise money for it, show it. Then some bad things happened along the way, so that I think that didn't end up being a happy alliance.

So there were these various things, and at every stage along the way there were white women who were not playing the most positive role in terms of helping to move the group. They were there with other agendas. That's why I think the Line of March stuff was important. They weren't invested in creating a nonracist R2N2. That was not their goal.

FOLLET: The Line of March was not?

FRIED: Yeah. They were much more invested in getting Line of March politics into the movement, and I would say that there was a lot of that from different places in this. You know, you have these national groups, they really all have their own thing they're doing. There's SWP [Socialist Workers Party]. And so even though usually the individuals who came to the steering committee did have a genuine commitment to the [reproductive rights] politics, I think the politics of their own organizations tended to prevail. So I don't know if it would have shaken out differently. Some part of me feels like at a certain point it has to go and something new has to come.

But it was pretty shattering at the time, and it left without there being another political pole [other than] choice because these other groups weren't going to do it. Like, Line of March is not going to have 110 groups doing that, right? It's just not going to happen, they're too sectarian. So it really — there was a big void there that did not get filled again. Some people have kind of turned up again in NNAF, some trying to connect to SisterSong, still keeping those politics alive, but not in a strategic way.

We really did think, in R2N2, that we could have an impact in kind of a way that the reproductive justice idea is having an impact now, you know, 20 years later. But that's what we were trying to do, is really push [against] this choice framework and create something that was more dynamic and compelling. And also, not electoral politics but different kinds of political organizing. So for me, this was very important. It was my first doing feminist politics at a national level, and also doing reproductive rights politics.

FOLLET: Has it started to —

FRIED: It's flashing.

FOLLET: Okay, if it's flashing, let's pause for a moment and switch.

FRIED: That's good.

60:00

END TAPE 4

## TAPE 5

- FRIED: [off-tape discussion about Fried and other activists having been cheerleaders]. First of all, in our office, like four people were cheerleaders. And so we were at the Summer Institute [CLPP Summer Leadership Institute], and I wrote this reproductive justice cheer, which is really great. I'll send you a copy. You have to take a lot of license with the words in order to fit them into the rhythm.
- FOLLET: Yeah.
- FRIED: But I can't tell you how many people had been cheerleaders, wanted to be cheerleaders. You know, we did a whole little thing, made a pyramid, and had a little scripted thing –
- FOLLET: Oh, you're kidding?
- FRIED: No. We did this whole thing, it's really great. But I just started laughing and I said, you know, cheerleading must be leadership development, because all these activists have been cheerleaders.
- FOLLET: It's something.
- FRIED: And they're not even our generation, they're young.
- FOLLET: I was just going to say, generation.
- FRIED: No, they're young.
- FOLLET: Well, it gives you experience with a megaphone.
- FRIED: Well and I guess it's also — oh, the megaphone. We have to put the megaphone in the tape, the R2N2 megaphone.
- FOLLET: Oh, it's R2N2?
- FRIED: It was stolen by a priest at the clinics, and Susan Yanow went to small claims court and got — They tried to rip off the bumper stickers, but, you know, the glue remains, so you can see exactly where — (laughs) Oh, it's a beautiful thing.
- FOLLET: Okay. The trauma over race, the paralyzing impact of race in R2N2. Did issues of class or sexuality come up with that kind of intensity?
- FRIED: Not with that same intensity, but, for example — and this was true throughout the choice movement, but it was painful to think that it was also true in R2N2. Many of the core people were lesbians, but for the first few years, there was no lesbian visibility in the organization. It was

like that was some other issue. So it wasn't really a very holistic, integrated sense of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

But there did then become a lesbian caucus, and it was a very big deal. I think class issues less so. Maybe through some of the clinics a little bit, but not dealt with in that same kind of really up-front — where it comes to a big clash and then falls apart, at least not that I remember, but certainly the ones around sexuality.

But the race was the most bitterly, untransacted, harshly transacted, divisive, the most at sea. Maybe if I had been part of the lesbian caucus — that there was that same feeling of, We just had no clue of how to deal with this, or at least how to deal with it in a good way. Everything we did seemed to make things a bit worse, so even the people who thought of themselves as the most sensitive or who didn't have another agenda, who really were trying to make the group be antiracist — but we weren't very good at it.

Really, in terms of myself, it really wasn't until I went to the Sisters and Allies, and I went with a couple of other people in my local R2N2 group, who had very mixed reactions to it. I mean, it was kind of a crazy, hokey thing. There was the psychodynamics part of it, which was kind of kooky.

FOLLET: Of Sisters and Allies. Can you explain where the whole Sisters and Allies came from? Was it one meeting or a series of meetings?

FRIED: I believe it was a project of the National Black Women's Health Project, but it was the Lillie Allen piece of the project, and it was under the guise of self-help. I think because what Lillie Allen then went on to create became known as self-help, is why some of the subsequent groups who use self-help, they say theirs is different from what the project did. So at the end, there is not a universal notion of self-help.

But the Lillie Allen piece was very based on reevaluation counseling. Some of the idea of it is that you would break a person down in order to get to the core dynamic, and then you could build back from there. But this was being done in a context that wasn't really a safe space by any definition of safety. So if you were part of that, it was extremely difficult.

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So you have Sisters and Allies, and the basic conception of it was to bring women of color — primarily African American — and white allies together to figure out ways of working together better politically. And some of what you had to do was get over some of your personal crap about race. So that was the idea of it. I can't even remember how it is we knew about it or, you know, thought it was important. There actually was a debate within our local R2N2 group about whether it was important, because to some people it didn't seem like politics. It seemed a little too new-agey or whatever, and what's the group going to get out of it, because we're spending group money to go. But we prevailed, and Cara Page, who was also my student at the time, also went.

FOLLET: And you went to — where is this?

FRIED: We went to — I think you say Dahlonga, Georgia. We went to Atlanta — that was still when the mother house was part of the Project. We went there and then a bus came. There's pictures, so you can see how many people there were; but there were like tons of people, and we were all trucked up to the mountains of Georgia. It was just spectacularly beautiful. But you know, kind of like us taking all these young people to the Catskills. It's a pretty remote area and it's like a camp, you're in bunks, and then there's a main lodge and all that.

And then Lillie Allen was there. I don't remember Byllye [Avery] being there, but Lillie was there, and she would run these big group sessions where she would, you could say select, target somebody to be the recipient of this. It was pretty rough stuff. I mean, she used personal knowledge that she had of people. So yeah, exactly, it was crossing a lot of lines. People would get extremely upset, and then other people would have, like, secondary upsetment from watching this. To me, those sessions were like, I think I almost just discounted them. You know, I just tried to get out without getting harmed.

But then you were in small groups and Loretta was my small group leader. I'm trying to think of who else was in it. There was a young woman, Alex Stanton, and I can't even remember who else. The small group was, for me, the place where it really happened, and because Loretta was our leader, it was very political. She wasn't going to sit around and listen to white guilt all day long.

FOLLET: Can you describe that? Describe it –

FRIED: You know I don't really — it's more impressionistic. I hadn't known Loretta. I had only met her at [the big women of color and repro rights] conference she had organized. So this was after that. So this is somewhere — it must have been like '88, '89.

But there were a lot of tears in this, and so there was some talking in terms of people talking about where they'd come from. I think maybe questions like, How has race or racism been an issue in your life? And so, you know, of course from the white — I mean, the Stanton kid, her father was the head of CBS or ABC or one of those, so she's coming from super privilege. There was quite a mix, as I remember, of who we were in our group. But what the white women, including myself, were bringing to this was really, you know, like racism from the side of privilege, and then feeling like, How can we deal with this? And feeling guilty.

To me, the most important thing, which I have always talked about all the time, is basically the message from Loretta and probably from others, that you just have to deal with that. You know, that's yours to deal with, that's not us. We're not here to fix this for you. We're not going to make you feel not guilty, that is just not going to happen. And

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we're not going to spend any time making you feel not guilty, except to say, you know, It's okay, we all come with a lot of whatever, and it doesn't mean you can't be a good ally and a good activist. That's the message: that you can have benefited from oppression, you can be part of the oppressing race, and you can still do this work.

I think even though you have to keep saying that over and over, because you don't really believe it — but that was permission, and it's ucky to say that you had to have permission, but I feel like I did personally. Permission to move on, not to stop. I mean, I keep struggling with this all the time, to not make it the subject matter. I mean, that was it. It's like, We're not here to talk about your racism or the racism of white people. In such a critical way this was certainly not the only, but an unbelievable contribution of Loretta to the *Undivided Rights* project was to keep saying, This isn't about the white people and what they did; it's just not. Yes, it's true, that's all true and it's important and it's whatever, but it's just not the subject matter.

I remember at least one if not two of the people I went with from R2N2 just were so turned off by the Lillie Allen piece of this that I think they just couldn't much move with it. But in general, our R2N2 group in Boston, there were enough people who really wanted to figure out how to be allies of women of color that it was okay. We're not talking about a group of 100,000 people here.

