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AN INTERVIEW WITH DIANE CROTHERS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Diane Crothers, on February 11, 2022. I am Kate Rizzi, and I am in Branchburg, New Jersey. Diane, thank you so much for doing this third oral history session with me.

Diane Crothers: Kate, I am so delighted to be doing this with you. As I've said, you're a terrific partner on this excavation of the deep past.

KR: Thank you. What we are going to do to start off today is that you have some follow ups and some thoughts, as you have reflected on what we talked about in our last session. Please go ahead with what you would like to add.

DC: Okay, thank you. I think last time, one of the questions you asked me was when I was in this women's group in North Carolina, what was I aware of in terms of interactions of different schools of thought about this? I was telling you, I was just trying to get out of a violent marriage. I was really not focused on that and also, again, being the youngest, and that pretty much remains to be true. However, I have found since some documents that are from the early women's movement, that are theory of what is going on, and they are addressed to me in my married name, so it is 1968.

One of them, and I don't know if you've seen this recently, but Heather Booth is somebody who is a lifelong activist and a terrific person. She was in a group called "Call Jane," before abortion was legal in Chicago, and she would help women get safe abortions. She and two other women wrote a piece in April '68, which is a mimeographed, four-page thing, called, "Toward a Radical Movement." In that, it's trying to mesh what we didn't call at that point feminism, but it's trying to mesh these women's groups with the Left. She's saying stuff, like, "There are now about thirty-five small radical women's groups concentrated in a few cities, and then through the original groups of just young radical New Left women, there are ..." blah, blah, blah. What strikes me, and I haven't read every single line of it and I will do that, but it's taking a focus on the myths of women's lives, the realities of women's lives, and trying to cast it within the Left. For instance, under myths, it says, "A woman's nature is usually explained in terms of her biology. She is passive in her sexual role. She receives the penis." Now, this has a certain resonance fifty years later. At the time, I would have seen that as just incredibly Freudian and incredibly transactional. Then, there's this phrase, a paragraph later, and it's critical of that, the piece, it's critical of that, that notion about why should function follow form, "even if women are by nature sexually passive." Now, that is not something you would find in a radical feminist publication of just a year later. This is April '68 that they are saying that. Heather was married her whole life to Paul Booth, who was an AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees] organizer. She was a founder of Midwest Academy in Chicago. So, she is firmly situated in the Left, Democratic Party politics from the Left, in male-female organizations. She's also, though, credited in and appears in the documentary *She's Beautiful When She's Angry* by Mary Dore. She's in that as well on the feminist side. [Editor's Note: Mary Dore's 2014 documentary *She's Beautiful When She's Angry* explores the history of the women who founded the modern women's movement between 1966 to 1971.]

From that period, now, we could go to the *Manifesto of New York Radical Feminists* that we wrote in November of '69. We could go to that, which I have just reread for the first time in fifty

years. [laughter] Also, I have the *Organizing Principles of New York Radical Feminists*, "Topics for consciousness raising, how to organize a small group, and how to then focus on action." I also have notes I wrote and things that I presented in May of 1970 at this Congress to Unite Women, which had to do with infighting in New York Radical Feminists and I'm making a critique of the anti-democratic process that's being used by several groups and the vying for power that is going on in May of 1970. What do you want me to focus on?

KR: Let us go into the ideology of radical feminism.

DC: Okay, that's fine. One of the things that is happening for me, at this point, I'm still trying to make sense of and understand this whole conflict with my father and about how I saw the world and whether I needed to be incarcerated for my own good in a mental hospital, et cetera. I found something that I wrote when I was still in undergraduate school and I had these incompletes. At this point, it's 1970 and it's a very long paper, but one paragraph in it, I think, is indicative of what some of my challenges were and then some of my strengths, as I got into these groups. "When I was eleven years old, an argument began between my father and me, which was to continue for a decade." We were nothing if not persistent. [laughter] "The crux of the argument was whether or not there was such a thing as scientific objectivity in any matter dealing with human values. My father took the position that all his views were scientifically verifiable. That is, he concurred with contemporary beliefs and that if one differed with his views, one must be somewhere on a continuum progressing steadily toward the correct views or else be completely invalid and sick as a person." Then, I'm talking about, "Here, Benjamin Rush, the father of American psychiatry, could not agree more. He defined sanity as an aptitude to judge things like other men and regular habits, et cetera, insanity as a departure from this. I took the position that human experience is infinitely varied and that therefore all people's politics are 'real.' That is, they exist legitimately on their own terms." We fought over this point many, many times over the next ten years. That's what's happening inside me at this moment of all this social change. I'm trying to figure out whether that's a valid perspective and then, if so, what is my perspective from where I sit. So, that comes from childhood and adolescence actually.

I'm looking at the *Manifesto* [*of New York Radical Feminists*]. You don't see that word very often. I'm reading this book by Bernadine Evaristo called *Manifesto* and the subtitle is something like *Never Give Up* [*On Never Giving Up*]. Do you know her work? She's a British Black feminist and she got the Booker Prize a couple years ago with Margaret Atwood for *Girl, Woman, Other*, and this is her sort of memoir.

Manifesto of New York Radical Feminists: On Radical Feminism, now, this is dated November '69 and that lines up with other things that I've seen about when that was. By the way, the *Ladies' Home Journal* demonstration was March 18, 1970, it turns out. Now, this is Anne Koedt, Shulie Firestone, Minda Bikman, and me, as far as I can recollect. Cellestine Ware may have been a part of this. I don't think Ann Snitow was there yet, but she could have been. It's a small group and we are hammering out what we think. This was such a great method that certainly stood me in good stead for many, many years; you just get a good group of people together, mostly women, and you figure out what's going on and what you want to do about it. You can do this with small groups; as Margaret Mead said, "A small group of people, that's the only way anything has ever changed."

This first paragraph is, "Radical feminism recognizes the oppression of women as a fundamental political oppression, wherein women are categorized as an inferior class based upon their sex. It is the aim of radical feminism to organize politically to destroy this sex-classed system." So earnest and so right to the root. "As radical feminists, we recognize that we are engaged in a power struggle with men and that the agent of our oppression is man, insofar as he identifies with and carries out the supremacy privileges of the male role. For while we realize that the liberation of women will ultimately mean the liberation of men from their destructive role as oppressor, we have no illusion that men will welcome this liberation without a struggle. Radical feminism is political because it recognizes that a group of individuals (men) have organized together for power over women and that they have set up institutions throughout society to maintain this power."

This is like a four-paged, single-spaced document. The next section is "Politics of the Ego." Then, there's, "Sexual Institutions." Then, there's, "Learning to Become Feminine." Then, there's, "Internalization." It's really quite global in what it attempts to do. It also very much responding to women on the Left. It is saying, under "Politics of the Ego," and this was new, what we're saying here, "A political power institution is set up for a purpose. We believe that the purpose of male chauvinism is primarily to obtain psychological ego satisfaction and that only secondarily does this manifest itself in economic relationships." Again, that's very much putting a psychological, family-structure-oriented attack vis-à-vis economic relationships and Marxism.

When you get to "Sexual Institutions," "The oppression of women is manifest in particular institutions constructed and maintained to keep women in their place. Among these are the institutions of marriage, motherhood, love, and sexual intercourse." Now, that was new, to really attack the whole notion [of sexual intercourse]. You still see this now, the word foreplay, the pre-intercourse part of heterosexual sex, and of course to many, many women, foreplay is the main event. [laughter] This was part of that shift. When Anne Koedt had written "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," one of the things about that had to do with whether all women, most women, many women prefer heterosexual intercourse for their own gratification or not. This was being raised to a level of institutional attack. It uses words that are very evocative. "In each case, her sexual difference is rationalized to trap her within it." It's got language like that, which is new. Then, we talk about this little girl learning to be female. "Her brothers are given activity toys. The world is their future. She is given service toys," which I wasn't a mother or a grandmother or a stepmother when I helped write this. That's painful to read, "She is given service toys." "Her ego is repressed at all times to conform with this future submissiveness. She must dress prettily and be clean, speak politely, seek approval, please."

Yesterday, we did a class at my lifelong learning program, a woman led it, and one of the people who run it, a woman, said to me, "Did you notice how many times she apologized?" You still get this, particularly as you go up in age, you get a lot of apology for breathing, for anything that goes in any way, and you just don't see that behavior in men.

Do you want more about that? The last part of it is, "We must begin to destroy the notion that we are indeed only servants to the male ego and must begin to reverse the systematic crushing of women's egos by constructing alternate selves that are healthy, independent and self-assertive.

We must in short help each other to transfer the ultimate power of judgment about the value of our lives from men to ourselves." That's essentially what's laid out as the agenda.

KR: When you and the other women in the New York Radical Feminists were coming up with this manifesto, were you looking at the ideology of more traditional women's organizations, like the National Organization for Women (NOW)? Were you looking at that ideology and then saying, "We're going to do something different. We need to change things in a different way?"

DC: Right.

KR: How did you come up with this ideology?

DC: Well, a lot of the people in that first group had come out of the Left, probably all of us pretty much, and so we were very used to the idea of radicalism, a radical critique. I don't know if I ever actually went to a NOW meeting, but the NOW women that we would work with, when our agendas were in sync, the way we saw it was they wanted to integrate women into a corrupt, capitalist, white, racist system. While we supported many of their goals and agreed with them--equal pay, access to jobs, breaking the glass ceiling, abortion, contraception, those are all bedrock for us--we didn't think that would be enough, and so we attacked these other things.

