**Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project**

**Interview with Brinton Lykes**

***Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford***
***Boston, MA***
***November 21, 2007***



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AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer
BL: Brinton Lykes, Interview participant

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AR: So if you could state your full name and date of birth for the record

BL: My full name, my God. It's Margaret Joan of Arc Brinton Lykes, and my date of birth, March 3rd 1949. Oh actually it's Margaret Brinton Joan of Arc Lykes.

AR: Oh great, that is a mouthful.

BL: It is, but I go by Brinton. The rest of it is just a sideline.

AR: Okay, fair enough. Well let's start then by having me ask you about the evolution of your identity as a feminist. How did that all take place?

BL: Okay, let's see. I think I date it primarily to my involvement in theological education. I grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, and I was involved in high school in the sort of ethno-margins of the civil rights movement, in that I was in a Catholic school and the school was integrated during my experiences of high school. But more importantly for me, I think that the Catholic Church took a position in that period of time to – the Archbishop excommunicated political leaders who were Catholic who refused to integrate public schools. And that had a very strong impact on me as a child, not only because of what it was itself, but also because New Orleans is a relatively small city and there were people who knew people who were involved in that process, so it had a kind of more personal set of connections.

AR: Okay.

BL: And I became more aware of my own privileges as a white in that environment and in that context. So although I had been raised very clearly with a sense of Christian charity and sort of do unto others, and to be engaged in participating in teaching and hospitals, or engaging in acts of social service, I think the beginnings of my understanding of the civil rights movement began to politicize that in some way.

AR: Okay.

{2:21}

BL: I went to college in Virginia and during that time I spent a year in France, 1968, which was an incredible experience because it was a period of enormous upheaval in the United States, but

also in France. In particular, there was a student strike and it was connected to a worker's strike, and I was very involved with someone who was a political science PhD student who was very involved in those political movements. And for me it was my first introduction to socialism and to Marxism, and to a structural analysis of poverty. So it kind of took a lot of my upbringing and my understanding of Christian charity and it framed it in a much more political context.

AR: Right.

BL: And during that period I also travelled in Eastern Europe. I was in the Soviet Union when they invaded Czechoslovakia, spent time in Turkey and in Iran, and had quite an extraordinary experience of seeing how other people saw the United States. And of also beginning to understand myself as a United States citizen from the perspective of someone who lived outside of the United States, as much as perfect my French and enjoy sort of learning a second language and being engaged in the world through a second language. I think all of that set a framework for when I returned to college and was a senior in college. And it was a philosophy professor who I had that had invited a woman by the name of Ti-Grace Atkinson, who was a Southern feminist, a very radical feminist. And when she began her presentation at our college, she invited all the men to leave.

AR: Wow.

BL: And she was much more radical than I was at that time, and it was also quite extraordinary to me to have men introducing me to a radical feminist. I mean it was the male philosophy professors at our university who organized this symposium on the women's movement and feminism. And I think I was, I don't know what the right word for it is, titillated is a little too sexual for it, but it was something that on the one hand attracted me, and on the other hand felt a little bit politicized in a way that felt divisive to me, or felt like it was sort of separating me off from people I had been involved in political struggles with. I got involved in the anti-war movement when I came back to the United States, and that was very heterosexual, and I came to see quite heterosexist in many ways.

AR: Okay, yeah.

BL: But I was very mobilized by the presentation, very interested in it, and after finishing my bachelor's degree, I entered a theological studies program at Harvard. And there are lots of complex reasons as to why I chose that as the next step in my career, but I had seen religion and the church as a base of potential political transformation and change; as a sort of context for organizing.

AR: Yeah.

{5:33}

BL: And I was very interested in organizing and in social change. It was a very interesting and important decision because I came smack on, head on into collision with patriarchy, and I hadn't really thought it through ahead of time. I mean I picked a degree because I thought I wanted a

career somehow in a religions organization, institution. I knew I didn't want to be a nun. As a child I had actually often played priest, although never thought of it as a gendered thing. I think I thought of it more in terms of who's in charge here. I'm an oldest daughter in a family of nine kids and I spent a lot of years in charge of a lot of things.

AR: Right, that felt natural.