So, you know, there was enough support of people trying to work this through together. This was the most important political experience for me in terms of trying to understand where I then went with it. It created my alliance with Loretta and working relationship. I think it was really deepened for me and Cara, although you sort of didn't quite know it at the time. Meeting people who then turn up later in life, and just being more open, you know, open to trying to really struggle through this.

FOLLET: Aside from the permission, which is huge, what did you take away from that Sisters and Allies meeting?

FRIED: It's the de-centering of whiteness and racism, and the re-centering of a different kind of political agenda and what was important. It was interesting, because the Project at that time —

FOLLET: The Black Women's Health Project?

FRIED: Yeah. It really was almost — I mean, it wasn't the only one. I remember Charon Asetoyer was at this, and Luz was at it.

FOLLET: Luz Alvarez Martinez?

FRIED: Martinez. So Byllye [Avery] must have been there. Each one talking about how important the Project had been to their organizing, which I think it was at that. I'm not sure if it was at that, I'll have to look at the

picture, or if it was at — but something I had been to, where it was very clear to me how these alliances worked.

So the Project was the biggest and most visible of the women of color organizations. It was alternatively being courted by the mainstream pro-choice organizations and very important to them. They really wanted the Project to be pro-choice and be out there, and it was.

Sisters and Allies opened the space to see that the Project wasn't just about abortion. I remember I met somebody I hung out with a bit, Robbie, I can't remember her last name. She was — One of the things that the Project was doing in Atlanta was it had organizing in housing projects, low-income women empowerment projects as part of their work. I must have sat on the bus with this woman because we talked for quite about what she was doing, and she herself, her personal welfare. Also, for me, it was the most intimate I had been with people who weren't just middle-class activists, you know, who weren't professional political people. Again, it just, it challenged — except for working, I guess, in the early '70s, we worked with welfare rights organizations, but, you know, even then, it was people who were professional activists. They came from a different place, but they were much more recognizable than, you know, somebody who's a single mom in a housing project.

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So I think that was really important in terms of my own thinking about issues, and what is an issue and what isn't an issue, and why it's important. R2N2 had a holistic, integrated, intersectional analysis. We have a whole list of things, but, you know, it's one thing to have the list, and then another to see it coming together and to appreciate the fact that for some — people enter at different places, enter the political arena. So I think that was really important for me.

I think the other thing is that this began to be a political home in a way. I mean, I was not an African American, so I wasn't going to be part of the Project, but you could. I was a member, you know, I had a little button. I was a part — I was an ally. So it was a place that made sense. That doing abortion rights work was so much more comfortable under this rubric than under the mainstream choice rubric, and even than under the R2N2 — Or it was a place for the R2N2 politics to feel like they had a connection to the constituencies and the communities that we professed we were part of.

FOLLET: So you had sustained the R2N2 at the local level.

FRIED: Yeah, we sustained that for a long time, and it would go up and down. Our R2N2 group, throughout the late '80s, we did clinic defense at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Brookline. We would go every Saturday at 5:00 in the morning; and then when the murders happened in Boston, we, with NOW, but a lot us, organized this huge vigil that night. Our group would swell or not. So like at the Webster decision [*Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*], we went from six to 14, and it was like, Oh my God, look at us. Maybe we even had 20 at one point, and it was

like, Unbelievable, this is a movement. But for the most part, we were a relatively small core group who felt pretty marginal in terms of the larger movement.

For a while, we were part of the statewide Coalition for Choice, and we left it over this Dukakis gay foster care issue, but we had kind of like pushed our way into that, only to feel [marginalized and compromised]. I was the person who went. I was our representative on that steering committee, and I just always felt like every vote was seven to one. Or sometimes the [Massachusetts chapter of the] Religious Coalition [for Abortion Rights (RCAR), now Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC)] would vote with me, but it was really feeling like our politics were really on the margins of this movement.

What is really interesting to me is that out of that spawned the National Network of Abortion Funds, the Abortion Access Project. Maureen Paul, who's the head of NAF [National Abortion Federation] and a major person in the field of training and providing. So a lot of leadership of the movement has come out of our little marginalized fringe group.

FOLLET: In Boston.

FRIED: Yeah. So Stephanie Poggi is now the ED [executive director] of NNAF; Maureen, who was the head of the NAF board and is the –

FOLLET: National Abortion Foundation.

FRIED: National Abortion Federation. And she's also been the medical director of several Planned Parenthoods. Susan Yanow founded the Abortion Access Project. [R2N2 founded AAP and Susan was the ED]. So, you know, this is a lot of leadership from this place, and in a way it makes me think about that women of color coalition that we read about in *Undivided Rights*, of Mary Chung and Luz [Alvarez Martinez], and how people were really connected to each other. And even then they were driving each other crazy sometimes, and then really supported each other, and that really has continued. So we persisted. Even after R2N2 died, we still — a core of us is connected, and we actually just had, last year, we had a reunion of our local R2N2 group.

FOLLET: Really?

FRIED: Actually, I should give you those things. One of the people had put together some of our old leaflets.

FOLLET: Oh yes.

FRIED: I'll get them. They're in the closet, I didn't throw them out, and we had found pictures of our work.

20:00

But we sustained ourselves at the local level. We had some cohorts in other places, but we were kind of looking. Where do you look then, to larger national direction?

FOLLET: Yeah.

FRIED: And to an affirmation that you're on the right track. And so I think in some ways the Project, the National Black Women's Health Project, was something of that for us in a way. The Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom Group in Boston, Health Care For All — you know, those kind of bigger political forces and organizations were then where we looked for at least some sense of, Are you just, like, these six crazy women in Boston doing your own thing?

FOLLET: And the six of you were all white?

FRIED: Six or seven. Not all. I think all but one or two. Ana Ortiz was [in the group] for a while and then Vanessa. [Both Ana and Vanessa were partners of white women in the group.] There were two Latinas in for a while. I'm trying to think of whether there was ever — I think Renee. Maybe a couple of people who then cycled into that Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom Group were in it for a while. We didn't have hostile relationships. You know, as we learned with *Undivided Rights*, people are doing their own group and it makes a lot of good sense, and, you know, you can then be good allies.

FOLLET: Did you have any models of white antiracism at that time?

FRIED: Not that we were consciously operating with. Stephanie [Poggi] and Susan Yanow had also a lot of experience in the violence against women movement, and they both worked in this shelter in Boston. Maureen [Paul] had done women's health center work, and then people doing welfare rights. So people are bringing a little shred of experience one way or the other. I don't remember if we did diversity work at the local level, although we would have endless discussions of why are we always or overwhelmingly — Then it would die down and we'd just say, We are who we are, we do the best we can.

FOLLET: But it sounds to me — is this right? — that going to the Sisters and Allies gathering in '88, '89, is really the next step from the kind of paralysis, the way race paralyzed you in R2N2.

FRIED: Yes, at the national level — yeah.

FOLLET: At the national level. That this, the Sisters and Allies, and the de-centering, that your paralysis isn't what this is about.

FRIED: Exactly.

FOLLET: We have another agenda, and we need to put that in the foreground, and work with us if you can, and we're moving on with or without you. Is that –

FRIED: Absolutely. And also, even like before that, the conference that Loretta organized as part of NOW.

FOLLET: Can you talk about that conference?

FRIED: Which was “Women of Color and Reproductive Rights.” Again, like, '87, I think.

FOLLET: Was it at Howard [University]?

FRIED: Yes.

FOLLET: Okay.

FRIED: It was very big, or at the time it seemed big — 300 or 400 — and incredibly dynamic, and again, another of these spaces — an “In Defense of Roe.” I went to all of these, sort of really searching for someplace where our politics made sense. And they did make sense in these contexts. That and then, in the very early '90s, when Betsy Hartmann, my colleague and friend here, got me to go to these International Women and Health Meetings, which was sort of at the international level, playing that role.

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So these were very important as positive spaces, as spaces where a dynamic, exciting movement and groups were organizing. You could connect to that and not be endlessly — you didn't have to go to these groups and say, Well, let's not talk about choice, or abortion isn't the only issue. It all made sense in that context, and suddenly the things that we thought in our little R2N2 group — it was like, it wasn't just us.

FOLLET: So the '87 conference at Howard and eventually the Webster [“In Defense of Roe”] conference in '89, but there was a series of regional forums, and when you say, I went to all of these –

FRIED: Those were RCRC [Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, then called Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR)] ones, I think.

FOLLET: Yes.

FRIED: And I wasn't part of that. I was too antireligious at that point.

And I think the other thing that we never really saw is how many women of color were working in the mainstream. So here we were, and we're, like, the most antiracist group or whatever, and it's Planned Parenthood, of course, that has the most women of color working for it.

I mean, that doesn't make it an antiracist organization by any means, but we didn't really exactly have ways of making connections with those women. And that's why it was so interesting to me to encounter this woman [I mentioned] yesterday, who had worked in Planned Parenthood as a young African American woman, who felt resonating with our politics at that time around gay issues. But there was no way, no way to make that bridge.