That made somebody like Betty Friedan very nervous. Betty Friedan was anti-lesbian. I don't know if I've talked about, I think I mentioned this, this thing that the New York City Bar Association did, this panel, this really offensive panel, "Has 'Women's Lib' Really Liberated Anybody?" [laughter] This was right before law school, so this is '70 or so. There was a group called New Women Lawyers by Emily Jane Goodman, who became a judge, and she was there. On the panel is Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan and Eleanor Holmes Norton and Rita Hauser, who was anti the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment]. Betty Friedan is talking, and she's got this white ruffled blouse, this great big white ruffle down the front. She was not a great thinker. She did a great thing with *The Feminine Mystique* and reached a lot of middle-class housewife women, but in operation with other women, she was very difficult. In the middle of a sentence, she broke out and she said, "I love men." Okay, apropos of what? That was kind of the delivery of this other wing. [Editor's Note: The New Women Lawyers took over the meeting of the Bar of the City of New York on March 25, 1971.]

As I say, we had things in common, but we were trying to figure out what to do in terms of action. These operating principles--again, an old yellowed thing that cost twenty-five cents, this is a long time ago--it sets out what you do. *An Introduction to New York Radical Feminists*, "Philosophy, topics for consciousness-raising, how to organize small group reading lists." This is three or four pages. At the end of it, it says, then you figure out what you're going to do and turn this into action, whether you're going to do theater or media stuff or what you're going to do.

The New York Radical Feminists would do stuff, like we decided to integrate these bars in New York that decided [not to serve a woman unaccompanied by a man]. Two women who showed up were "women alone," because they didn't have a man with them. We decided to integrate all these bars by a group of women on a Sunday afternoon. Café de la Paix was this very upscale restaurant on Central Park South, and P.J. Clarke's was one of them. We went from bar to bar in

groups of women and insisted on being served. That is not what NOW would do, because you could get arrested and things could get physical. I don't remember what the Playboy demonstration was, but apparently there was one and it was a site of conflict in the women's movement. We had this Congress to Unite Women--well, let me back up. Have I talked about "Has 'Women's Lib' Really Liberated Anybody?" Does that sound familiar to you?

KR: You can talk about that.

DC: Have I talked about it before?

KR: You have mentioned it, but you have not gone into it in depth.

DC: Okay, well, let me just spend a minute on it then, because it was one of the moments when I decided to apply to law school. Up on the dais is Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, and Friedan does this, "I love men" thing. Then, Gloria takes the mic. She talks a little bit, but she says, which is typical of her, she says, "And I always wonder, when I am asked to speak at an organization that has a lot of women members, why is it that they import me? Why don't they ask the women in their organization what they think? I'm going to turn the mic over." She turns it over to Emily Goodman, who gets up and raises hell about the representation of women in law school and in the courts and obnoxious behavior by judges and on and on and the impact of the law on women's lives.

Then, there's a debate between Eleanor Holmes Norton and Rita Hauser about the Equal Rights Amendment, at which point Rita Hauser says, "The Equal Rights Amendment is nothing but a vague moral prohibition." Norton does this very theatrical thing and she's so intense and she goes, "There … there … there is nothing in the Bill of Rights that is anything but a vague moral prohibition." I looked at that, I thought, "I want to do that." [Editor's Note: The phrasing of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment is: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."]

Norton came out of the civil rights movement. She was a Black woman from, I think, Washington originally, although that's where she ended up. She was incredibly self-confident and intense. This book that I found, in September of 1970, when she was the head of the Human Rights Commission and she convened a set of hearings on "Women's Role," one role, "in Contemporary Society," and I came and spoke on the panel about women's liberation, that's a seven-hundred-page document. She was gathering data and testimony and context of people that could then be built upon in New York City. [Editor's Note: Eleanor Holmes Norton, who serves in the U.S. House of Representatives from the District of Columbia, served as the New York City Human Rights Commissioner from 1970 to 1977 and held the first public hearings in the country on discrimination against women. The hearings took place from September 21 to 25, 1970. Records of the hearings became the book *Women's Role in Contemporary Society*, the Report of the New York Commission on Human Rights, published in 1972. Norton was appointed chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) by President Jimmy Carter in 1977.]

Years later, when I worked in Washington, I went and watched her as a member of Congress convene a panel on the Equal Pay Act, I think. I watched how she handled it, and she just was a brilliant, well-prepared, aggressive [leader]. She was making her points and bringing you in, but she was just such a strong character.

Flo Kennedy, I don't know if you've encountered her in your travels, but she was a wild Black lawyer in New York, who used to wear these very decorative, huge cowboy hats. At one point, she was Billie Holiday's lawyer, and she was very theatrical, very flamboyant. She was sitting like right in front of me during this panel. What she did was like what Norton did; she took control of the setting by stepping outside how you're supposed to behave. She had this guttural laugh, and so what she did when somebody said something stupid, like Rita Hauser and the vague moral prohibition, she made this sound, she said, "Uh-huh ah-ho, ah-ho, ah-ho." It was clearly this ridiculing sound deep in her body, and she's sitting there, she's a lawyer, so she can play with these boys. What a night. I wanted to do that, for sure. [laughter]

Because of this ego structure of the New York Radical Feminists, one of the things that we got into, which is very deep but very difficult and a lot of research had not even begun about it, is what are males and females biologically like? How much is culture? How much is biological? When we were going through this, one of the biggest insults you could hurl at a woman in a meeting was that she was a male identifier, that she was acting like a man, that she was treating you like a woman, and these were frameworks for hierarchy and subordination. One of the people in law school that I knew, a woman, called me a male identifier once--that's in my notes. It was a very interesting and difficult political project to try to figure out--what did you want to keep from how men acted, and what did you want to toss away? What did you want to make accessible for all humans, not just men, and what things were really things that you wanted to put in the trash heap of history? Then, correspondingly, what of the things that women had [done] traditionally and because of culture did you want to keep and what to toss away? Obviously, that goes on today. That's really a long-term project.

We had this workshop. There was a conference May 1, 2, 3 of 1970, and the workshop is called "The Politics of Personality." Just before this, I had written a film review [for WBAI Radio], that I kept a copy of, of a wonderful film, a very challenging film, called *Georgia, Georgia*, and it was about a Black woman played by Diana Sands. Maya Angelou wrote it. I saw it in an all-Black, except for me, audience, and I was fascinated at the audience's reaction to different plot points. The big conflict in the film was that this performer, this artist, who was Black, was attracted to a white man, and she ends up getting killed for that by Black people. So, a lot of the film is about conformity to group process. It was also very homophobic, a lot of stuff of yelling out "faggot," stuff that was really on the surface, that you would get, in other settings, a much more polite rendition. When I wrote that review, I end up asking, "Do feminists demand the same rigid conduct from women? For us, it's complicated by the fact that lesbianism in some parts of the women's movement elicits automatic approval almost by definition, but imagine a woman in bed with a man, possibly in love with him? Do our feminist hackles rise? Do we automatically assume that she couldn't be there by choice, that she must have been pressured by him, that she stands only to lose in her contact with him?" Then, in *The Village Voice* a few weeks ago, Jill Johnston reprinted an article that Ti-Grace Atkinson wrote. Do you know anything about Ti-Grace? Do you know who she is?

KR: You can say for the record who Ti-Grace Atkinson is.

DC: Okay, Ti-Grace Atkinson was a very important early feminist who was a founder of The Feminists. She took a very anti-marriage line and developed that. She was a separatist pretty much. Here, you see her, Ti-Grace "describes a woman who considers herself a committed feminist and who yet feels she has a right to a private life.'" Here's where some of those [tensions arise], the personal is political, and those [questions around] do you let a group determine your previously private decisions about sexuality? This woman that she's talking about in this article "becomes, to Miss Atkinson, a collaborator, a traitor to her sex." Very hard words. [Editor's Note: Diane Crothers reads from her film review on WBAI Radio.] "How different is this from Georgia's fate at the hands of her own people? The Blacks in the film and in the audience felt she had no right to live in a manner not approved for a 'real Black woman.' Do feminists deaden and destroy each other for the same reason? One cannot be committed to one's own oppressed group without adhering to a strict group-controlled, group-defined political line. Can our movement breathe and give birth to itself again and again, as it must, when we carve out the privateness, the individual complexity in each of us? Do we work together for years in order that only one kind of feminist, a politically-correct feminist, be allowed to exist." You can see what the tensions are in the women's movement around that time, from that. This is all 1970.

Then, we go to this Congress to Unite Women. [Editor's Note: This is referring to the Second Congress to Unite Women on May 1, 1970.] This is the one where my mother was in town and was so moved by the lesbians coming in and saying, "Whoa." In this, this is my outline for it, "The structure of our personality determines the character of the feminist society we are able to envision. In other words, insofar as we are unable to resist dominating others, we will provide feminist alternatives that serve merely to establish yet another group in power, dominating women again, but more subtly and under a much more sophisticated cover." Then, it goes through that whole thing. The last paragraph, "The male Left and the Black movement in this country have met with resounding failure to achieve radical change precisely because of their inability to attack and radically alter the basic dominant-submissive behavior pattern. Ours will become an impotent movement unless we're strong enough to face domination and the will to power in ourselves and to learn not to control these urges but to examine and redirect the need for self-assertion so that we do not attain a measure of freedom at the expense of others." Now, that's very much from the civil rights movement and from democracy, let the people decide, and all that kind of political background. Then, we go to that workshop, and all hell breaks loose. I'm just giving a little political history about the New York Radical Feminists. [Editor's Note: Betty Friedan, author, feminist activist and co-founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), referred to lesbians in the organization and in women's liberation as a "lavender menace." At the Second Congress to Unite Women, members of Radicalesbians and Gay Liberation Front, along with several other feminist organizations, protested the exclusion of lesbian-feminists from participation in the conference and from the movement as a whole. The protesters, wearing "Lavender Menace" t-shirts, turned off the lights, seized the microphone, and took control of the conference for two hours.]