BL: But I went to divinity school because I saw the church as a context and a base from which to engage in social change. And yet most people, I was in a Masters of Divinity program, which is preparation for the ordained ministry, which was completely ridiculous because I was raised a Catholic and there was no way I was preparing myself for the ordained ministry in any strict sense of the term.

AR: Okay.

BL: But I also was raised in a class background where, although nobody ever talked about it, I think the assumption was I was going to go to college, get married, and raise a family and be a good southern woman. And because nobody talked about it, I was able to ignore the message pretty easily. I mean I don't remember feeling conflicted about it at all.

AR: No.

BL: I just remember doing my own thing.

AR: Okay, so your family didn't actively discourage you from pursuing this path?

BL: They actively discouraged me from almost everything I did.

AR: Oh, okay.

BL: So it didn't really…it wasn't as a woman. It wasn't gendered.

AR: Okay.

BL: They thought I was involved in, when I was in college my mother called me and said, "If I see you on television in any of those demonstrations, don't bother coming home." When I decided to go to divinity school, she hung the phone up on me.

AR: Really. So to be radical or political was not…

{7:38}

BL: Yes, it was not part of the family tradition, trajectory, vision. No, my mother says it started when I was six years old. I actually think of myself as having spent most of my life as kind of a goody two-shoes. I mean I always got the prizes at school and sort of did the right thing, and did

well. The nice thing about my mother though is that she was very democratic. She felt the same way about all of us, it didn't matter who was doing what.

AR: She didn't single you out.

BL: No, no, no, I don't feel singled out at all.

AR: So you kind of ran up against patriarchy when you hit Harvard Divinity School.

BL: Yeah, because the assumption was that the women that were at the divinity school were there looking for husbands, not there to study alongside other people. I was still affiliated with the Catholic Church, so I joined a student group, and there were some women campus ministers who were incredibly interesting. And there was a very progressive Jesuit who was sort of co-ordinating the campus group at the time, and I don't really remember exactly how, but we formed this women's group at the time and we were interested in looking at women's experiences in the church. And so we began, now looking back on it, we began a community-based research project.

AR: Right.

BL: We knew we didn't represent, we knew we were all university affiliated, so we knew social class-wise we were quite different than other members of the Catholic church, and also race wise we were not particularly diverse. So we began a project where we interviewed people. I was doing some work in a local housing project, so we interviewed some of the Catholic women there, and we began to write this book collectively. And then we had the stupid idea to try and get it published. And that was great because we naively sent it to Catholic presses and they sent us back horrific letters saying, well because we began bumping up to peoples struggles with sexuality, peoples struggles with abortion, peoples struggles with all kinds of issues that in '70s not a lot of people were talking about, but were very much a part of peoples lives who were trying to live somehow connected to organized religion.

AR: And the second wave of feminism was really bringing more to the floor.

BL: Exactly. Also, critically important at that time was Mary Daly had published *Church and the Second Sex*, and she was a part of something called the Boston, I think it was then called the Boston Theological Institute, it certainly went on to be called that. And that was a consortium of the different divinity schools in the area and of women connected to that. And the book, *Church and the Second Sex*, we all read in this little group of Catholics we had, and it was mesmerizing; it was just really a powerful statement about patriarchy. And so she would have these meetings and we would go and listen to her talk. Janice Raymond was a doctoral student at the time, and she was writing about friendship and about sexuality, and there was a lot going on at the edges of theological and feminist circles. So I really entered feminism through theological education.

{11:03}

AR: Okay.

BL: And then I marched out of Memorial Church behind Mary Daly, sort of as the first kind of major act of standing out in protest in some way. And I ended up helping start a women's studies program, which became a Research Associates in Religion program at Harvard Divinity School, and then ran the women's studies program as a co-ordinator of it for three years, after I graduated with the M. Div degree. This solved a big problem I had, which was finding a job. Because by then, the Catholic church was no longer seeming like an option in terms of an employment source for me.

AR: Okay. A couple of questions. First, I take it then that your feminist values, as they were developing through this experience, did you ever get into any kind of a personal conflict over how your feminist values would reconcile with your upbringing and Catholicism? It sounds like you sort of worked through that, but was there a process there?