FOLLET: Between your group and Planned Parenthood, or her as an individual?

FRIED: Or even her as an individual activist. It just wasn't going to happen. At the time, I experienced each thing, each of these gatherings, as just a real nurturing, exciting activity. I would be full of ideas. I would come back and I'd write about it in the R2N2 newsletter and talk to people, but I didn't experience it as a continuum of connected building at events. But clearly they were, and they were for the reproductive justice politics to emerge too.

Same thing for the "Mosaic for Choice" [conference] where there was a very strong women of color presence. ["Reproductive Justice" first emerged from the women of color caucus at this conference.] It was a Ms. [Foundation] conference; it was, again, overwhelmingly white, called "Mosaic for Choice." But, you know, that's when a sort of very clear critique emerged, but coming from people who had a lot of stature in the choice movement. So you really had to listen. You have, you know, Toni [Bond] as the first head of an abortion organization in Illinois, who is a woman of color, and she's telling you that even doing that work, there's critique here. And Loretta, you know — impeccable credentials in terms of the choice movement.

I think these things were all very important, because it wasn't people saying, Don't work on abortion. It was people saying, There is a broad perspective here, abortion is part of it, but it's not the only thing. I have this great T-shirt from one of the marches — I think the '89 march — that was done by some radical student group, and it says on the front, Abortion is not the only issue, and then on the back it has all the issues that are the issue.

And I guess that's the other thing, is those politics were around. That is part of what was some of the politics of R2N2, and they just didn't have a place to go. And I think that's what I was saying at the very beginning about, you know, there's, like, who you are and there's other places to develop this and make it into a force as opposed to something you just think or have an inkling of.

FOLLET: And by the late '80s, there are enough women of color organized in their own groups, around their own agendas, that –

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FRIED: That you at least feel they're our allies. Again, everybody feels marginalized and each national march was another occasion for people to feel slapped in the face and just not taken into account.

FOLLET: Because?

FRIED: Because the mainstream groups continued to dominate. So when you really get the national politics cooking, the narrow choice framework would prevail. Even at that one where the Project organized all those buses and there was a huge contingent of women of color, it still did not have a feel. Really, until this last one in 2004, where there was a diversity of speakers — you know, Loretta and Silvia Henriquez [executive director, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health] — and people really kind of pushed for a different shape to things.

But that's not the way the old ones looked. The old ones were much more tokenized in terms of the women of color being a visible presence, and also in terms of the broader politics. They were called the March for Women's Lives. You know, one of them, they tell us that we should all wear white, you know, the old suffragette — right, hello? Or they tried to control the banners. You couldn't have your own banners and signs. They all had to look a certain way. You know, just really white-breading the whole thing. And each defeat felt like a bitter defeat: That's it, this movement's hopeless, we don't want to deal with it. Again, then you kind of see, you get to a point where, blessedly, things are changing.

And then in all of this — you know, after all of this kind of work at the political organizing level, then comes the National Network of Abortion Funds, which was totally different from anything I had ever done. The most related, in a very direct way, to the constituencies that we claimed we were paying attention to: low-income women, young women, women of color. But the most complicated for me politically. And really, initially, I didn't think of the Abortion Fund work as political in the sense of it wasn't demonstrating, it wasn't — except for the part where we were trying to get rid of the Hyde Amendment. The part of, you know, the sort of heart and soul of abortion funds, which is getting money for women to have abortions, the kind of direct action piece, it seemed to me more like service. I remember thinking, when we started the abortion fund here —

FOLLET: In Western Mass.?

FRIED: Yeah, which was almost by accident. When I took the job here [at Hampshire College] in 1986, there was a referendum, a statewide referendum on abortion. Had it passed, it wouldn't have outlawed abortion; it would have had the effect of taking away state funding. It was designed to outlaw abortion, but they couldn't do it because of *Roe v. Wade*. So when I came here, the first thing I did was connect up with the people who were organizing against, to stop the referendum. There

was no NARAL presence here, but there were individual NARAL members, and people from Family Planning [Council of Western Massachusetts], and kind of a group of us. Then, during that year, close to that time, the referendum did not pass, but it was pretty close. It was like 60/40 — too close for those of us who worry about these things.

And then, soon thereafter, I was also on the board of what [is now] Tapestry [Health], then called the Family Planning Council. Through that, through my association with Leslie, some time in early '87.

FOLLET: Leslie Laurie?

FRIED: Yeah. Who has been a very longtime stalwart of all of these politics in Western Mass. This was before the gag rule, so Family Planning was not as worried then about it connecting abortion and Family Planning, and then when the gag rule came, bam! Then they really had to back off. Somehow somebody called us. Family Planning had a client, and she needed an abortion and she was poor, and we called around and we raised the money and then we said, Hmm, probably not the only person.

35:00

FOLLET: Probably more than one.

FRIED: Probably more than one. Then through my old R2N2 connections, the Chicago Abortion Fund was being — somebody who was prominent in that had been on the R2N2 national steering committee and at NAM with me. Then Sarah Bittenwieser, who was my colleague here at CLPP [Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program], her mother was working in the — there was a fund in Philadelphia which was also being run by someone who I had known from NAM and R2N2. You know, so suddenly, like, people started to crop up, right? So a couple of women came and talked to us and helped us start our fund here. But really at the time I kept thinking, Okay, we're doing this because we are the people positioned to organize this, and then other people will come and we'll go back to organizing demonstrations and whatever else we were doing. So it was kind of inadvertent in that way, and then after a couple of years, deciding to start the Network.

There was Shawn Towey in Philadelphia, and Shawn and I were old allies, and totally on the same political wavelength, and we had this broader perspective. So we wrote these principles of unity, and very broad in terms of what we were about, not just about abortion funding. We didn't have a proactive vision of this organization. We thought we would just be holding the line and nurturing each other.

So again, it was almost like we kind of stepped into something, but then, you know, once you're in it, you're just like, Oh. And it was at a time when other organizations weren't doing so well. Interestingly enough, the Clinton presidency was bad for the movement. People thought, Oh, things are fine. So NARAL was losing membership. It was really a time when the Abortion Fund and Access — it was just the

same time when we formed the Abortion Access Project — was kind of much clearer, that that's where the problem was, which had always been true, but it just wasn't so clear. Just like now, when you're attacking *Roe*, it all gets lost, and now we have to defend *Roe*.

So again, I feel really committed, obviously, to the Network of Abortion Funds and to that work. [I was the board chair, essentially functioning as an unpaid ED for 10 years.] But it took a while for me to see it as political, to get rid of that bifurcation in my mind between service and — I think for the people who are providers or worked at clinics, like my next door neighbor and one of my close friends in Boston were part of those women's clinics — there was one in Somerville — but I had never been in those things. I had only been in this other part of the movement. So it took me a while to get there in terms of getting rid of the line of difference between different kinds of organizing. Since the Network, I would say, that and then working here and working with young people, are the two political experiences that have totally defined my last 20 years, at least where most of my energy has gone, and my heart.

FOLLET: The Network and here.

FRIED: Civil Liberties.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: Are they connected?

FOLLET: You came to CLPP in '86.

FRIED: In '86.

FOLLET: Now CLPP already existed.

FRIED: It existed but it didn't exist. I had two wonderful predecessors, and my immediate predecessor was Janet Gallagher, who is this wonderful person, a lawyer. Both of my predecessors had been lawyers, and both had been prominent in Catholics for a Free Choice. They partly used this program to build that, but also — like, Pat Hennessy, who was the first director, had worked on the sterilization abuse guidelines piece, and Janet had done various things. She was one of the first people to write about fetal rights as a threat to women's rights, and this was, like, early '80s. She also came from a radical political place. She had been part of the Jury Project, working with people who were imprisoned for left political activities and being a supporter for them.

And they also were here at a time when there was just not much attention, especially to young people, on reproductive rights. There wasn't much of a developed program when I came here. There were courses being taught, and the idea that you would connect with national

40:00

and local organizations. So I was on the Family Planning board because Janet had been on the Family Planning board. So I was following those footsteps. She had done all this Catholics for a Free Choice, so I was going to connect to other national formations.

FOLLET: So it was already identified as a reproductive rights project.

FRIED: It was. It was founded as a reproductive rights project, and it only has this more oblique name in part because the founding donor really saw abortion as a civil liberties issue, and so that's why it's called the Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program. I think for colleagues here at Hampshire, partly people were thinking, Well, we'll connect it to other civil liberties issues, maybe there will be a time when this one will be won.

FOLLET: There just might be another issue.

FRIED: There just might be another issue. So it was founded with the idea that young people were not connecting to the abortion rights issue, and they needed to be informed and engaged. It was not any clearer than that.

I just found some interesting archival memos in the Hampshire archives [containing the wishes of the original donor specifying this]. The president of Hampshire would speak out on these issues, which she, of course, had no problem with. She had had an illegal abortion, which she was happy to talk about. So it was kind of interesting in that way. I think she had one. But in the memo she says, "I have no problem with this." But then it wasn't developed programmatically.