Talking about how we formed New York Radical Feminists, this was November of '69, "During the next seven months, I helped form many new consciousness-raising groups under the aegis of New York Radical Feminists. I also participated in many feminist actions, which were reaching out and changing the thoughts and lives of women across the country. This included the *Ladies' Home Journal* action, making bars accessible to women alone, planning and running workshops in the Congress to Unite Women, taping biweekly feminist film reviews on WBAI …" This was all focused out, not the infighting and not the perfect theory stuff. I'm talking all about why this is so important, but I'm also dealing with, at this conference, attempted takeovers by different groups. There was one called "The Class Workshop," and in this one, "These women decided beforehand that the issue of how women are divided by class should predominate the Congress. This was not a democratically arrived at decision of the Congress but rather the view of a militant disruptive minority." So, you start to see these groups come in. They're women, but they're primarily focused on not feminism.

KR: Along with that, the issue of class, in your radical feminist circles, what was also talked about in terms of heteronormativity and what was talked about in terms of race-based oppression of women?

DC: Right, right. Did I mention last time that I recently watched this fifty-one-minute interview on YouTube with Jan Peterson? Did I talk about that? No. Well, Jan was a member of New York Radical Feminists in West Village Number One, which I was in at the time that I did this thing. Jan, I went to a reunion ten or twenty years ago with her of New York Radical Feminists, and she remembered the whole night that I had this fight with Susan Brownmiller about whether rape was a women's issue. Jan could recount the whole thing, "She said this. You said this." It was really quite impressive. Now, Jan, in this fifty-one-minute thing--she must be eighty by now--it's an analysis and a history of her life as an organizer among other things, and she talks about being in New York Radical Feminists and its upper-middle-class, individualist focus. Now, I was an upper-middle-class woman, and that did not trouble me. I didn't even see it, but she was a working-class woman from Wisconsin. Her father was an electrician. He died when she was ten, and she had a much harder scrabble early life. She became a social worker. She said she would go from New York Radical Feminist meetings in Manhattan to Brooklyn, and she ended up working in and living in Williamsburg, Brooklyn for the rest of her life. She built a women's organization there, which was white, ethnic, mostly Catholic women, called the National Congress of Neighborhood Women. She built a very let-the-people-decide kind of [organization]. She had also been in the civil rights movement. She built a very not-top-down organization. She eventually, to her great credit, went international. She did the Beijing women's meeting. She has this group now that's in many places in the world. But she was reacting against the individualism, and she wanted a collective response.

As to the heteronormative part of it, there weren't lesbians, to my knowledge, in our inner group. Everybody that I was aware of their sexuality was heterosexual. No, that's not true, Anne Koedt, I think, was a lesbian. Around 1970, with Rita Mae Brown and putting that forward, was the critique of that. Washington, D.C. had a much stronger political lesbian focus within the women's movement. There was a group called *off our backs* that had a newspaper, and The Furies, I think, were from D.C. New York was really much more, you could say, performatively heterosexual because there were people like Anselma Dell'Olio. There were really good-looking

woman who would become media attractive people, and New York is very media oriented, unlike D.C. or Chicago. That's about all that we knew at the time. Can I take a quick break? [Editor's Note: Anselma Dell'Olio is the author of "Divisiveness and Self-Destruction in the Women's Movement: A Letter of Resignation," which was delivered at the Congress to Unite Women. She is the founder of the New Feminist Theatre in New York.]

KR: Yes, sure, I will pause.

DC: Thanks.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on and recording. I had just asked you about, to what extent, in your radical feminist circles, were you talking about issues of heteronormativity, which you talked about, and then also race-based oppression?

DC: I'm sorry, hold that thought for just one second.

KR: Oh, sure.

DC: Can you see this?

KR: Hold it up a little bit higher, *Women's Role in Contemporary Society*.

DC: This is the Eleanor Holmes Norton seven-hundred-page thing. I just want to find this one thing in there that addresses that point. [laughter] One of the things that's so great about this project for me is I have such affection for this young woman. Everything turned out fine in my life, but I look back at the rawness and the bravery of the people who were involved in this stuff. [At the time] we have no idea how this is going to go, whether there would be a women's movement.

I'm on this panel of women's liberation [at the New York City Human Rights Commission hearings on "Women's Role in Contemporary Society"] at this point, and this is September 21 to 25, 1970. I'm talking, "I would like to speak to the issue of whether men are the enemy. I think they are," and just go on about that. [laughter] But later, on this issue about race, "Sometimes the women's lib movement is faulted for being a white middle-class movement, and one thing that was suggested when that first charge came up was that white middle-class women should go organize other groups of women to get them into the movement. It seems to me to be a very presumptuous kind of suggestion. It seems to me that if you want to accept that it's a white middle-class movement when it can deliver some benefits to all women, particularly benefits like nationalized free childcare and free abortion and free contraception, that poor Black women and poor white women will then be free to develop their own political perspective on themselves as women and that it's very presumptuous to attempt to impose anything on them. If we can free them from some of the more pressing obligations of being a poor white or poor Black woman, that they will then contribute to our movement, but they will contribute at a different political perspective."

For me, at this moment, that was one of the attacks on the women's movement, "Oh, it's all white woman. It's all educated women. It's all young women." One of the things that's hilarious in this, one of the panelists on this day was from an organization called Older Women's Liberation. Do you know how old you had to be to be in that? Thirty. [laughter]

It's also so instructive to look up some of the people from that day. There's this woman Carole Vance, and she was Columbia Women's Liberation. I looked her up. She became a Ph.D. and a big deal academic, and then they fired her. Columbia fired her. Then, there's a petition online to get her hired. So, she's still operating this human rights and sex trafficking center. So, I wrote her a fan email, saying, "I just read about you. I'm so glad you're doing well and doing good." [laughter]

You're also reminding me that in my own personal life, because when you're twenty, or seventeen, or twenty-three, you don't really have much of a lens of looking at yourself. Recently, for that memoir course, I was writing about some related stuff and I'm in my senior year of high school, and this is true, and I'm deciding that it's time to select somebody to have sex with for the first time and who is this going to be. There are various possibilities, but then I met this really good-looking, tall, blonde guy and so I pick him. And, you know, things proceeded. When I went to law school, I looked around and I thought, "Now who are the good-looking men?" and there were three and two of them were married. So, I ended up with the third one for three years. Now, this is not the usual model of heterosexual women, but I didn't know that that wasn't the usual model because that was what was natural to me. I was attractive, and I didn't get punished for that. You know, it was working for me.

Then, my best friend in law school was a lesbian, and as she put it, she specialized in turning straight women. [laughter] She was very smart and very literary. Her big disappointment in life was she didn't get published by the Yale Younger Poet Series, so we had a lot in common. We had literature. She did some programs for me on WBAI. We had a good time. But she couldn't turn me, so there was that. However, there was this other woman, after law school, who had the same idea. She got as far as kissing me one time. It's one of the more revelatory moments in my life because I wouldn't have discovered this if she hadn't kissed me. She kissed me and she recoiled and she said, "You kiss like a man." [laughter] Now, if you only kissed men, you don't get to figure that out, do you? [laughter] So, that was the kind of atmosphere.

The politics of it, Anne, when we would talk about sex, say, in the New York Radical Feminists, and this is when Jane Kramer from *The New Yorker* was coming to all our meetings all the time for a year to write about us, and she was married. She still is married to a man. Either she or somebody else described having an orgasm through vaginal intercourse, and Anne, who is this very severe, long blonde hair, never a smile, says--the woman says this thing, and maybe it was me, that they had an orgasm through intercourse, and Anne says, "No, you didn't." [laughter] I thought it was funny at the time and outrageous. There were all these issues about how to construct sexuality and where you got your information and whether you shut it down because it didn't fit your particular schema. That's all I can tell you.

KR: You did, last time, talk about bringing rape and sexual violence against women.

DC: Let me just finish up one thing on this 1970 thing.

KR: Sure, of course.

DC: Okay, so we get this class workshop, and this is composed of about fifteen women from the feminist Redstockings and WITCH, Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell. They were meeting for several months, and they prepared a media proposal. What this was about apparently was, "Never talk to the media." Okay, now, that's a very Left thing, the media are not your friends. Well, we know they're not our friends. However, you try to reach women across this country, it's a big country, and we were interested in reaching women. Then, they tried to push that through, and that failed. Then, they try to basically shut the whole thing down, this conference. I'm talking about, "The building closes at six. It would have precluded discussion of any ..." So, I'm trying to make this a democratic process and that you don't get to hijack it. We've got the class workshop, we're doing that. Then, there's women who decided to go to New Haven rather than work on a feminist congress. I think, at that time, it was a Panther trial, and it might have been Bobby Seale or somebody. I don't know who was getting tried in New Haven. [Editor's Note: Jury selection began in May 1970 in the trial of Bobby Seale, founder and chairman of the Black Panther Party, and Ericka Huggins, head of the party's New Haven chapter, who were charged with capital murder and kidnapping related to the 1969 murder of a party member suspected of being a police informant. The trial ended in a hung jury.] Then, they come to this meeting, attacking the concept of parliamentary procedure, dealing with the "male pig press" and the idea of order being maintained at all. Then, I'm totally pissed at them, "These women bring with them from the Left a great deal of self-righteous disdain for the media and its power to reach women across the country. These women insist on basing their politics on the writings of a nineteenth century man who was incapable of dealing with the tyranny of men over women and who could hardly be expected to deal with the implications of a technological revolution in media, which was just beginning at the time of his death." Okay, so, I'm totally ticked at them.

Then, we have the Playboy demonstration, which "was attended by less than thirty women, and then it was assumed that another crisis had come up and that women's issues were to be quietly put away until another day." You see on *The Cavett Show* that I'm referencing that, when Hefner does the mansplaining about, "You should work on other stuff." [Editor's Note: On May 26, 1970, Diane Crothers and Holly Tannen, members of the New York Radical Feminists, appeared on *The Dick Cavett Show*, where they debated Playboy founder Hugh Hefner.]