BL: Well you know, I think in some ways I'm definitely, I mean part of why I started with growing up in the south and anti-racism, I feel like I grew up and went to school through social movements.

AR: Okay.

BL: And I think that I was a beneficiary of what they call consciousness-raising processes. I mean that little group of, there were – I mean and I also have a very strange approach to life, which is I think we're all the same age, even though I can be in a room with people who are thirty years younger than me or thirty years older than me. As I'm getting older I'm starting to realize that I am older than many people, but… Many of the women in that group were quite a bit older than I was, although I didn't experience it that way. So they had life experiences that were quite different than mine...[inaudible]. I think that I was fortunate in that, although I'm sure that if one would have interviewed my mother at different points along the way, she would have probably in some way said she expected that her four daughters would get married and have kids, etcetera. For better, for worse, I don't think she ever wanted to get married and have children.

AR: Oh interesting.

BL: And she had nine children. And she was an artist who began at some point in, when I was a late adolescent, to take up art again and to try and get involved in some way, in some sort of professional way of being in the world. It made for a very tense relationship and yes, I think as I began to articulate more clearly my own understanding of myself as a feminist, and began to reject in a more self-conscious way some of those values, I think one of the challenges of feminism in those days, at least as I experienced it, was that it was very much not politically correct to get married and to have children at that period.

AR: Right.

{14:23}

BL: And I had a number of friends who were married and had kids, but mostly it was a kind of negation of much of that world. But I think because I was negating, I had been negating so much of it for so long, even though I didn't really see it as necessarily negating it. One of the things that was very clear to me though was that I was very much supported by living in a university environment with a lot of progressive ideas.

AR: Yeah.

BL: And that made it much more plausible for me to feel supported in that process.

AR: You were sort of scaffold by that.

BL: And while I was in divinity school I joined something called the Women's Counselling and Resource Centre, because there was a PhD program at the time at Harvard in psychology, I think it was called psychology and public policy, clinical psychology and public policy, I can't really remember what it was called, but it was jointly organized by the school of education and the divinity school, and the school of public health I think, at Harvard. And one of the guys who taught in it also taught at the divinity school, and through him I met a number of women who had a huge impact on my introduction to psychology, my understanding of feminism, and beyond divinity school. One was a woman named Dorothy Burlage, who grew up in the south actually, and was hugely active in the civil rights movement; she was probably ten years older than I am. Another is a woman named Jane Levy, who was a psychologist and a clinician, and another is a woman named Barbara Dubois who did one of the first dissertations on feminist clinical work, or psychotherapy or counselling.

AR: Okay.

BL: And the Women's Counselling and Resource Centre was a project that was started by women in that program and people at the divinity school to offer short term counselling and referral services to women. And there was nothing in Boston that offered feminist anything. So I was this little divinity school student who was a part of this process. I mean I really felt like a little divinity school student, but it all made perfect sense to me. I don't know if there was a psych of women class at Harvard school at the time, or whether I took a class that had a lot of psychology of women in it, I can't really remember whether there was a specific course that I took. But I actually spent, I think, two years for sure, maybe four years, working in the Women's Counselling and Resource Center as a volunteer.

AR: Okay. And how did, I'm really interested in the evolution to feminist counselling and feminist therapy. What were you guys doing? How did you know what to do?

BL: Right. Well that's a really, well how did we know what to do? You know, I had taken pastoral care and counselling, I worked a summer with in-patients at the state hospital, so we knew basic counselling skills, and they were all doctoral students.

{17:54}

So as far as I was concerned they were like light years ahead of me. So they had had different theoretical courses and practical courses in counselling, and where did the feminism come through? Well you know, I would love to find, and I'm sure I have it someplace, Barbara Dubois did her dissertation on, I think it was what is feminist therapy and what does it look like.

AR: Oh wow.

BL: And she interviewed women. I was a participant in her interview study.

AR: Oh wow.

BL: And she interviewed us about what we understand feminist therapy to be, or feminist counselling. I have to be very careful because I am not a clinician; I'm trained in pastoral counselling

AR: Right.