Neither of them stayed very long. The first person was a young lawyer, and she was a philosophy professor here, organized a conference on abortion, out of which came a book, and it had different perspectives. Janet had done this really great thing, this project of working with Hollywood writers, soap opera writers, to try and get more abortion politics in that, and they both worked with students. But there weren't any [ongoing projects].

So I came and I had really thought I was only going to do this for a little while, because I'd taken my leave and how can I live there [Somerville] and work here [Amherst], and blah-blah-blah. So I thought that there had to be programmatic institutions so that when I left, somebody wouldn't have to reinvent it. So I created the newsletter and the [annual CLPP reproductive rights] conference, and that was it for a while. There was a student group associated with us but it was, again, fairly small.

And then kind of steadily, one thing led to another. So for a while, we had — the [annual reproductive rights] conference really grew pretty steadily, but slowly for a while. First 35, then maybe 70, then it stabilized around 100 for a while, and, you know, now it's 1,100 and growing. But in the beginning, it was always very diverse because I brought this broader political perspective. And then when Betsy

[Hartmann] came, which was really great, because she had the same exact politics but had been working internationally.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: So it was really great to work together. Also we were both activists. We both saw this as an opportunity to get more people into activism. There wasn't one bone in our body that said, Ooh, let's just do scholarship, whereas her predecessor had been like that, and so it would just not have — there wasn't really a grand alliance going on. But I think that that was really great for us to do that.

One of the really important pieces of being here, and having this program, and growing it in the way that we have is it's really allowed us to connect with and support activists like Loretta, like Toni, and to find new ways of working together. They speak at our conferences, they come to the Summer Institute. We have interns in their organizations. It's really developed very rich and long-lasting connections, other than just, you know, me and Loretta knew each other in 1987. There's much more of a structural connection, which I think is then building those new generations in this political way, and that's really critical.

So I think there are many ways in which the program has been important, but I think that it's also been an important political place for those other people. We have this consultant now, who is doing these interviews with people, and it's really interesting to hear what people say is important to them. Some of what's important is [that we have a radical perspective and vision]. You know, it's like reproductive rights is not just even sterilization and birth control too, but it's also antiracist and antiwar. You know, just that kind of a full political perspective in the way that it's evolved. Because when I came, it really was abortion; that's what it was about, and that's what the donor cared about. Now, really, what he cares about is young people being engaged, and if the way you do that is radical politics, it's fine, or whatever. Not to put too fine a point on it.

And I also think the foundations that fund us, mostly what they care about, you know, they're all terrified that all us old people are going to retire, and who's there behind us? So that you engage new generations is really critical for people, and it's what we care about too, it's just we think the way you do it is you don't just talk about choice. I think that's been important to connecting this program to national organizations and activists and vice versa.

I think in terms of the Abortion Fund work, you know, we're trying to define — like, we're thinking about leadership transition here. I'm really not going to be here forever, despite what it might look like. And what is this job, really? I didn't have a job description. My job was, you teach part time and you run this program, but of course there wasn't really a program. So now it's the job, it's like 25 jobs in one because of the way it's evolved, and so we're trying to think of what's critical.

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To me, one of the things that's critical is that the person who has the job be grounded in political activism; that you cannot just be a scholar and do this job, and I think [political activism] does ground you. Throughout being here, I have seen it as critical to building this program, that I and the program have a national profile. I didn't when I came here. I had done — you know, R2N2 wasn't exactly giving me one, and I had done local activism. I had written newsletter articles, but I hadn't seen this as a focus of intellectual and personal energy. And that's what being here has done for me, is it allowed me to do that, to bring together all the pieces of myself.

So I don't go to philosophy conferences; I go to the National Abortion Federation, [to national political conferences], right? That's where I get my stimulation and thinking, from these international projects. There's nowhere else on the planet where that would have counted towards keeping you here and been seen as a credit to the institution, but it is here and it's just fabulous. I'm eternally grateful for that, because it allowed me, then, to find a way to be — a way to be in the academy, a way to teach classes, and also to write.

I'm not freaked out about writing anymore. I like to write, it's fine with me. I don't obsess endlessly. You need the article in two weeks? Okay, I'll do it. It's just such a contrast to where I came from. And it's not just getting older. It's writing for a purpose. Like writing for tenure is not a purpose. Right, exactly. And it would just freak me out and I would — like, my head would be empty. What would I possibly write about?

FOLLET: I remember what you said yesterday about the term of having to write something, that thing about invisibility.

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FRIED: Oh, [invisibility of oppression. I also wrote about the] Marxist theory of justice. What in the world was that?

FOLLET: But your writing now is so clear, it's so accessible. I mean, all the intellectual training and political work you see, but it's in the backdrop, it's in the way you frame it. It's really beautiful work.

FRIED: Thank you. It's important. Demystifying is really important to me, and to be able to write in that way and people value it, as opposed to — Like I just wrote finally — I've been giving this talk for a couple of years called "Ten Reasons Why Choice Is Inadequate." So I finally wrote [a draft], and being able to write it in that way, and absolutely wanting it to be crystal clear. You shouldn't have to wonder about what that means. It's just been really terrific. [I'm still working on this.]

I don't know what would have happened to me. I mean, I guess I could have kept going forever as, like, a teacher of philosophy at Bentley and a political activist, but I don't think I really would have been who I am now.

I've just had wonderful opportunities here to be inspired by incredible people, and to keep taking it in new directions. That's the thing that I love about the [CLPP] program is, Oh, we're going to do a convening of people internationally who do youth leadership development, and they're going to come to the conference, and then we're going to talk about a project. It's like there's always something [new and] great. We can do a convening on how do you defend abortion rights in a reproductive justice context, because we spend all this time saying it's not the only thing. So I just love that. I like working with students in both an activist and a teaching way. To me, that's a very comfortable way of being.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: Right? I mean, I really have a whole bunch of them where we just did their thesis together, that's what we did, and that's okay too.

But I think that the Abortion Fund work is incredibly grounding. It's also exciting and, again, it kind of goes back to this idea of how marginal you are. I mean, we have felt really marginal. We're a national network but, you know, we don't have a presence much at the national level. We've done some. In the last six or seven years we've been building that and now, we actually — there [might] be a bill in Congress to rescind the Hyde Amendment. And I'm just like, Oh my God, this is so exciting. And we have allies and, you know, we're fighting about what it should say and this and that; but nonetheless, me and Stephanie and a couple other people wrote the — what do we know about writing a bill? But we did, the first draft, and it's got all this great stuff in it. It's coming now. [Representative] Jan Schakowsky from Illinois is going to introduce it, which is perfect because Hyde was from Illinois. [Effort tabled until after November 2008 election]

FOLLET: Right. And this is coming out of the Network [NNAF]. This is the Network's initiative.

FRIED: Yes. It's the Network and this coalition. We created this Thirty Years Is Enough coalition. It's coming from the coalition, which is great, because it means that there are inside-the-Beltway people doing the inside-the-Beltway things, and then we're doing all the grassroots part, and it's going to have national grassroots, and it's just exciting. Who knew? Who thought? I mean, for so many years, like, Don't come to us about the Hyde Amendment. We don't want to do it; we can't touch it. And we're not the only ones saying it. It's just — Stephanie and I looked at each other like, Oh my God. But, you know, you just do see that if you can be persistent and make good alliances, sometimes you can prevail.

FOLLET: You've really pulled it all together here [at Hampshire], and it's growing. You have a staff of, what, seven, and that's just in CLPP? Does that include Betsy's?

FRIED: It's seven of us. Betsy, Marlene, two Amys, a Mia, a Johanna, an Alicia, and then we have two off-site development people who work with us. So it's close to nine in the CLPP-Pop/Dev [Population and Development Program] sphere. It's exciting, and we're growing. We need another person and hopefully we'll hire them next year. It's great. It's wonderful. Any time I hear people saying, you know, The younger generation doesn't care about these issues, I just get pissed off. And it's just not my experience. We work with some wonderful young people all around the country and all around the world who are fabulous.

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FOLLET: As you work with them, with young people, how does your experience inform what you teach them, how to organize? How do the hard lessons that you learned about race, about all this, inform how you try to keep them from needing to reinvent that?

FRIED: Well, they probably will need to reinvent it. I think for one thing, we [at CLPP] see ourselves as really bringing this broader perspective to — a broader understanding of where reproductive rights sits in a human rights and social justice framework to these new generations, in all the different ways we can. And also, creating spaces where they can be together, so that they don't have to be just the white women, and the women of color are left behind. [The new generations are also developing it.]

So our [New Leadership Networking Initiative] is really diverse. It's diverse in terms of the race and ethnic composition of the people. It's diverse in terms of the kinds of groups that are in it, national and local, but also what issues people are organizing around. I think that people then have a — like, our [summer] leadership institute this year had like, what, 19, 20 people, six from the South — which is, again, where are the voices? These issues are not just issues on the two coasts. So there were three people from New Orleans, who were working in a very different way, and there are people from Planned Parenthood.