Then, the last challenge to this poor little conference, we were talking about the Women's Center in Manhattan, "The meeting to decide how to structure the Women's Center was turned into a meeting to decide how to organize women to work against the war, only belatedly dealing with the center after more than two-thirds of the women had left. Almost all the women at the meeting were capable of relating to women only as workers or consumers, not as housewives or women. Again, another issue took priority." Again, it's a hugely contentious time of the war, class stuff, the Panthers, COINTELPRO [the FBI's countersurveillance of groups deemed radical].

Then, the last part of it is about, "Radical feminism has been too much and too long involved in in-fighting and in the development of pure political theory. We must turn to action to draw in the vast numbers of American women who will respond to their own oppression as women. We must each begin with ourselves by developing our strength through commitment, involvement in feminist activities …" and blah, blah, blah. So, that's just before I decide [to leave]. As my son said--my son once wrote a paper about *The Scarlet Letter* and--what's her name in *The Scarlet Letter*?

KR: Hester.

DC: Hester. The way he describes it is that, "Hester should take her baby and blow this pop stand." [laughter] That's kind of the feeling at that moment, "I'm out of here." That is a long treatise of all these groups, and I delivered that orally. I was probably tired at the end of that. Law school probably looked simpler. Okay, so, I think I've said what I can say about New York Radical Feminists. Great days, great days, changed my life.

KR: Before I ask you a few questions, is there anything else that you want to follow up on from last time?

DC: I can't even remember what last time was. I've been so deep in these radical feminist documents and on the South. I'm ready for law school. Let me see if I have anything. We talked about *Georgia, Georgia*. There is a song in *Georgia, Georgia* called ["I Can Call Down Rain"], "I can call down rain. I can call down thunder," and the Diana Sands character sings it. You can't really find it online, except through Facebook, which I'm not a member of anymore, and she died shortly after that film. She was a great actress. I have heard it in the past. That song, it's a Black female actress trying to be in touch with her authentic identity and to not be shaped by everybody else's prohibitions. It's one of the most powerful things I've ever heard, which is why I did the review of it. No, that's it. If you ever find it, please send it to me. Okay, the rest is all on law school, applying, missing the first day and all that.

KR: Let's talk about you going on *The Dick Cavett Show* and debating Hugh Hefner.

DC: Right, okay.

KR: First, I just want to know some of the details that I don't know and that probably most people would not know. Where did you go? Where was the studio? I am assuming it was not filmed live.

DC: No, it wasn't filmed live, that's right. It was taped. Is it ABC that it's on? I forget what network it was on. [Editor's Note: *The Dick Cavett Show* aired on ABC Late Night in 1969-'70.]

KR: Okay, we can add it to the transcript.

DC: Yes. I'm trying to think of what the timing is. I was also profiled on this CBS documentary on women. They followed me around with a mic. That CBS documentary was aired on April 1,

1970. It was on Channel Two. This thing with Hefner was the end of May, like May 30th [May 26], or something, 1970. I had done this CBS documentary before that.

I was in the West Village One [Brigade], which was after the Stanton-Anthony Brigade of New York Radical Feminists and I fell apart, I was attacked or both. I moved over to West Village One, and that had Susan Brownmiller and Sally Kempton and Jan Peterson in it and a number of other people, some of whom were journalists who were then writing also about women's liberation, and Susan was in that role.

Susan and Sally were invited and they went on *The Cavett Show* with Hugh Hefner [on March 26, 1970]. Particularly Susan, she had her agenda, she had something to say. She was pretty snotty, and she went through the whole thing against him. [laughter] It was full of conflict, full of drama, good TV. They wanted to have them on again, because the ratings went up. We understood this, that the ratings would go up and you would get a nationwide audience for your ideas. So, they came to our group. We had this thing that you passed this around, when there was a media opportunity, both so that you can learn how to do it and you would have a broad base of women who could handle this stuff when people were hammering you in an interview, and that you could present the movement well.

I had just done this CBS documentary, and that one had six women profiled. I was the "militant feminist," and there was a nun and there were various people. This guy, Al Waller, I will use his name for that one, was the director, and he told me this whole rape fantasy that he had. I was having to defend against that and also thinking of whether he was doing this with these other women, including the nun, or was this just specially for me? But also, he's following me around, the production team, with a mic for like a week. So, I am trying not to say anything that can be spliced and edited in a way that will make us, the women's movement, look bad.

Shulie Firestone had been on *The David Susskind Show*, and Susskind was really into drama in a very negative way. I had some notes from that show, when I was helping her do that show, and it is about how he was into whips and knives. He wanted to just kind of have a gladiatorial approach to feminism. Shulie was hot; she was hot tempered and she would respond. So, she is filmed at that thing with her little five feet tall, long black hair, little wire glasses, saying, "Pregnancy is barbaric." Okay, this is not the message we need to reach the vast majority of women, who were mothers. [laughter] We knew all that going into this thing with Hefner, round two.

Holly and I agreed to do it. Holly was a beautiful Arpege [perfume] model, all over the pages of *Seventeen*, blonde, sweet looking. She wasn't actually like that, but that sure was what she was making her living as. I was a secretary at the time, and I chose a yellow shirtwaist to wear to it. We were young. We were attractive. We had opinions, and we were deeply committed to the women's movement. That's basically how we got selected in that group. Do you want me to just take you through the day?

KR: Yes, please, take me through the day, and start with what was it like for you when you first met Hugh Hefner backstage.

DC: Right. It's Midtown. We're going to a taping, and it's daytime. I'm stuck in traffic. I'm in a cab, and I'm nervous about being late. I get there, and they tell me to go downstairs. I run down this flight of stairs, and there is Hugh Hefner sitting on a stool, two feet away from me, getting made up, chatting up the makeup girl. I thought, "Oh, no." [laughter] So, I just turned around and bolted up those stairs, and it took me about ten steps to realize, "You need to turn around and you need to do this." So, I did. I came downstairs and I got made up and had to deal with what this was going to be, but I am interested in new experiences and that one was totally new.

Then, we went to the taping. Holly and I had decided that we would--she had a Superwoman t-shirt on, so she was doing the outrageous visuals. I was doing the conventional middle-class woman, secretary, you know, a normal person. She would do the jokes and I would do the history. She did the stuff about the testicles, "How would you like to have the silicon injections?" and she makes these huge testicles. Then, they cut that joke to this music they would play at the breaks, which were all these offensive '50s stay-in-your-place kind of women's [songs]. The one I remember is, "Love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a … " I can't remember the lyrics of it.

KR: "Horse and carriage."

DC: "Goes together like a [horse and carriage]." Really? Okay, so, they would play that, and we would regroup at the commercial break, Holly and I, figuring out what the next segment would be like. Cavett, once he realized we weren't going to attack him, he backed right up, and I remember that during one of the breaks early on. As soon as he realized that he was not our focus and he was not going to be our focus, then he got much more comfortable, although he did ask these outrageous questions, which you would never see [today], "Are you married?" [laughter] He asked us that.

KR: He asked you off camera?

DC: No, on camera.

KR: Wow. What other outrageous questions did he ask you?

DC: He talked about, "You girls," and, "What should I call you?" Then, Holly delivered this great extemporaneous line, which got buried in the laughter about, "I don't care what you call us. You can call us everything. You can call us whatever." It was just like, "It is so immaterial to me what you call me." That independence, that spark of, "We will be defining us" was just a delight. Of course, because you're going on in twos, it's so much easier on you because you're playing to her as well as the audience. Hefner is a part of it, but you're just using him as a foil.

KR: What were the exchanges like with Hefner?

DC: Hefner, as my sister would say, had been a man too long. [laughter] He was used to a lot of deference, and so all you had to do was muck that up. Well, one of the things I learned about *The Susskind Show* with Shulie was to answer the question you wish you had been asked and do

not go where he wants you to go, if that doesn't suit your purposes. Now, that is a great technique, and you see that all the time now. He would say something or other. I would just figure out where I wanted to go, and so it was either laying out the history of something or challenging him on his premises. I think that's the show where he said that Playboy, we should be really grateful to Playboy because it liberated women from the kitchen, and I said something like, "Women want the whole house." [laughter] He just plays into that because he's being so stupid and so tired. There was a generational gap as well. I was twenty-three, so he was significantly older.

When I look at the clip again, all these years later, one of the things that is remarkable to me is how inner-directed I appear to be. I am [focused on] talking to myself and to people in that audience and I am going to say what I have to say and I'm going to sketch it out. I've just got none of that propitiating smiley stuff going on. [laughter] That was very charged, very exciting.

Some women had called us up individually, Holly and me, and tried to get us to pressure him to set up a reparations fund to pay for abortions, and both of us turned that down. I thought strategically it was a bad move because he could agree to whatever, and then how are you going to enforce it? He just looks like a good guy and you look like a shrew; this is not going to play. Then, at the time, the women probably from WITCH or RAT, which was a left-wing women's group, they came in and they disrupted it. This is around the same time as this is class workshop stuff. People from the Left are coming in, women, are trying to disrupt using the media. They think it's indelibly corrupt. So, they came in. Then, the Bunnies are sitting there with their ears and the breasts and all the rest of this. It was very theatrical, and Cavett was going to keep order. It certainly wasn't my job to keep order. It was like a play, like an improv, and you got to talk about the things that were most important to you at the time. It was very exciting. [Editor's Note: Bunnies refers to Playboy Bunnies or waitresses at Playboy Clubs. During *The Dick Cavett Show*, an audience member shouted at Hugh Hefner, "You make all your money off the exploitation of women, and as women, we are here to demand reparations." Dick Cavett responded, "Okay, listen, we're going to toss out anyone who yells from now on, and you're going to be the first." In February 1970, feminists from Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH) and other organizations took over the underground publication *RAT* for what was supposed to be one issue, but then they did not relinquish editorial control. In March of 1971, the paper changed its name to the *Women's LibeRATion*.]