BL: And in that particular period of time, that was quite recognized as a way to be in the world. It went into being not very recognized, and now it's having a slight resurgence in the world of psychology, but I'm not a trained clinician. But we knew listening skills, and we had an analysis of oppression due to gender, so we listened for that.

AR: Yeah.

BL: And it was during that period actually that I really began to articulate what became the reason that took me back to do a PhD. There was a woman for example, I mean this stands out very clearly in my head but I have no idea what year it was, in the '70s, but a woman who ended up starting a shelter here in Boston, an alternative site for women with serious mental illness that went on to become quite well known in fact. And she showed up homeless and dishevelled one evening at the Women's Counselling and Resource Center, and she was clearly in some sort of serious crisis. And she had been in and out of mental institutions, but she was absolutely adamant that she did not want to go back into an in-patient kind of situation. So how did we respond to that? We marshalled all of the resources we could find in the community to somehow keep her out of [one].

AR: Right, right.

BL: Which were the churches primarily. And so the divinity school connection, you know even though the churches might not have been completely on with the feminist agenda, they had a set of resources that could offer something to a human being in a crisis situation, and she was convinced that she did not need to be re-hospitalized.

{20:28}

Now, we had clinical supervision of people who had credentials, so someone got called that night to be sure that we weren't doing something that could get people legally brought up on

charges for creating a risk for somebody for taking their own life. And we had a series of intake questions that were pretty conventional, but within the conventionality of it there was a clear commitment. And we met as a collective, did supervision as a collective, I mean it was an extraordinary experience, but it was one of those experiences of that time. I mean there was a lot of that in the '70s, not a lot of feminist stuff yet, but there was a lot of this collective approach to things, cooperative approach to things.

AR: And starting I think by the mid '70s, you would have been right before this, but starting by the mid '70s there were feminist therapy collectives that started.

BL: Right.

AR: But this was right before that.

BL: Right, and one started right here in Boston that Judith Herman and others were a part of that lasted, I don't know, maybe it's even still around, remnants of it, I'm not sure.

AR: Do you remember the name of it?

BL: Was it the Women's Mental Health Collective? Yeah, I think it was called the Women's Mental Health Collective.

AR: Okay.

BL: And Paula Clapp, is that her last name? Yeah, I think her last name is Clapp, anyway she's a neighbour of mine, and she was in it when it first started. Yes, and those started around '75, '76, '77. And some of the people, Jane Levy I think helped start that. Some of the people that were in this Harvard-Epworth Methodist Church basement, I mean we literally were in a church basement. Like Monday, Thursday, Friday, six to eleven, or something, I don't remember exactly, but it was all volunteer. And the students were the doc students [we] were getting. It was a project somehow connected to what they were doing.

AR: Right.

BL: So those were sort of the beginnings of my connections to the women's movement, to feminism. And I was also, at that time, part of a, I guess I was on the board of some kind of campus ministry organization that was a collective of people who did campus ministry on all the campuses in the greater Boston area. And there was a women's feminist study group connected to that, and that was a pretty radical group of women. Not necessarily radical in the Mary Daly sense of feminism, but socialist feminists.

AR: Okay.

{23:11}

BL: That was also beginning to take form in the Boston area, a number of socialist feminist study groups at that same time. And so we read Marx and we talked about race and class and gender, and the hit parade of oppressions, and got wrapped up in all of those complicated discussions which lead nowhere as far as I can tell, but you learn a lot in the process. And also got involved in activist efforts, and that's kind of, I guess my roots in the women's movement have always been very activist in orientation and very much connected to local communities, as well as to the university and to intellectual academic thoughts. And what happened sort of was, well, several things. The theological piece of it, women in theological education got more and more focused on access to ministry, and I was very clear that I thought ministry was, ordained ministry in particular, was part of the problem with the church, not a solution to the problem. But as importantly, I didn't feel like I had a vocation to the ordained ministry. I think a lot of the women who got involved in that process felt they were called to ministry in some way. And I felt like in order to stay connected to the church and not be involved in that particular struggle, the spaces were very limited, but also, I became increasingly clear that my draw to theological education had really been to liberation theology.

AR: Okay.