People are struggling over — We did a workshop in eugenics and population control. You know, kind of from the get-go. We also did something on the words of choice, you know; really to just work it from the beginning so that it's not that, at some point you have an inadequate politics or analysis, and then you have to always be adjusting it; but you've, in the meantime, pissed off so many people that no one wants to work with you. So I think that that's really important to us.

Also, we're trying to develop models of sharing power, stepping aside and not always being the one. And partly, we've created this leadership network because I felt like people of my generation have networks. We knew who to call, we know how to get what we want. Younger people need this. They shouldn't always have to call me and

say, Marlene, who should we get to speak on —. You've got to get yourself out of that role, even though there's a lot of, you know, power and excitement in that role. So we're really trying to figure out how to do that.

Certainly, the younger activists talk a lot about wanting to do intergenerational work. They don't say, Just go away all of you people, but do respectful intergenerational work. So I'm really committed to trying to figure this out, not just for myself but in a broader way. How to take this incredible wealth of experience and knowledge of older activists, and have them play better in the sandbox, you know, in a way that doesn't [overwhelm and patronize younger people].

In our Summer Institute, I think we've hit the balance, which is some of what we do is we have a few people of the older, more experienced generation, and then we made mentors. We made people in their — you know, 30-year-old mentors. They are the mentors because they've already been doing it for a number of years.

And now [the camera is] flashing.

FOLLET: Are we flashing? Okay. Just as a note, one of the ways where this Voices of Feminism Project that this oral history is a part of, is evolving, is working with organizations, using oral history as a medium of intergenerational communication.

FRIED: Oh, that is really a good idea.

FOLLET: I mean, organizations who have participated in this project see it as a potentially useful way of addressing intergenerational tensions within their organization.

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FRIED: Well, that is great.

FOLLET: We're looking at what that will look like, but —

FRIED: But, you know, it's hard. Some of it is that the organizations are very — like, in trying to do this work here and thinking about it structurally. So, like everything else, there's only one CLPP director, and that's what [many of] the organizations are like. So some of what we're doing is we're really elevating the associate director positions, to make them positions of greater responsibility and authority in CLPP. It's a struggle to think about these ways, because what I see in the nonprofits are these very flat organizations. People are not paid very well. They're desperate to keep doing the work, but they can't afford a house if they keep working there. So how to change that without completely destroying the culture.

FOLLET: And that brings up the question of funding, which is ever-present.

FRIED: It's ever-present, ever-present.

FOLLET:           Okay, let me switch.

END TAPE 5

## TAPE 6

- FRIED: I think the thing I want to say about this last bit is that the more I think about it, the more I think of how important mentoring is. And you read some of what people say on the Right, you know, you look at what they're doing, and that that has been really critical in terms of bringing people along on the conservative side. I mean, we haven't paid enough attention to it, but also some of it is just a mind-set. I mean, like at the Summer Leadership Institute, we were talking to everybody about, You have to see yourself as a mentor. Even if you're 21 years old, you are mentoring somebody else. Also, you don't always mentor down, you sometimes mentor up.
- FOLLET: Exactly.
- FRIED: Right? So I just think that that is a very important part of — There's an old-fashioned model of leadership development, which I think we're trying to explode, which is, you know, you find the people who are leaders and you bring them and you give them more things and make them better leaders. I see it much more as, you create an atmosphere in which people can be leaders, and then people will be leaders. You don't know. Leadership potential isn't just like that little nugget diamond in the rough that you have to find. It's what you have to create.
- FOLLET: That then gets passed to another.
- FRIED: Exactly.
- FOLLET: The torch-bearer image is just so sort of condescending in that sense.
- FRIED: That's right, exactly. We really think of leadership development and the next generation's work as movement-wide work, as really as saying, It's for everyone. You see it at our Summer Leadership Institute. You know, you have people who are junior program staff in their organizations, they don't feel very empowered, but here they are, they're in a leadership development project. Well, they're stepping it up. It's fabulous.
- FOLLET: Right. In a way, you're answering my question about being an ally, I guess. We've talked about privilege and the way it worked for you, and the kind of paralyzing effect it can have, as in an organization such as R2N2. But you've also described yourself as someone who rises to the leadership — the class president, the person who'd just as soon be the mother to all the people in the commune — that that's the role you tend to have. How does that square with — And here you are running this ever-growing operation here, having started other organizations, the Network of Abortion Funds. How does this leadership bent and experience and role square with being an ally in a movement where, you

know, from the Sisters and Allies moment on — ? Has that been a challenge? Has that forced you to make any changes?

FRIED:

Yeah. Some of what I think is a challenge for me is figuring out how it is that I do exert my own leadership expertise, experience, and step back enough, don't suck up all the air. I worry about that a lot. I actually was even talking with my young colleague about our Leadership Institute, Kim Sullivan. She's an up-and-coming leader. She's pretty new, she's been here for a year. I think it's really important that she be the face and voice of this leadership network. I was asking her whether she felt like I was giving her enough space to do that. And I asked Cara [Page], who was also there, who I felt would probably give me an honest answer, brutally honest. She hasn't told me yet. She said she'd think about it.

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But you know what? It's something where you kind of always have to check yourself. I noticed, for example, when I am talking — we do our *Undivided Rights* talks, and I've given zillions of talks. I'm much less at ease in our *Undivided Rights* talks than if I'm talking and I'm either the only person, or if I'm talking about "Ten Reasons Why Choice Is Inadequate," or something like that. I think some of it is around these issues of stepping back, stepping up, who's telling what, who's representing it. Again, I don't have any idea if my coauthors are aware of this, because it played so differently with them, but I'm very aware of being the least interesting person to the audiences of women of color, and actually to the white audience, in a way. And I did have a really big role in doing the work, and it's okay with me, but it's also something that I'm kind of struggling with, to not feel at peace with, but I think it makes me sometimes stumble in the speaking appearance world.

I remember once, not even in the *Undivided Rights*, but a very similar thing. African American Women Evolving gave me some kind of award, so I went to speak at their annual meeting, and the other two people getting the awards were women of color. What I did is I just gave a really truncated — I didn't give a talk, you know, because I just felt like, Why should I be [so prominent]? And I think Toni [Bond] was disappointed in that, because I think she didn't understand what I was doing; so it just seemed like I was giving short shrift to the event.

So it doesn't always quite work out the way you would think it would work out, but it's an important struggle. It's one that I'm totally committed to. You know, it's different on different occasions. So, you know, when Toni says I'm her Jewish mother, you know me. So I feel we have a mutual [relationship]. She tells everybody, all of her friends, they meet me and they say, Oh, you're Toni's mentor. Now I feel that I have been so much mentored by her. So it's just very interesting in that respect. So there's the one-on-one, and then when we're both out there in the world in our personas, how things get transacted out there.

I also feel that I have really strong relationships. I didn't for most of my life. I didn't have strong relationships with people who

were doing the same work who were really different from me. And I feel like I do now, and that that is also a very centering experience, so that I'm not always just guessing. We've been at each others' houses and been to events together and went to a wedding. [My husband Bill was the photographer at Toni's wedding.] You know, you just feel more like it's more organic than just having a set of political commitments or ethical commitments to being a good ally.

I feel like I'm now a connected person, and I feel the same with the young people. Really, one of my proudest things is that Choice USA gave me its first Mentor of the Year Award, and it's like, Okay. Because I do. I do see myself as a mentor and people tell me a lot that I'm a good mentor to them. But it feels really good, and that feels like a really great role to be in. You know, I'd rather be a mentor than a queen. (laughs) Da, da, da. I'm sure there's a song in that.

You know, as you can see, I also like being in charge of things. It's important to me, not for its own sake, but in order to — It's important to me to have power to achieve what I want to achieve. It is a struggle when I'm not going to be asserting my power, or when it has to be dialed back a bit. Was that an answer?

10:00

FOLLET: Mm hmm, mm hmm. Do you have any mentors in this? Well, you mentioned Toni as a mentor.

FRIED: Toni, Loretta, Betsy, Jael, a lot of the young people I work with. In terms of when I say mentor, it's people like Cara, who are opening me to new ways of being and thinking and seeing. Even though I have more experience doing it, they really get me. Aimee Thorne-Thompson from PEP [Pro-Choice Public Education Project], who I just think is fabulous.

So I feel like I get a lot. I don't feel that these are situations in which I'm just getting sucked dry. Part of what I think allows me to keep having energy is that I actually get just so juiced up by these things. Summer Institute is exhausting. It's like four or five days in [a retreat center] with 25 25-year-olds. It's a lot of energy but wow, it's just so exciting. So I absolutely feel that.

And it's not just saying it, it's really feeling it. I think this is really key to this intergenerational work, because if it's older people just coming in to impart wisdom and knowledge — First of all, the power will never get shared, it's just too unequal.