It shaped me because many years later, when I would be a litigator, it was the same kind of experience. I'm talking to myself. I am creating a record here, and some judge is telling me to sit down and to shut up or whatever he is telling me and I had bad relationships with short male judges. They were difficult for me. [laughter] You go back to this period where you're on national television and you're so young, a child. As my sister would say, "Come and get me, copper." [laughter] That was it. That was fun.

KR: Between the radical feminists in the audience and the Bunnies in the audience and everyone else who is in the audience, you have this very diverse audience. How did the audience react overall?

DC: I thought they were very engaged. When I listened to the clip, there's a lot of laughter, there's a lot of responsiveness, and Cavett, he was what he was. The next night, he had Raquel Welch on and he says to her, "You know, I had some lib ladies on last night and you're their enemy." I thought, "That is the last time I am watching you." [laughter] That was the take, make it a catfight, make it among women.

KR: Just for the record, you were recently interviewed by the podcast *Something Else* for their series called "Power" on Hugh Hefner. When the issue of Playboy Bunnies was brought up on *The Dick Cavett Show*, you, in your language, were very careful and deliberate and supportive of the Playboy Bunnies as women and you did not objectify them in opposition to radical feminism.

DC: I didn't characterize them as being in opposition [to radical feminism], yes.

KR: Right. How did you know how to do that? Was that a strategy that you had talked out before going into *The Dick Cavett Show*?

DC: At this point, it's May '70. January or February of '71, I think, is the date for the rape speak-out. Then, the sex workers, or what we called prostitutes at that point, those conferences were coming the next year. We were developing our whole analysis of various kinds of work that women did, whether they're housewives or whether they're prostitutes. There was a lot of condescension towards housewives, and then you do an analysis of that and you look at what the transactional nature of being a housewife is and what she's exchanging for what. It was one of the few choices that women had was our analysis. We didn't put down a woman who was "just" a housewife. We distinguished ourselves from the politics of the time of putting women down that way, and we felt the same way about sex work. At some point in that period and certainly by now, when you read about women who are doing that for a living, there are many things about it that are very attractive, like the pay, the small number of hours. Watching *Deuce* with Maggie Gyllenhaal, watching a woman in the pornography industry, but that's now, that's not then. I think it was being affected by what was called the pro-woman line, that the things women did, you didn't assume they had a full range of choice for one thing and that you looked at it from their perspective. What were they getting out of it? What were the things that were the pluses? I think that's a radical shift in understanding.

KR: Can you say, for the record, what you said at *The Dick Cavett Show*, when the issue of the Playboy Bunnies were brought up?

DC: I don't remember. You'd have to tell me what it is and then I'll say it. [laughter]

KR: It was set up with the expectation that you would attack the Bunnies, and you did not.

DC: Really?

KR: Your response was that they make more money doing what they do than they would doing anything else. That was your response. Do you remember that?

DC: No, but that's typical. At that time, I was a secretary, and I was making six thousand dollars a year. That was a good salary for a woman, but there were very few ways that women could make a living and make any more money per hour. The other thing, too, is that I was very conscious of this double-edged sword of being physical attractive to men, and in my experience, it was something I was often punished for, rewarded for, it was very complicated. Other women didn't like me for it. Men did like me for it. It's like being a lawyer. Some people will think you're smart because you're a lawyer. Now, to me, that's really pushing it. [laughter] There's a lot of people who are smart who are not lawyers, and in my mind, there's a lot of dumb lawyers. Physical attractiveness is like that. When you take a woman and put her in an occupation where she's got to do that--I was recently watching something about Hefner, this is now though, and these Bunnies were talking about doing the "Bunny Dip," serving food like this [leans over backwards in the pose of the "Bunny Dip"]. It's objectification. It's men who think this is okay to go to the Playboy mansion. There were so many levels that it was disgusting on. You're going to blame the women? I don't think so. [Editor's Note: The "Bunny Dip" was a maneuver used by a Bunny while serving drinks at a Playboy Club to keep the low-cut costume in place.]

KR: During *The Dick Cavett Show*, Hugh Hefner made a statement about how you and Holly should be spending your time doing other things besides advancing your own equality in society. When he said that, how did you feel? [Editor's Note: During *The Dick Cavett Show*, Hugh Hefner said, "At this time, when our society is coming apart, that the same women who are involved in this could be doing things that need to be done if this society is to be saved."]

DC: I felt like I'd had a snootful of men telling me that for years. Men told it to us in the New Left. Ministers told it to us in the civil rights movement. Fathers told us. Lots of men tell women this, and all these men are in positions of power, some kind of power. It's very difficult to develop the staying power on one's own oppression in a way that doesn't make it so narrow that there's nobody else in that group with you. But if you're establishing for fifty percent of the population, that's pretty broad. Again, that was a perfect example of how I would do the history, so I went back to abolition and just walked us up through and that men are often doing this.

In fact, just recently, I'm taking this terrific course with one of my favorite historians, Stephanie McCurry, she's at Columbia now, and she's written very important books, like *Confederate Reckoning* is one of them, of the decision-making of the South to get into the Civil War, and that these white male planters talked only to themselves and didn't consider enslaved people or women, and what a disaster it turned out to be for them. She does a course at Gilder Lehrman [Institute of American History] on "Gender and Women in 19th Century America," and she was just walking us through the debacle of the fight for suffrage around the time of the Fifteenth Amendment. She is a passionate feminist, and her point was that when you're in a mixed-sex organization and men tell you, "It's not your turn, we'll get you later, we'll get you, come the revolution," don't believe them. It will not happen. She knows a lot more history than I'll ever know. That was our position.

KR: What did Hefner say to you that surprised you?

DC: I don't know if that's then or now, the thing that surprises me about him is how prurient his vision of sex was. The healthy boy-girl thing was the way he was describing this, like everyone

is seven years old. The intense need to remove unpredictability from a sexual relationship, to make it so choreographed and so rote, to me all the life was getting sucked out of it, but to see this very choreographed world that he needed to live in. The extent of that, I guess, it was hard to believe he was really serious. Now, it did make him a lot of money and he was certainly very successful, but it was so peculiar. I think that's really now, not then. I don't think anything he said at the time surprised me because we were pretty rat-a-tat-tat back, and if he'd surprised us, we might have had to, "Wait, where are we going?" [laughter]

KR: You sounded really calm, cool and collected while you were on *The Dick Cavett Show*. How were you able to do that? You are a very young person and you are on national television and you are debating somebody who is a national figure. How were you so calm, cool and collected?

DC: Well, first of all, we could smoke. That was fabulous. [laughter] That always helps. I smoked my way through my first year of law school. It really helped. Again, I was just born at the right time with the right mother. I had been to Birmingham, and these people were bombing us. These people were threatening our lives. We knew what lynching looked like. I was reading something I wrote after that summer, when I get back, I realized that I had presumed that I would be dead, that I was not going to get through that summer. Those things really shape you. I was eighteen when all that happened. This is five years later. I have managed to get out of a violent marriage, again, somebody who wanted to kill me if I left. I had slayed some dragons before I got to that stage and lived to tell the tale. I was often rewarded for taking the bull by the horns and getting in there and fighting. It's right around this time, like two or three weeks later, I go back to Chapel Hill to try to finish that stupid bachelor's degree. I go to a women's meeting, and they're talking about my not-yet ex-husband. The women are on strike who work for him because, well, it's a long story, but they are having a picket line. [laughter] So, I go. I held a picket sign, and I see him. Fifty years later, when we're doing that Labor and Working-Class History [Association] panel, he himself, my former husband, said, "I'm the only husband that got picketed by his wife." These were the choices I had as I went along, and each time I did them, they were fun and you survived and you got to tell the tale and you met other people who had some of the same qualities and your world got bigger. That's very energizing.

KR: Hugh Hefner was always very involved and very careful about crafting the narrative of his legacy, which has gone a long way in withstanding itself until recently. There is the *Something Else* podcast. There's an A&E documentary [*Secrets of Playboy*] that is coming out and reexamining Hugh Hefner's legacy.

DC: Now, there is an A&E documentary that I saw several years ago, where I knew if they were giving two hours to him that we'd be on it. I had a VCR at that point. I was ready and I taped it and then lost the thing. But there's something on, that's running now, that's the women, and I've been watching that, but that's not us. That's the Bunnies, right?

KR: Yes, right. How do you feel being a part of this reexamination of Hugh Hefner's legacy?

DC: I think it's one of the most challenging intellectual and political things that we have to do. There's this wonderful documentary W. Kamau Bell is doing, *We Need to Talk About Cosby*. I

don't know if you've watched that. I've watched one and a half of them, and one of the things that he's doing in that is taking all this very positive, engaging stuff that Cosby did, in *I Spy*, which I can't say I ever watched, but all these things where sometimes he fought for Black people behind the camera, in front of the camera, and then the stuff that we know about these multiple rapes and the admissions that he gave about that, about drugging women to rape them, and how do you put these two things together, particularly when so many Black kids grew up on *The Cosby Show*. My dad, who's a white man, was constantly complimented as being a lot like that character, the dad in that show. We had very fond feelings for Bill Cosby during all that. One of the things that Bell does that's very effective, I think, at the end of the first episode, he puts up a timeline of what Cosby is doing in public and on media, and then he inserts the rapes so that you can see in 1962, he did thus and such. While we're watching him do *Fat Albert* and do all this stuff that my son was raised on, you are watching the rape allegations all along the line.

I think that's something that's true of our whole culture, as we relook at figures like Hefner. Someday, somebody will do that to Bill Clinton. It's painful to see people who have good sides or good points or have done some good things and then to see what it cost, what that arrogance and that humiliation of others [cost], not a pretty picture.