BL: which I had gotten very involved in at divinity school and studied with some of the greats from Latin America who kept being thrown out of their countries, so they would spend a semester at Harvard.

AR: Oh wow.

BL: And then [I studied] with a woman named Rosemary Ruether who was trying to articulate a feminist liberation theology. I realized I was much more interested in theology and spirituality as a motivation for social change than I was interested in the church or in the existence of God or not.

AR: So how did you get from liberation theology to a PhD in psychology? I know it's community social psychology, but tell me how psychology kind of entered the picture then in terms of your formal training.

BL: So I had had this experience in this counselling centre with these feminists who were connected to this psychology program, and by the time I was…well it had never occurred to me as a child, or even as an adolescent, to do a PhD. I don't come from an academic family, I don't come from sort of thinking of academics as a place to – but I had always liked school and had always been good at it. When I was in divinity school I became increasingly, or no, when I was co-ordinating the women's studies program, [which] happened in a very short period of time, I graduated with a M Div in '73, then I did that for a few years.

AR: Right.

{26:26}

BL: But by ’76 we had gone from these handfuls of women in theological education to a third of the classes were women. I mean it was just unbelievable. I lived in South Africa for two years and in those two years I watched the white university I was teaching in transform itself in the post-apartheid era, and same thing happened around gender issues and theological studies.

AR: In a couple years, yeah.

BL: It was just extraordinary. And also, in a very short period of time, you went from women who understood through their lived experiences, discrimination and lack of access, to women thinking it was all open to them. And so I began to get increasingly curious as to how it was that some people when faced with a problem, anything from a relatively, what I would call now a relatively small problem like what am I going to do with my life, to a much more serious problem like my husband’s beating me and I have a young child at home, and is something wrong with me and is that why he’s beating me, or is it connected to other things? And is it connected to something that has to do with the reality out there? I have a quote, I just moved offices, but it’s taped on my wall, and it says “Do not adjust your mind; there’s a fault in reality.”

AR: Yeah.

BL: And for me I trace that to some of the early things I read in those years. Dorothy Smith’s work with women in mental institutions, Phyllis Chesler’s *Women and Madness*, I mean I was reading all those things when I was working at that Women’s Counselling and Resource Centre. So this question about sort of what are the conditions that support us to see things, and I did see it dichotomously at the time, I wouldn’t describe it that way now, but as sort of an intrapsychic individual problem, versus a social problem that’s connected to things in society that have to change.

AR: Right.

BL: And I was curious as to, so I had an intellectual curiosity about it, and then I had a very practical problem, which was I sort of fluked into a job when I finished divinity school. I had applied for these jobs with the Catholic Church and campus ministry, which didn’t even pay you enough to pay the rent, much less eat. And I had done this job and every year I was offered a new job as an administrator at Harvard; somebody would come into my office and they would offer me this, and then they would offer me that. And I thought I don’t really like it; I like organizing, but I don’t really like administration. And my parents were sort of saying, and how is it that you’re going to pay the rent next year? And I was sort of thinking, how am I? The reality of, I was in my late 20s, and I thought you know, I kind of like the university environment, it’s dynamic. I mistakenly saw a lot of the social movements I had been part of as somehow yoked to higher education. I now think it was a historical phenomenon more than a university based phenomenon. But in those days I think the university was a place with a lot of dynamic changes. I now see it as more trying to hold us all into the status quo.

AR: Yeah. But this was a different time.

{29:48}

BL: It was, and I thought, well okay, so I'll do a doctorate. Well what will I do a doctorate in? I think if I might have had my druthers, I might have ended up in something that was more psychology and religion, or psychology, sociology, and religion, or something. But long story short, after talking to a lot of people and looking around a lot, people basically said psychology at this moment in history is very anti-religion, and it's not going to be an easy thing to do. And also, since I was interested in the interface of psychology and sociology, I think if I had known more about what anthropology was and had a better sense of what that was, I might have chosen differently. But the long and short of it is, I actually studied in a program that was called psychology and social structure, and it was at the interface of sociology and psychology.

AR: That's neat.

BL: It doesn't exist anymore, it didn't exist for very long. It lasted about as long as the one I had been associated with when I was in divinity school, in psychology and public policy.