FOLLET: You mentioned the importance of international work as an expanding experience for you.

FRIED: Yeah.

FOLLET: When did that begin?

FRIED:

Nineteen ninety, when Betsy [Hartmann] took me to my first International Women and Health Meeting, which was in Manila, in the Philippines, and it was organized by this group, Likhaan [Linangan ng Kababaihan], which is a very sophisticated political group. They have a totally intersectional, anti-imperialist, gender analysis of things. You know, Betsy always says this, You feel like you're crazy in the U.S. context, and then you get out a little bit and you say, Oh, this is it. So that was really a great experience, and it was just after the Webster stuff [*Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*] here. So it was before Clinton, it was the gag rule, you know it was a lot of hard times here.

And then through that I met this Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, which Betsy had been part of, I think, since the beginning. It was all so wonderful. Betsy really has a huge profile in the more radical international women's movement, and is really seen almost as *the* person who has a critique of population control in the U.S. So it's great to do these things with her. She introduces me to everybody and if you work with Betsy then you're okay, which has been really great. Actually, painfully not visible here in the United States in that way. You've got to go to one of these things with her to see it. And, you know, she's always asked to speak even when people don't want speakers from the U.S., they don't want (inaudible), but they always want Betsy. So that's been a really great — And she's a really great mentor and model in terms of somebody who is just kind of a modest person but who played such an important — and continues to play — such an important role. [And she has been so supportive of me.]

So after that, I kept going. I've now gone every couple of years, whenever they've had these International Women and Health Meetings. And then there were a few other international things that she and I did together. And then through that I got hooked up with Barbara Klugman, who is now at Ford, but who for years ran this Women's Health Project in Johannesburg, South Africa. She and I and a couple other people crafted this international abortion advocacy project, which then Barbara ran with and organized out of Johannesburg. That was a different level of doing international work.

So I was part of this Johannesburg initiative. Eighteen countries were part of it, and the idea was, What could we gain from each other in terms of learning about abortion advocacy from wildly different contexts and regions? And it was really terrific. Barbara is really an interesting thinker and solid activist, and she did this model for analysis which we all used to analyze our own countries; and we met a couple of times and produced a book and have done workshops.

Sadly though, the Women's Health Project doesn't exist anymore, but the work was really foundational, I think, for a lot of other subsequent international work that happened. That was a much more sustained engagement, and a place where I also was then suddenly put into a leadership role in an international thing. But again, one where [as

15:00

a US person] you [shouldn] have too much of a profile in terms of this stuff.

Now, for the last who knows how many years, being on the board of the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights. It's a complex structure, but there are three of us who are international members of the board. So somebody from Likhaan in the Philippines [Sylvia "Guy" Estrada Claudio], who I had met when I went in 1990; and Anissa Hélie, who was with Women Living Under Muslim Laws, but who is now in the [Pioneer] Valley; and I are the three international people, and then the rest of the board is all people from the Netherlands. You know, a weird profile for an international network; and so we're moving the organization to Manila to be with Likhaan [and changing the composition of the board — one or two Dutch and the rest international]. It's been a lot of fits and starts.

A lot of what I feel in the Women's Global Network, again, is the stepping back [publicly], like when we were fighting about who was going to be the co-chair, I said, I have time and energy, but I'm not going to do it. I'll do what you need to be your backup, but you have to do it. Again, I'm quite comfortable with that, in terms of a role of, you know, sort of understanding enough about the politics to say that whatever my own ego needs — Plus, I get so much from it. I mean, that's the other thing.

Guy and Anissa and I — I mean, from the moment we met, we were so on the same political wavelength, and we've had to transact a lot of really difficult, hard things with this organization, which almost has gone under many times. So it's been fabulous to do this. In our private communications, we call each other the triplets. So it's private triplet communications, which are separate from the board communications.

FOLLET: Oh, sweet, sweet. Did you attend any of the UN conferences?

FRIED: Yeah, Betsy and I went to the one in Beijing. She went to the ICPD [International Conference on Population and Development].

FOLLET: In Cairo.

FRIED: Right, and then together we went to the Beijing conference, but we were mostly in the counter-conference or the —

FOLLET: The NGO?

FRIED: Yeah, right. We were not lobbying. We did not have credentials to go to the main one. It's interesting. The International Women and Health Meetings are somewhere around 400 people. The last one in India was almost 1,000, which was huge. The Beijing meeting was like 35,000, 40,000 people, and it's a bit bewildering. I went to that with — we traveled with the people from *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, which was really

great. They were meeting with the people who were doing the translation/adaptation projects. The *Our Bodies, Ourselves* people are like goddesses to the rest of them. One of the most terrific things I've gotten to do is write the — I wasn't part of the original [Boston Women's Health Book] Collective, but since some time in the '80s, I've been writing, [co-authoring] the abortion chapters, or the rewrites. If I call anybody and I say, you know, "I need this because I'm working on *Our Bodies, Ourselves*," there's, Whatever you need, you've got it. It's really great.

So it was terrific to do it with them, and they were also meeting with the Chinese people, who were doing a translation/adaptation of it. And so through the Women's Global Network, we kind of navigated this huge conference with *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, CWPE [Committee on Women, Population, and the Environment], and Women's Global Network [WGNRR], which is the only way to make these things manageable, and also then, we had a role and a purpose. For the rest of it, you know, half the time you spent half the day trying to get to where you were going and it would be rained out.

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But the International Women and Health Meetings, because they're smaller [and] you're guaranteed to meet people who are really grassroots people, as well as people who are operating at a different political level, have, I think, been much more important in terms of my own political development, and also for creating alliances and new ways of working, that sort of thing.

FOLLET: I know you weren't at Cairo, but I think Beijing was kind of a follow-up to the real transformation that occurred there regarding assumptions about population control and the empowerment of women and reproductive autonomy.

FRIED: And there was also a fair amount of political struggle. I went — before Cairo, maybe six months before, there was an International Women and Health Meeting in Uganda, in preparation for Cairo. Part of the interesting thing about these IWHMs is that they're kind of a bit anarchistic. They're not controlled by the dominant players in the international abortion rights movement, much to their upsetment. I don't think upsetment's a word, but they'd like to control [all international abortion politics]. Especially going into Cairo. Those organizations — International Women's Health Coalition, Catholics for a Free Choice, IPPF [International Planned Parenthood Federation] — really wanted the feminists to speak with one voice.

And so the Uganda meeting was unbelievably contentious around this, because first of all, you have all the people who think the abortion issue is just a first world privilege issue. Then you have people who don't want to talk about abortion unless you've got a population control analysis. And then you had these people who are more focused on the mainstream — the UN, the governments — sort of trying to work it from that perspective, very similar to the politics around choice in the

U.S. There was a document that the International Women's Health Coalition wanted everybody to sign on to ["Women's Voices"], and people just weren't having it, and there was a lot of fighting at this meeting. Betsy wasn't there, I can't remember why, but I remember those of us who were kind of on the — of the women's global network politics, were not signing on. So we were sort of in that, but I was staying in the hotel with Frances Kissling and all these people, so we all meet in the bar at night and, you know, just a scene, just a scene. Loretta and Dazon [Dixon Diallo] were there, because they had brought a coalition. I had traveled there with a coalition mostly of people working on HIV/AIDS that Dazon had organized. So there was this group of African American women and me, traveling around everywhere together. It just was a scene, just an amazing scene.

Also very interesting, I went also with a colleague of mine from Hampshire, Michelle Murrain. She was a neuroscientist professor. She's since morphed into many different things, but we didn't know each other very well. She was a much younger than me, an African American professor, but, you know, for ten days we were really cheek by jowl, which was really a great experience, and we learned that we did have a lot of political things in common but, you know, who knew? It was really quite fascinating.

So I think in those ways, because of having the [CLPP] Program here, we've really been able to build on these international alliances by bringing people to speak at the conference, by funding interns in their offices. So to continue to be able to do this is really great; and even this new project of trying to network people internationally who do youth leadership development. It just wouldn't be possible if we didn't have this structure to work with that. But these are very precious alliances. Many of them are building on what Betsy had for many different years. Now I am getting mine through being on the board.

25:00

I remember after Cairo and Beijing, there was a lot of discussion about how are we going to work together, preserve alliances, without the UN, because there was also a lot of critique in this process. It was incredibly expensive. Who gets to go is totally — right, and it's always — the participation is funded by Northern foundations. So these aren't exactly the great equalizers.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: And sort of better but somewhat the same for these International Women and Health Meetings. So these are complicated kinds of meetings which are incredibly important. And then you need to have a way of having an international women's movement without the UN or without the MacArthur Foundation. I don't think we've all figured that out very well yet. Some of these things are being funded by the EU, the Dutch government, which is at least a little better, but some of the same problems in terms of who's dominating and who has the purse strings, which is partly why this Johannesburg initiative, we felt very strongly

that it needed to come from Johannesburg, that it shouldn't be coming from [the economic North]. I feel that about this international youth leadership that we're about to do. We're going to host the planning meeting, but very sensitive to the fact that if it's going to turn into a project, it can't be a project just of ours. It's a bad statement if nothing else.