One of the things that has become normalized over the last fifty years is the rage that women felt, and feel, but felt at being treated this way. In the early parts of the women's movement, it's kind of an inchoate rage, but then it becomes more and more translated into words and then it gets published. One of the documents that I have from law school is such a perfect example of how much rage there was over being treated this way and that it was almost unendurable. You couldn't contain it in your body. It's been quite a fertile time.

KR: I just want to circle back to my question about the reexamination of Hefner. You were, in fact, debating him at the time, challenging him at the time.

DC: Right.

KR: Now, there is this reexamination going on. Why do you feel that what you were doing was important, and how do you reflect on that now?

DC: Well, unfortunately, it is still my experience that whenever a woman challenges the patriarchy, other women draw strength from it and they become able to imagine doing similar things. Unfortunately, we still need models to do this. It's still so difficult to just get right up in somebody's face and say, "Actually, no."

At the time, when we did this with Hefner, we got terrific mail from all across the country, and these women would write and say, "I thought I was the only one." You would be extending this branch to them that it was possible to reimagine their lives and reimagine their futures. For me, there's not any more important work that I've ever done than that, because of the isolation of many women's lives and most people don't live on the coasts and so they're not going to have access to so much stuff about change. That's incredibly important.

Oh, I did find this letter, which was entertaining. I saved it because it was such a part of the experience of 1970. This is from somebody I went to school with in Chapel Hill. It's December 27, 1970, so it's after *The New Yorker* article comes out. It's the same year. We've got the CBS documentary, we've got Hefner, and then we've got *The New Yorker* article. She says, "Dear Diane: It was interesting to talk to you again, although distance and new experiences pull people so far apart. I had wanted to comment on *The New Yorker* article to you. My feeling"--I will not try to editorialize--"my feeling is that personal articles like that are no good for anyone. Of course, you didn't mean for Jane Kramer to do it that way, but then again, you all must have told facts about your lives and she must have sat in on a lot of meetings. You've probably had mounds of criticism. Don't judge me too harshly. I would've been flattered to have gotten in on something like that. It just unfortunately sounded like an ego trip for many. Also, the women were far from typical, all educated, extra intelligent, writing books, et cetera. I do think there's a place for such an article. You all must have learned a lot from it." Then, this women's group is going to talk about it in January or whenever. That ambivalence, that sense that there's only so much attention to go around, and if you get some, I won't get it, and the reality, she's in Chapel Hill, she's not going to get it. I had this professor at Chapel Hill, I may have told you about it, he was a New York, Jewish, smart guy and he said he had a feeling that there could be a revolution in New York and he wouldn't hear about it for six months. This is part of how big this country is and, when you live in other places, how distant it is.

It helped shaped me because you would get stuff like this, and people would think, "You shouldn't have done this." Or, "You shouldn't have gone on." Or, "It's an ego trip," or blah, blah. Then, you'd get letters from people. You develop a different sense of who's in the world and who you're speaking to, and each time, it gets bigger. I'm on the CBS thing, and it's all on tape. It's not live. It's a mic that's being edited. Then, this event with Hefner, you are sitting in front of an audience, but you've got nationwide and you are bringing hope to people. You are bringing possibility, and these are powerful [images]. Also, I was a child in the civil rights movement, so the fact that civil rights became a big deal because of the media, because of reporters, watching Black men get beaten, watching little Black boys getting beaten with an American flag. Images are so important, and people don't forget them. This was handed to us. I mean, they should've just frozen us out.

KR: Do you want to take a quick break?

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on and recording.

DC: Great.

KR: Is there anything else you would like to share about being on *The Dick Cavett Show* and your interactions with Hugh Hefner, before we move on to another topic?

DC: No, I don't really think so. I think, in retrospect, it looks a lot bigger than it was. This was a two-year period, which was the most dazzling intellectual period of my life, which had major impact on me, but this was really just one night. [laughter]

KR: In your feminist activism, you identified rape and sexual violence against women as a crucial issue and you brought that to the forefront. You did various demonstrations, such as the Speak-Out Against Rape. How else did you bring the issue of gender violence to the forefront?

DC: You're talking in that period, '70-'71? Have I told the story about the *Gangbang Swap*?

KR: Yes, you talked about that.

DC: I think it was really just that speak-out, and I've talked about this woman I saw a couple years ago who remembered that speak-out so powerfully. One of the things that I have developed over the years, that the women's movement developed in me, is that when you're sitting around in a group and people are sharing your experiences, I can start to see patterns and I can figure out how to present that. When we started to do this and Alix Shulman was talking about pants-ing, rape by therapists, rape by doctors, hitchhiking, marital rape, all of a sudden, you've got six categories, that's all you need. I think it really was more how it changed me, that that's such a powerful thing to figure out, that you have a half a dozen things you can just get up and change the whole thing, the whole dynamic about it.

I think the argument with Susan Brownmiller at that group and then her writing that book *Against Our Will*: *Men, Women, and Rape* and the change in her own perspective, that's what we were arguing about that night, that rape had been used against Black men, and white women on a pedestal, and all that about lynching, and that there was a new way to listen to rape stories and sexual violence. [Editor's Note: Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* was published in 1975.]

I think at that point in my life, that's all that I did with it. Well, we were doing that project about what if women ran New York State, what would the laws look like? I was typing all that, and there was a lot of stuff about rape in that list of legislative agenda items. It's hard to imagine now that in 1970 you had to have corroboration of identity of a rapist to prosecute. You had to have corroboration of penetration, stuff that makes it impossible to prosecute. I think that's pretty much it.

Fast forward into my life in domestic violence prosecution, I was the one in the office who took most seriously the complaints of women and the sex and the violence and the terrorism, and I would go to court really on anything. You give me anything that I can go to court on, you give me a believable witness, a set of facts that are credible, we are going. I was different from the other prosecutors. [laughter] I also had the highest conviction rate, but that's many years later.

KR: Is there anything else you would like to add about your radical feminist activism?

DC: I probably have said this before, but I was just thinking, when you were talking about the [*Women's Rights Law*] *Reporter*, I was just thinking about meeting Ann Boylan at that Women's Center meeting and what a profound experience it was in the women's movement from doing consciousness-raising. When you look at the last page of this New York Radical Feminists' operating procedures, or whatever we called them, there are nineteen suggested topics for

consciousness-raising. This is a mimeographed thing, by the way; that's how old it is. These are, "How I came to women's liberation, what it means to me, what I expect from it, childhood training, early childhood sexual experiences, puberty, dating and social life, adult sexual experiences, love, fantasies, work, education, marriage, pregnancy, motherhood, aging, family, fashion, politics, the media." This is the underground reality of people's lives. The women's movement, to me, this is one of the great gifts of it is being able to listen to what women will tell you if you listen and then to build something. The other day, I was in a perfectly conventional lunchtime conversation with somebody. She ended up telling me that she was shot on the street in Manhattan a couple weeks ago. Now, we got into a whole thing about bail reform and all sorts of other stuff from around that. But women are not listened to, and so when you do that, you uncover a subterranean world. It's a great gift. That's true of Black people, of any group that is not in a privileged position.

I found a note this morning about a guy, Jose Rivera, who I think was at the law school or one of my law professors. He was giving advice about how to pass the bar exam, and I already failed it once, so I needed advice. He said, "Just imagine that you're a member of the ruling class. Answer all of the questions from that perspective." [laughter] Well, lots of people don't know that.

KR: How did you and Ann Marie Boylan go about founding the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*?

DC: One night, at the Women's Center--I think around on 14th Street. It used to be the old fire station. I think it's a lesbian and gay center now. But I see a sign for it every time I get off that subway stop where I get my hair cut. We were there at a women's meeting, a big, brawling, incoherent, disordered meeting about women's liberation. Ann got up, and she made a pitch for a new legal journal that she wanted to start. Ann is physically very unprepossessing, a plain, long-haired, diffident woman, not particularly sure of herself in speaking, apparently, long pauses between what she said. She wouldn't meet your eyes, I think very shy, and all kinds of other stuff, I think, was going on for her. She got up, and she was talking about this. She raised the issue about whether divorce was a women's issue, and everyone shouted her down and said, "No." [laughter] By this time, I was in the middle of a divorce. I had been to a hearing and I had seen the stuff that my soon-to-be-former husband was pulling. I had a sense of what the laws were, what the state's interaction with women was, how constrained you had to be as a wife, and how basically you were owned by this other person according to the rules, and nobody really gets into that when you're getting married, what you're signing on for. I stuck my hand up and I said, "Actually, I think divorce is a women's issue, uh huh." I stuck out in the crowd.

She came up to me, and we started to talk about this thing. She had my kind of politics about it. The flyer that we had at the beginning, it says, "A new weapon." It should say, "A new weapon for women's lawyers." But she wanted to get women who were not lawyers to understand their legal rights and to understand how to affirm their freedom and their independence. That is my kind of stuff, to not have it be all professionalized and through some conduit.

Nancy Stearns, for some reason, is in my memory, of some article that was in the Rutgers alumni thing, I think I say something about Nancy Stearns vouching for me, but I'm not sure why that is.

She taught a women and law class at Rutgers later, at the law school, but I don't know what I knew her from at that point.

At any rate, we started to talk about it, and as the months went by, we started to develop what it could look like. Ann had a capacious view of what could be in there. It was not going to be written for lawyers. There would be articles and there would be a lot of pictures and there would be a focus on regular women. There was a section on childcare. There was a section on contraception, and there were jokes about the myths that held us down. I think in the contraception one, there's a picture of a woman finding a baby under a leaf or under a tree or something. The centerfold was a beautiful thing--this is all the first issue, so I'm getting ahead of myself. Her view was capacious. She never understood how few pages seventy-two pages really is in terms of text, so she really had like two hundred pages of copy. Part of my job was to get that down. She would get mad, and we would get into it about the realities of how many pages we could do. She had raised money from the Rabinowitz Foundation, who were connected to left wing things in New York, and they gave her a little money. She was a recent graduate of Rutgers Law, and she just had this idea. She hadn't even been divorced herself. I never really got to know her personally, but I think this was her politics. This was not so much her experience, but I could be wrong about that.