AR: So it was kind of a child of that period of time?

BL: Yeah.

AR: Or a child of someone who was interested in that.

BL: Well it was a child of that period of time and of a small number of people who thought that there was a way of being politically engaged in psychology, which I think is a questionable association after many years of trying to be an activist.

AR: I think I read somewhere [that] you'd written how liberation psychology is actually an oxymoron.

BL: I might have written something like that.

AR: Political psychology might also be an oxymoron.

BL: I think it's very challenging. I mean, I don't regret [it]. The program was excellent for me. It was right here at BC [Boston College] actually, but it was in the psych department, not in the Ed school.

AR: And who ran it, or whose child was it?

BL: Well, it was the creation of a guy named William Ryan, who wrote a book called *Blaming the Victim*, who was involved in the civil rights movement and in worker organizing for decades and was connected to a guy named Ramsay Liem, who was also in the program, who did a lot of work on labour at the time. And then Ali Banuazizi, who was a historian of psychology and who is a political psychologist more than anything else. And then I worked with Abby Stewart who at the time was at BU.

{32:18}

AR: Oh okay, right.

BL: Because it didn't have a very strong gender dimension to it, but they had all come out of the progressive end of community psychology, which was a child of the times. I mean it was the '70s and '80s, and at that time I think there was a sense still, that there was a way of creating collaborations with communities to bring about change and that psychology had a role in that process. And that psychology also needed to be, I mean in Latin America, there were articles that emerged, a guy by the name of Zúñiga wrote a piece on critical psychology, and Ken Gergen wrote [about] the crisis of social psychology during that period, and it seemed like there was some possibilities of excitement and change. And there was a lot going on in feminist psychology and in gender studies. I've come to see that the sort of dominant voices in psychology can absorb just about any radical anything that passes their way.

AR: Yeah.

BL: And part of it is a methodological juggernaut that it has. One of the little studies that I did with Abby Stewart during that period, because she also ran the Murray Research Center for awhile, and I did an internship there during my doctoral studies, which was fabulous for me.

AR: Yeah.

BL: But one of the little studies Abby and I did at some point along the way was to look at *Psych of Women Quarterly* publications and whether or not there was a methodological gate keeping people out. And there is. And also, I mean I would love to see some graduate student replicate this study because we did it quite awhile ago

AR: Yeah, that would be neat.

BL: But I don't think it's changed much.

AR: I don't think so either. I think a little bit. Every once in awhile something sneaks through that's sort of more qualitative, participatory action, but it's not a lot.

BL: Even though they have incredibly interesting people on the editorial board. If you look at the editorial board and you see what they publish, it's scary.

{34:59}

BL: I mean you look at these journals, and I myself and former students have had incredible tiffs with journal editors over methodology. But at the time anyway, it looked like there were possibilities of doing more exciting things. But I had a big challenge in psychology because I really hadn't studied psychology as an undergraduate. I had studied philosophy and religion, and I had taken a few psych courses sort of connected to divinity school, for which they gave me no credit whatsoever because it wasn't scientific psychology, it was all this counselling stuff, or clinical stuff. And there was no clinical program at BC, and there still isn't actually. Plus, I didn't know anything about statistics, positivist science, any of that.

AR: Although in your Murray Center work, it looks like you…

BL: Well I learned, I learned! That's exactly right. And I have Abby Stewart to thank for not only learning it, but also learning it in a more creative way and being able to do things with it that were quite interesting in fact. She's quite a sophisticated methodologist and I learned an enormous amount from her. No, in fact, that's what they told me actually at BC; they said if you want to get a job in a psychology department, we strongly – if I had been left up to myself, I probably would have done a theoretical dissertation, not an empirical study, and I was advised strongly, and I think they were right, basically you've got to document your credentials. Now my dissertation, if you were to look at the dissertation in and of itself, it's this weird document, because it's like 150 pages of theory and then 50 pages of…

AR: Well, when I saw the name of it I thought it might be theoretical. I come from a history/theory graduate program, so I'm thinking oh neat, she did a theoretical dissertation.

BL: Exactly.

AR: But it's got an empirical add-on.