FOLLET: "Ours" being U.S. based?

FRIED: Yes, CLLP.

FOLLET: Is that synonymous with saying foundation funded?

FRIED: [It's not just about funding but more ensuring that the project isn't US-centric.] Our allies have mixed — Some of the people that I work with internationally won't take money from Ford and MacArthur. Some will but with, you know, (chuckles) hold your nose and take it. I mean the program officers are wonderful people, so it isn't really about that. It's about money and power and control, and the role they've played in all of this.

FOLLET: Right.

FRIED: So I think it's difficult, and I don't think we all have much of an answer yet of how to do this in a different way. I mean, the issues around money are just overwhelming. People are politically organized all over the world without huge grants, right? So some of it is that you've created this culture of organizations of nonprofits which run in a particular way, which is really different from having a social movement. So I don't exactly see us going in the social movement direction.

FOLLET: Right, right. To come back to the movement in the U.S. in the '90s — were you at the Webster conference, the "In Defense of Roe" conference [in April, 1989]?

FRIED: Yes.

FOLLET: You were.

FRIED: Another very critical moment, I think, for the movement, and then also certainly for me politically.

FOLLET: Can you describe that in some detail?

FRIED: This is organized just before the march, and the march is the last day, and we all then go to the march. Again, the point of it is to have a broader perspective, but of course it's called "In Defense of Roe." It's at least half women of color. Broader but also to bring women of color

30:00

— I mean, I suppose maybe the point of it was to bring women of color to the choice moment, so already you've got a little bit of a problem going, so that's why it's called "In Defense of Roe." So it really was quite diverse in terms of who was there, and really strong voices. I remember particularly Nkenge [Touré] and the Asian Pacific Islander women. There really was a lot going on.

All of these gatherings also had a very — you know, you were kind of a witness to it. It was really exciting, especially for the women of color, who do not have so many spaces of coming together, especially ones in which they were the majority. So you really could feel the exhilaration of the moment, and the many different statements about what choice means to our communities and how we're going to take this back, this different understanding of choice, to the communities. I think the leading organizations were the Religious Coalition, National Black Women's Health Project and —

FOLLET: ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union].

FRIED: ACLU, because Lynn [Paltrow] was the organizer of that. You didn't really have NOW, Planned Parenthood. That was one of the things that was notably absent. In all of these gatherings, the mainstream pro-choice leadership either doesn't show up or somebody shows up to give their ten-minute talk, and then they're out the door. So you didn't really feel like this was making a dent. I mean, ACLU was a big player, but not in the same ways, not NARAL, and same for RCRC.

So you know, I think you had that, plus this was the march that was — I think this was the one — or was it the next one? — where the women of color actually wrote a statement. No, it was the next one [1992]. But again, it had that feel of here was this very powerful conference going on where the messages were really important about doing this work differently and having the faces and leadership be different, and then you go to this march which is more of the same. So you know, I think there were a lot of moments like that, where there was such a dissonance between what I felt was where the dynamism was coming [from, from the women of color groups], and then we're back to the same old business as usual.

FOLLET: When you say the march was more of the same, by chance are you thinking ahead to the '92 march, or are you thinking about the very next day?

FRIED: The very next day. More of the same only in the sense that, yes, there was a large contingent of women of color, that was absolutely true; but in terms of who's on the podium, who are the main voices speaking out here, and also in terms of the breadth of issues — it's just not representative of this other important voice, even though there was lip service paid to her. So not lip service but whatever, you know.

I think the inability to actually effect any kind of deep change in the major institutions of the choice movement has been frustrating for a lot of us on all levels, in terms of women of color, young people, you know, the way in which the message, the agenda — it just doesn't really seem to ever get deep enough or get through. I think there are a lot of different reasons for that, not the least of which is in Washington; and the world just really looks different there in a way that's not good — you know, the racism, all those things.

So I do get the two marches mixed up, but I still think the point was pretty much the same in terms of what's really being projected here. And then some of that, of course, is the media. Who do they cover when they speak about these issues?

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FOLLET: Can we turn to how all this organizing among women of color in the '80s and by the end of the '80s, evolves into efforts at coalition, and eventually to what we now know as SisterSong?

FRIED: Yeah.

FOLLET: Were you involved in the starting of SisterSong?

FRIED: No. Only insofar as sort of being an ally to Loretta and Dazon; and I think I've been a member since the beginning, but not in the actual organizing of it. Nor the Women of Color Coalition, you know, because it was the Women of Color Coalition. Again, I think it's something where it's only when you look at it backwards, you see the relationship. For one thing, you can't miss that you've got the same players, or many of the same players, but also the degree to which the work really does build on what came before. The only way that I was involved, quite peripherally, is in periodically advocating for, and defending against criticism, primarily from some funders, about the importance of SisterSong. I mean, that's one of the roles that I feel I have been able to play, is that I get to talk to a lot of the funders. It's like, who you can hear what from; so they can hear things from me that they can't [listen to from the women of color]. No matter how much that pisses you off, you need to be that voice if you have that ear to say it into.

In the early days of SisterSong, the original coalition was really dictated a lot by Ford [Foundation] in terms of who they wanted in it and how it had to be, and that it had to be around reproductive tract infections, which is not the SisterSong that we know today. So there were so many constraints on it to begin with, and so many ways in which it really just could fail.

Then there were other funders who were not part of that, who just felt like, Oh, this was — you know, who were critical of it and not wanting to fund it. Critical and/or, Well, Ford's done it, we don't have to. So I think that, you know, it's really by dint of the passion and energy of some of our dear friends that it survived that period, and there was a lot of sorting out, and some of the original organizations left. To

have it evolve into a genuine coalition of women of color for reproductive rights that isn't constrained in all of these ways, has been, I think, a really important thing. I see myself as an ally doing whatever I can do to help the effort, and sometimes what that's meant is advocating for them to get funding, not always successfully, but a couple of times.

FOLLET: What case do you make, what's the message you give?

FRIED: That everybody knows that choice is a failure, that the movement is not winning. Everybody knows that we need to do things in a different way, and that there are simply not enough people who care about abortion as a single issue; even if all you care about is abortion, you can't win it that way. Depending on who I'm talking to, but if that's where people are coming from, you need to think about new allies, broader allies, and what's a strategy that's actually going to win on a whole lot of fronts? And what is the connection between the different elements of what we're calling reproductive justice or reproductive freedom? So I think that, in a nutshell, is it. I don't really try and make it on guilt or morality. I don't think those are very successful pitches.

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The other thing I want to say is that I think in terms of what's dynamic. Silvia Henriquez from National Latina Institute [for Reproductive Health] and Naina Dhingra, who works at Advocates for Youth, and I, were invited to speak to the board of a relatively small, not tiny, family foundation — and, again, started by the Planned Parenthood generation — that has, over the years, been pretty conservative in its funding, but is now having its own transitions to other generations. And it had a person working for them, a young, white person, who was really great and who really wanted them to think more broadly about the kind of funding they do. And so the three of us went, and we talked about reproductive justice and youth and different things. According to the [program], this was just the most exciting thing that's ever happened, and they were really resonating with it. And this was not, you know, your group of wild-eyed radicals. But I think what they were connecting to was the energy; they were able to see that this is something that really can grow and be energetic and bring new people in, and is not the same old same old.

Silvia, Eveline Shen, and I did a similar thing at the Tides [Foundation] Momentum Conference, which is all their donors, and it had exactly the same feel to it, of, you know, people can see that this is more powerful, more compelling, has a lot of vision to it, and a lot of dynamic, fabulous young activists of color. And the Roe generation is the generation that always wonders, Where are the women of color? So there they are. Hello.

FOLLET: From your own perspective, apart from when you're invited to —

FRIED: To sell it.

FOLLET: –to sell it, where does it fit in your own trajectory of having been involved in reproductive rights for decades and your own political life?

FRIED: It's really not exactly parallel, but in some ways I do feel that for those of us who saw ourselves as being abortion rights or reproductive rights people, not choice people, it's finally — it's a political place for us. I think Loretta and the others in SisterSong understood that. So everybody can now join. You can't vote or whatever, which I think is just fine. But they really saw that people are going to be drawn to this because there aren't other places for them to go in terms of having a broad agenda and seeing across a spectrum of issues and communities. So in many ways, I think this is just so terrific for the movement.

I think partly it even circles back to being able to do this work on the Hyde Amendment. We started in 2000, and NNAF had a coalition called the CARE Coalition, the Committee for Access and Reproductive Equity. The idea was to advance a broad agenda [and also to] advance abortion funding. It was really a hard sell at that point, but I think a lot of the people who were in that are people who are now in this Thirty Years Is Enough [coalition].