KR: The *Women's Rights Law Reporter* was actually New York City based at first.

DC: Yes. We got an office at 119 Fifth Avenue in the Flatiron District, and that's where we operated out of. That's where I would develop budgets, and that's where we went to different foundations and tried to get funding. Most infamously, we went to the Ford Foundation to get money and met with these two men, one Black, one white, and they turned us down. Then, a female staffer called us and said that they thought the women's movement was a fad and it would be gone in a year. We were patted on the head and shown the door by the Ford Foundation. That's the year Susan Berresford was hired by Ford, and she became the first female president of the foundation. So, it was a long, slow slog.

We did everything ourselves. We had no money. At one point, we're in this printing press in New Jersey and we're working so hard. I don't know if it's true or if it's not true, but there's that old saw that women who work together closely all have their periods at the same time. That was all true of us and we didn't have periods for like six weeks or something. We were working so hard on this thing. I remember standing at this press and we were collating. First, the truck that had the red ink for the cover had an accident and drove off the road. Then, we had to figure out how to get that ink and how to get that ink on. So, this is basic. We got that ink on the front cover. Then, we're collating it so you can see the centerfold because it's flat before you're collating it and putting the staples in. I found a typo. Now, I had been over that thing so many times, and I missed this typo. That centerfold is a closeup of Harriet Tubman's face, a photo of her or a drawing. It's a Susan [Griffin] poem, "I Like to Think of Harriet Tubman." Now, I'm trying to think if this is during the Nixon Administration maybe, the Ford Administration, some of those folks who are defunding food for poor children, and so the poem is about that. "I'd like to see them live on a lunch every third day" or whatever, so it's very angry. Then, on the back cover is a picture of a white, working-class, overweight woman, and it says, "Join us. Subscribe here." It was very much directed to women, not to women lawyers.

KR: How did you go about getting the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* affiliated with Rutgers Law School in Newark?

DC: Well, I had audited a class with Ruth Ginsburg, who was on our advisory board at the time. She was doing one of the first classes on women and the law, and so I was over at Newark for that. I applied to law school, and she wrote me a recommendation letter. I'm going to enter in the fall of '71. The first issue was July-August '71 of *The Reporter*. Another mistake we made, we didn't put the year on it. We put, "July-August." [laughter] I mean, we were self-taught. My sister worked on this as well and Mary Morgan, Jeannie Friedman. There's a wonderful poster of a woman who could be laughing or could be throwing her hands up, she's got long dark hair, and the words are, "Women Unite." That's Jeannie Friedman's poster. She is a graphic artist, and she did the graphics for us and the design. [Editor's Note: Jeannie Friedman designed the "Women Unite" poster for the Women's Strike for Equality march in New York City on August 26, 1970.]

We didn't have any money. I was starting law school. My sister had gone back to live, I'm trying to remember, in Boston maybe, yes, and to school. It was just Ann and me, and then it was just Ann. I was overwhelmed by law school; this was not a good experience and I was deep in it, what am I doing here? Sometime around that point, Elizabeth Langer and some other law students, she was a year ahead of me, and she knew Ann, I think, she may have. She worked with Dean [James] Paul, and Ruth Ginsburg supported us, to get us this little office in the basement of Rutgers Law School. Because we didn't have any money, that's what happened, so it shifted to the law school. The law school wasn't all that sure if it wanted to adopt this radical thing, but eventually it did. [Editor's Note: Elizabeth Langer served as the first editor-in-chief of the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* once the journal became connected with Rutgers Law School in Newark in 1972.]

Then, it became more and more a tool for lawyers. It's still around, as you know. I think at some point, early on, the Supreme Court had a subscription. I think Hastings Law School had one on women, but that may have just been an issue. I think it's the first law journal on women's legal rights in the United States that's still in operation.

Then, I wrote an article for it. About my second year, I guess, I did an independent study on the AT&T employment discrimination settlement, and so that became an article in 1973, one of those issues. But there are alternate histories about this, and I've talked about them. I think I gave you a copy of my version of the origins of this, and Elizabeth Langer has her version.

KR: When you were there and still writing for it, was Rutgers funding the journal?

DC: You know, I don't know. I was not involved in the operation of it while I was a law student. I got a scholarship from the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council that summer, maybe the summer of '73, '74, somewhere around there. I may have worked at *The Reporter* at that point. Again, I tend to be overscheduled, shall we say. My WBAI Radio program that I was supposed to be producing, I was doing books and films of interest to women. I didn't read any of these books for the first year of law school because my reading speed went down to nine pages an hour. It was a complete disaster. I had to read stuff twice or three times, which I had never

done before. Then, at the end of that first year, I made a list, by publisher, of all the books that I had missed while I was in law school, and then I wrote to all the publishers and said, "I have this program. Please send me books." For days, huge boxes of all the books that I had missed came to my little apartment, and I was a happy woman. I was really focused on trying to just survive law school, yes.

KR: I am curious, did you cover the topic of sexual assault when you were writing articles for the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*?

DC: Well, the first issue, I did a book review of *The Manufacture of Madness* [by Thomas Szasz], and that is about the control of women by husbands, which has a sexual aspect to it because it's wives getting out of control. I did an article called "Unionizing Legal Workers" of the secretaries at a left-wing law firm, which pissed off the secretaries and they essentially filed a complaint about it. There's a little proviso in there about how the stuff that I wrote was too much about them as women and they were just not into this feminism thing. That was the second one. Other than that, I was just working to edit the case summaries, but I don't remember a particular focus on sexual violence.

KR: Are there any other stories that you would like to share about the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*?

DC: I think it helped create a legitimacy for the women law students at Rutgers at the time, because it was a journal. My class was forty percent women for the first time, and nobody, of course, had thought about what that would actually mean in a classroom or in terms of the curriculum. When we came up against things that were very destructive in the curriculum or in the classroom, I think it helped that there was this *Reporter* that had focused on our group as women.

There was this one case, which we'll talk about when we get to the law school stuff, but there's a woman named Madge Oberholtzer, which we learned about in "Criminal Procedure." She was kidnapped by a Klansman [David Curtis Stephenson] in the '20s in the Midwest and put on a train, and she was repeatedly bitten all over her body and raped sequentially. We had to be called on as women to recite those facts. I think that was probably one of the things, or the thing, that pushed us over the edge to develop this pencil-dropping thing that we did of when it was over-the-top misogyny--we didn't use that word--sexism. We would all drop our pencils at once, and, again, all that takes is three or four people doing that. You'd get a big rise out of [the professor]. I can still see the professor's face. I think institutionally it helped us to challenge some of the things that were going on. Our whole evidence casebook had many, many cases about sexual violence and about gang rape. Gang rape is one of the most violent forms of rape. To be called on as women to recite repeated, intense sexual violence and to have that come up frequently in class, and also I had a professor who was aroused by talking about the rape of women during the Allende debacle in Chile, these were very troubling things. I think it helped that law and women institutionally were being linked, because you were really at the beginning of something very difficult.

KR: Tell me about this class that you audited with Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

DC: She was, physically, one of the most restrained people you've ever watched, and she sat in that seminar room two hours every week and never moved her hands. Just try that some time; you can't do it. [laughter] During those years, I was in love with someone. I lived with another law student who introduced me to opera, particularly Italian opera. He was Italian. His father's name was Radames from the opera *Aida*. At the opera, I ran into her once there, and she was doing her mail with a little light. Before the show went on, she had one of those little pen lights and she was sorting her mail. She was just incredibly self-possessed, incredibly restrained. Nothing ever came out of that woman's mouth that she didn't intend, so the poise and the sense of humor. She had a great sense of humor, I thought. On Ruth Ginsburg Day in 2009, she told a story that her kids had a contest about who could make mommy laugh. I guess at home, she wasn't a barrel of laughs, but she had these sparkling eyes and she got jokes. [Editor's Note: In 2009, Rutgers Law School held a symposium to celebrate the legal career of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who taught at Rutgers Law School-Newark from 1963 to 1972.]

We had a little meeting of the current *Women's Rights Reporter* staff and us and her. I happen to have gone to see the Martin Marietta case argued in the Supreme Court, and she could recount that entire case, what the argument was. It was about whether a woman could be denied employment because she was a mother of preschool-aged children. She was a white woman. I think it might have been in Florida. I think it was someplace in the South, and Thurgood Marshall was on the court. She just recounted this whole thing about how Marshall understood that this would be used against Black women, and that he then came out very strongly, and Martin Marietta lost the case. Ida Phillips won, and she's one of the articles we wrote about in the first issue of *The Reporter*. Ruth could recall that whole thing, who was where, what the arguments were, just an incredibly bright and focused and hardworking person. [Editor's Note: In *Phillips v. Martin Marietta Corporation* (1971), the Supreme Court ruled that the refusal to hire women with preschool-aged children while hiring men in the same position violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964.]

You were sitting physically in a law school where there were no pictures of women anywhere. The only picture of a woman, and I don't know when they brought this in, it was like a Tina Turner picture in the student lounge and she had a microphone that it looked like she was sucking off. I kid you not; this is the only picture. When we had an International Women's Day thing later on, we turned that one to the wall, and we put curly cues of yarn on all the men's formal portraits. [laughter] But that's where Ruth is sitting, doing this class. Now, she's a big deal, and if it weren't for sexism, she wouldn't have been teaching at Rutgers because Eva Hanks helped her get there. That was a great coup, but we were not on her long-term plan.

KR: Did you think she was a big deal at the time?

DC: Before I went to law school, the only women lawyers I saw were Eleanor Holmes Norton and Ruth Ginsburg, so it was like starting at the top. This is who you could be--and that National Labor Relations Board lawyer that I told you about in North Carolina. In New York, in my world, these were some pretty impressive people.