So we [NNAF] did that and then we closed it down, and then we did this “access and equity contingent” for the March for Women's Lives. Again, it was a broad grouping of people who work on economic justice — you know, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, some local, national, the whole thing — worked on having an “access and equality” contingent at the march, which was really great. Afterwards, people said, Well, we want to do something else together; and so then comes the Hyde, Thirty Years Is Enough. So again, it's like, this is a shorter span, but still it's, like, seven years of really working and having some of the same, if not people — and some of the same actual people — then certainly some of the same groups coming together. And I think having reproductive justice politics out there now suddenly makes much more sense to people. Well, of course you would have to get rid of the Hyde Amendment.

The other way in which the reproductive justice and CLPP politics are different from mainstream choice politics is in putting out your vision no matter what. It's like, people need something positive, and you don't decide [your agenda by asking], What will this Congress give us? You just say, What's the vision here? And so I think that having that vision out there allows you to then articulate so you don't have people saying — I mean you do, you still have them saying, you know, We're never going to get [Hyde repealed]. The Democrats have told us, Don't ask for anything, we can't give you anything, our margin is this thin. But people are willing to [ask for] it, even with that strong message coming at them, and that is just incredible.

So I think some of that is coming from having just a more visionary politics out there, so it opens the political space. I don't know. Jael always says she doesn't think any mainstream leader read our book [*Undivided Rights*]. I don't know. I think there's a real

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discrepancy between the longtime, or even shorter-time, leadership of the mainstream organizations, who really, I think, still see the world very much in terms of Congress and voting and accommodation — you know, kind of traditional politics around abortion rights. But those organizations are full of people who are looking for something else, who want to be part of the movement, who haven't been working for their organizations.

I mean, we even feel this here. It's like, I've been here forever, and Betsy has, but the young people haven't. So they're committed to this politics, but maybe in five years they'll be someplace else. So I think that that's a kind of — understanding that and trying to work with that and being a place for that. I mean, there were just lots of Planned Parenthood people at the Smith [College] conference [Reproductive Justice for All, November 10–13, 2005]. Well, that was because it was half PP, but [they were also] at SisterSong, at Causes in Common. So I don't know that that's coming because the national leadership of Planned Parenthood has decided this is important. I don't think so. I think it's that the younger people think it's important.

The other thing is where are people getting political education? They're not getting it anywhere else, so I feel like they get it from us, and from going to NAPAWF [National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum] and SisterSong, and isn't that cool? Because other people aren't seeing political education as an important piece. It's just not happening.

I think from different directions, there's a lot of reinforcing political activity now. Yeah, I'm of course worried that it will all get completely snarfed up in the election and in the push that we all feel to having anyone but a Republican — and things getting sorted out in ways that aren't very good for our politics. I have hope. I have hope.

FOLLET: How invested are you in the self-help component of SisterSong?

FRIED: Well, I'm not. I'm, like, the one person in the women's movement who really never looked at her cervix, okay. I don't know what it looks like. I think, similarly, for self-help, but I respect it. It was interesting. I never really understood it too much until I read Elena's [Gutiérrez] chapters from our book [*Undivided Rights*]. I then had a whole different — you know, I sort of understood it a bit better, and I can see that some of what screwed up R2N2 would have not happened if we had had an understanding of self-help. You see, the way that it got transacted in R2N2 was — and I've seen this in different arenas — no, we're not talking about our personal life; we have a political agenda, we're a political group.

50:00

A couple of years ago, CLPP organized a joint meeting of our young leadership network people and this other group I'm in, the Training and Access Working Group. The young leadership network is totally diverse, totally broad, and this other network [was] older, mostly white, focused on abortion access. [It has changed.] And so we

organized a joint meeting, and it was at a time when maybe there was an election, something. The younger people want to talk about power and the dynamics of the organizations. The older people want to talk about, Well, what are we going to do? What's going on in the world? And it was just a — it's very similar. I think that the self-help idea tells you that you need to talk about those dynamics, you need to get over it. You don't need to spend your whole time doing it, but if you don't do it, you can't get to anything else.

So I think that the way it's had an impact on me is in terms of being — really appreciating the need to talk about dynamics, which is not quite, but you know, somewhat. Even in our office, we always now start our staff meeting with a check-in about how you are and what you're bringing to the table, which I think is really important.

So I do think that piece of it — I remember going [to Oakland] — Luz [Alvarez Martinez] did a [book event]. It was their 19th birthday, and maybe their last, for NLHO [National Latina Health Organization], and Loretta and Elena and I, we were invited to speak about *Undivided Rights*. And so we get there and there's like a whole flurry, and [Luz is] organizing [the meeting with] people dragging in food and this, that, and the other thing. She makes us sit down on a little couch outside, and just, you know, we had a little ten-minute chat about what's going on with you and how are things. I'd never actually experienced it in that way before, and it was lovely and made sense. You know, it was kind of like a cleansing breath. So I'd say I'm evolving. (laughter)

FOLLET: So you just said you're hopeful.

FRIED: Well, how could you keep doing this if you aren't? Some of it is just being around long enough to sort of see that there are terrible times and there are better times, at least in terms of the activism. I mean the country is going to hell. So you can't exactly say that things are going in that way. But I do, I do believe that the only way things are going to change is by organizing and people's movements. I still believe that, and so to me, I'm gauging how good things are by how much we're movement building to that degree.

You know, as you can hear throughout this, for me, being a political person is as much process as it is ends-driven. I experience politics and political activism as nurturing, self-development, community, caring, relationships; not, Oh, we have to go to the meeting. I mean sometimes it's like that, it's like, If I have to go to that meeting one more time, I'll kill them all. Do you know what I mean?

So I don't actually see it as a time-limited activity, you know: you do this, and then we vote, and then we get a good person in there, and then we all go home and start painting or doing whatever we do. I feel like it's part of — Certainly, my entire adult life has been shaped by it, and I can't imagine it otherwise.

55:00

I can't tell you how many *Roe v. Wade* talks I gave. So, like, [I would] always think, Oh my God, I can't believe we're still fighting this fight. Well, of course we're still fighting this fight, look at what's at stake. You begin to see how you're always going to need to keep fighting for justice and equality, hopefully in a more hospitable context. But I do think we can change. I think we have. I'm sure there are women's bathrooms at Dartmouth now. (laughter)

FOLLET: The measure of progress.

FRIED: The measure of success.

FOLLET: How concretely can you describe the vision of what you'd like to see?

FRIED: I see not, reproductive justice means blah-blah-blah, but what does it really — what does that world look like?

FOLLET: What reproductive justice means — I know it's a very wide open question.

FRIED: Well, [it's a lens, not a list.] At the individual level, it means that all women and girls really can determine how and if, under what circumstances, they are going to have or not have children, and have what they need to make that possible. You know, at the next level that is really about being a full citizen, having sovereignty over yourself and your community and your country, that it's just a critical piece of that. And it does encompass freedom from violence and economic and social resources being redistributed, environmental health.

So, you know, I do think of it in those ways, but I can almost start with a person. But it isn't individual, it is — you know, in order for me to have it, the world has to be really different. Then I just think of little bits of it. I do think about this, and I just can't get this one [woman] out of my head. After [Hurricane] Katrina, NNAF had a fund for women to have abortions. First of all everyone said, Oh, the people, they've lost everything, they're not going to thinking about their abortions. Well, you know, because you lost everything, you are thinking about your abortion. There was this one woman, and she was late, she waited a long time. A person asked her why she waited and she said, well, she's waiting for her FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] check to come so she could pay for the abortion. It's like, well — and think of all the other things she can't pay for because her FEMA check will pay for the [abortion].

So when I think in those terms of sort of the basics for human dignity, and not just survival but survival and dignity, it's not a world where you have to trade your FEMA check for an abortion. And I think that's why the interconnecting pieces are so critical. I love the way some of the groups articulate [the vision]. I love that the girls in the

HOPE Project [of Asians and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health (APIRH)] just, they really understood it.

You're flipping [i.e., the camera light is flashing].

FOLLET: Okay, we've got a couple of minutes.

FRIED: For them, reproductive freedom means getting rid of the incinerator and getting rid of all the liquor stores and getting rid of their disgusting high school and making it a proper school. There are very concrete ways in which you say, How can my community be better so that I can experience reproductive freedom?

So that's how I think about it, both at the level of the big definition — you know, when all women and girls can have power over their lives — and then also just in very concrete ways. That's where the Abortion Fund work is so incredibly grounded in terms of what women need; and that they need it, and they need not to be judged, and they need you not to think about, Why didn't you use contraceptives? You know, they need [an abortion] and they should not have to call a stranger and ask for charity to have their health care. Where is the dignity in that? So, you know, it keeps me thinking about what justice would really mean, what rights would really mean.

60:00
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FOLLET: Well, we've got about two more minutes on this tape. Well, it's not enough. Let me put in one more tape, and can we do a couple more minutes?

FRIED: Yeah. [Tape 7 consists only of one minute of room tone. Subsequent wrap-up conversation not recorded. Fried and Follet decide not to re-tape].

END OF INTERVIEW

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