KR: She wrote you a recommendation to get into the Rutgers School of Law.

DC: She did, very kind. Yes, she did. She said she had no doubt that I was going to make a major contribution to the legal profession. I mean, let's just go for a hyperbole. I'm coming in under demonstrated social commitment and I've got no bachelor's degree, but it was because of *The Reporter*. But I don't remember any of those meetings. I typically am referred to as somebody who is, oh, let's see, some say fierce, some say relentless, some say hardworking. Those qualities were there, and she would have responded to that, and that we were getting out in front of something that there wasn't a tried-and-true path. She was beginning to be that person herself. She had been pretty conventional up to that point, but then, according to her, she met these Rutgers women and they wanted her to teach this course and things developed from there. Then, she got involved in litigating on the strict scrutiny of the Constitution.

What did you just ask me about? Oh, if I knew if she was a big deal then. One of the things that I heard in these oral histories that the dean did and Carly Siditsky after she died of people who were one year or so ahead of me in law school who knew her as a professor--I never had her as a professor, she was gone by the time I was out of first-year classes, so I couldn't take anything with her--they, to a person, referred to her as this briefcase-carrying woman getting on the train from Manhattan, a kind of buttoned-down woman, but they all came from the Left and were much more hippie-dippy sorts than I was. I didn't have that feeling about her at all. Also, how penetrating she was, and to me, she was one of the best teachers I had. There were lots of people who were not good teachers and who weren't all that interesting and weren't going to take you anywhere intellectually, but she was. In fact, she had such a big impact on me, I ended up teaching "Sex Roles and the Law" when I was still a law student. It was her. She's the person I saw do it, and then Nancy Stearns. She proved it could be done.

KR: I did not hear which course you were teaching. Can you say that again?

DC: Sure, I was teaching "Sex Roles in Law and Society" at Livingston [College at Rutgers] and Jersey City State and NYU in the summer, yes.

KR: I am going to circle back to that a little bit later.

DC: Okay.

KR: How did you get into the Rutgers School of Law?

DC: [laughter] I'm glad I didn't sit on that admissions committee. [laughter] I was looking at my application, and, boy, I am in my own world when I'm writing this thing. [The application states], "List your major, extracurricular activities in college, and indicate the extent of your participation and any offices held." Okay, so that's like a nice normal person who goes to four years of college and has little elected offices. Then, I say [Editor's Note: Diane Crothers reads from her application to the Rutgers School of Law in Newark, dated January 12, 1971], "My major interests and activities in my college years occurred mostly during the years I was not in school." [laughter] I must have thought this would pass. [laughter] Then, I go on about all the politics and textile workers and civil rights and all the rest of it. It is peculiar, I'm dropping in and out of college; I report four colleges on this form. There was a fifth college, which is when

my father dragged me home to put me in the mental hospital, so I thought, "Let's not go into that, really." As far as I know, there's no transcript of that, let's just skip that. I'm saying all this stuff about Cavett and the Human Rights Commission, [WBAI's] *Womankind*, *Manhattan Tribune* film reviews, *The New Yorker,* being profiled in that, blah, blah. The last sentence in this paragraph is, "These activities (and, of course, my marriage and divorce)"--where did I get the idea that's what you should say in an application? That's what I mean, I am in my own world. "These activities (and, of course, my marriage and divorce) have shaped and focused my desire to become a lawyer to begin to deal with some of the substantive legal problems which impede the achievement of freedom for women." Talk about don't hold back. I mean, this is not about the admissions committee. I talk about the [*Women's Rights Law*] *Reporter*, "I worked as a reporter, writer, legal researcher, and associate editor. My work here has included interviewing women who have been in prison," which I don't remember, "lawyers, divorce clients, going to meetings, working with women law students. I've also written book reviews … I believe my work on this magazine is giving me a good foundation in the field of women and the law and some knowledge of other areas of the law as well." [I mention] writing this legislative program for bills in New York. Again, the last sentence, just in case you didn't get it, "And, of course, my own marriage and divorce have contributed greatly to my understanding of the necessity of defending and enlarging women's freedoms under the law." Only the "People's Electric Law School" would think that was cute. [laughter] [Editor's Note: During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Rutgers School of Law-Newark was known by many in the law school community as the "People's Electric Law School."]

KR: Did you apply to any other law schools?

DC: Nope. At the time, my father did not think a woman needed a law degree, so I wasn't going to get any financial help. I didn't have any money, and we were working for a hundred dollars a week on *The Reporter* when we had money. I needed a law school that I could pay the tuition for, that I wouldn't have to take out loans. I was never going to be a corporate lawyer, so this was not going to be something I could pay back. Rutgers was trying to be a national law school at that point, so you didn't have to come from New Jersey. You could come from New York. None of us at reunions can remember how much the tuition was, but it was something like four or six hundred dollars a year. I mean, it was just nothing. I had this little loan for eighty dollars a month that I paid off when my son was about two, so that would be about 1980. I had no financial problems from this. At the time, I'm not sure if I knew that I might not get a job. I didn't know that women from like Yale Law School went to work as secretaries; I didn't know that. No, it was the only place. I never wanted to leave New York again. I had lived in other places by then, and it hadn't gone well for me. I was too different. In New York, it's full of people who are too different, from other places.

KR: We have been going for well over two hours today, and I think we should, in our next session, really delve into your law school years. How does it sound if I just ask you one more question for today?

DC: Sure.

KR: You did work for WBAI Radio. I was wondering if you could talk about what you did and the topics that you covered.

DC: Well, Nanette Rainone was a friend of mine. I'm trying to think, I probably met her in the women's movement. I saw the movie *M*A*S*H** and got very ticked off about it. Then, she had a guest editorship with this little now-defunct newspaper, *Manhattan Tribune*. She said, "Why don't you write a film review about it?" So, I did and I was just ranting. Then, she started to be the creative director or program director at BAI. She had a show called *Womankind* and she asked me if I would do like a seven-minute segment every other week or so on books and films of interest to women. I thought that was a great idea. I am still a voracious reader. The other day, I went to the library--I go to the library once a week--I picked up fifteen books. Not everybody does that. [laughter] There's a lot of good books in the world. That assignment, I could see any movie I wanted for free, get into any film panel I wanted to for free, and then also get copies of all the books for free. So, this is perfect for me.

There was a wonderful movie once. There was an Argentine filmmaker named Nelly Kaplan, and I forget what the name of the film she made was [*La Fiancée Du Pirate*] in Spanish or Portuguese [French], I'm trying to remember, but in English it was called *A Very Curious Girl*. This was a movie in which the male gaze was disrupted. It was about a woman who was working as a prostitute in a small, I'm thinking, French town, but I don't know if that's true. Ann Snitow, who became a feminist studies professor, who had been in New York Radical Feminists--she taught at the New School for many, many years, she just died a couple years ago--she and I went and saw Nelly Kaplan in some hotel room in New York and interviewed her and I have a tape of that. What I recall from it was this part of the film where the character is crawling across a kitchen floor with her butt up in the air and her legs pretty unclothed, underpants on, but the gaze is not objectifying her sexually. The gaze is not interested in her as a sexual person, and I still have that in my mind. It was the first time I ever saw that.

Then, when Alan Pakula made *Klute*, I got to go to a panel that he was on, and he said things that were so interesting about Jane Fonda and how she affected the script of that film. Do you know that film? It's about a call girl. According to Alan, Jane said that she would not have the character having an orgasm with Donald Sutherland, who is her love interest. That was not going to be how she was saved, through sex. She insisted that the psychiatrist that her character saw be a woman. This was news to me, that if you had that amount of star power, you could affect the script. That was interesting. I would go to some of these panels.

I started writing these film reviews, and I got to know the work of [film critics] Andrews Sarris and Molly Haskell. I realized as I got further and further into it that I was never going to be interested in the mechanics and the artfulness of film per se. I was thinking, for a while, of becoming a film director because of interest in [film], and I still am greatly interested in film. But at that time, it was like two percent of women are making a living in film. I didn't figure that I was ever going to be supported by anybody else and I wanted to have children, so I didn't think this director thing was going to work for me.

One time, when *Clockwork Orange* came out, and I can't remember if I've told you this, I'm looking through the screen--I think I have told you this--at a male technician, and that film was

described as a harmless little fantasy about rape. I said, "Let's have a harmless little film about castration." The guy's back just went up.

I would meet people who listened to my film reviews, and they would carry on about it. That was interesting. A couple of years ago, I founded a group at my lifelong learning program, First Friday Feminist Films, and we would only see films by women directors and talk about them. Look at Jane Campion; I mean, the world has changed. She is just one of my favorites. That was a good experience.

It also taught me I didn't want to be a book writer, a film director, all the stuff that is very much in New York. I didn't see anybody whose life was a life I wanted to lead. It was like one book contract to the next, and I was more interested in something more stable and more organizational. I got interested in organizational politics more. I wanted to be in something where you had to figure things out. In my first job out of law school, I used to sit with an imaginary prism on my desk, a three-sided glass prism, in my head, and I would think, "Okay, here's where I am. Here's where I want to get to. What is the angle I have to get at this from that will get the big boys in power to move the way that I want?" That was much more where my interest was going.

KR: Is there anything else you would like to add in today's session?

DC: No. I think this has been very comprehensive. I appreciate that you've let me go on so long about all the politics, once I found those things that I had written. I was trying to lead and manage and facilitate and create order in those organizations, and I couldn't. I wasn't alone. That was really hitting the women's movement in New York. By the time I got to law school, I never read about a women's meeting I wanted to go to outside law. People had their knives out for each other. Nope, I think that's it.

KR: Thank you so much. We will continue with a fourth session, which we will schedule off the record. I am going to stop the recording.

DC: Okay, thanks.

----------END OF TRANSCRIPT----------

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 4/13/22
Reviewed by Diane Crothers 9/18/2022