BL: Exactly. Which, you know, I had a great committee. Bill Ryan and Ramsay Liem, and Abby Stewart, we met regularly. I mean I did wacky things, like I used a multiple choice version of the Rorschach to look at perceptions of, really whether people saw the whole or saw parts of the whole. It was wacky in a lot of ways. The fact that I got any results suggests to me that you can get statistically significant results out of almost anything if you put it together in a particular way. But it was a very interesting topic area and it was sort of before psychology went completely wacky into the self.

AR: Yeah.

BL: And it was a pretty exciting project because it had a gender dimension and a class dimension, and it held my attention for long enough to finish it, which is amazing.

AR: Which is the main thing, really.

{37:57}

BL: Exactly. And I learned a few things about research methods and statistics, and demonstrated more or less that I could do something like that, and I guess I got a job. And I interviewed for a number of jobs in women's studies actually. At that time I was kind of on the edge of where you could almost still get a job without having done a degree or having a certificate at the doctoral level, because there were so few people with degrees. But I ended up, there was a job at New Paltz and the department wanted me, but the provost thought I was too radical for the campus, so they told me. And I think San Diego, was that when they hired Oliva Espin? I'm not really sure.

AR: Okay.

BL: But in any event, I didn't get a job the first year I interviewed, and I taught here part-time, but I still wasn't finished my dissertation. When I finished my dissertation, I got a job teaching at Rhode Island College where Hope Landrine had been the two years before that, and where Faye Crosby had been the two years before her. So it was a great trajectory.

AR: Nice lineage, yeah.

BL: Nice lineage. I lasted longer than either of them did. Or I got stuck longer, however you want to think about it. But in the meantime, in that extra year when I was putting the finishing touches on my dissertation, I went to Central America and I began to reconnect to activism.

AR: What took you to Central America? Just your interest?

BL: No. While I was doing my doctoral program I helped start something called the Boston Women's Fund, which is a progressive foundation for supporting women and girls programs in the greater Boston area. I got involved in it because, well life is strange. While I was at divinity school I worked in a restaurant that was owned by the husband of a friend of mine. And some friends of mine from theological education, actually, were going to start the first women's bookstore in Boston. And since we were all still friends, they just happened to mention to me one day that they were looking for a place to start the bookstore, and my friend who owned the restaurant was looking for a tenant for the other half of this building that he had. So I put those people together and long story short, Boston had its first feminist bookstore, which we still have something now called The Center for New Words, which is a wonderfully articulated feminist project that has to do with books and teaching writing, and lots of cultural events, and a huge conference every spring on feminism and the media.

AR: Great.

BL: Which really is an extraordinary process. But many of the women who started that and who have kept it going were all in divinity school with me at the time. None of us followed very conventional life patterns. But I was hooked up – what did you ask me?

AR: I asked you how you got to Central America.

{41:04}

BL: So one of them actually convened a meeting in the basement of New Words bookstore, trying to get a project going in Boston that would work across racial lines. Boston has quite a reputation for, after the bussing incident and the difficulty in desegregating schools here, and the incredibly strong neighbourhood conclaves which contribute to difficult challenges in terms of anti-racism work in the city, part of the agenda in this project was to see if we as women could do something together across race lines. So we brought together a group of women that reflected some of the diversities of the city and we ended up starting this thing called the Boston - well it ended up after two years of practically beating each other up and doing anti-racism workshops and all kinds of other things, we got this thing off the ground. Which is now a great foundation,

which has a wonderful set of projects, and is also part of a huge national movement of women's foundations. But at the time it was one of the first.

AR: Wow.

BL: And in that process, it's a way of having kept my hand in activism while I was studying. I met some people who were connected to a progressive foundation in New York and they wanted somebody to, at the last minute, they were taking a group of people to Central America, and at the last minute somebody dropped off the trip and this friend of mine said to me, look, if you do this amount of work you can come on this trip and go to Nicaragua. And I thought, oh gee, I had always wanted to go to Cuba, and my interest in Cuba came from my studies; I was sort of looking at psychology and social structure. I had taken all of these sociology courses and it had seemed to me, I was always curious as to if a society, you know, does Cuba really look like people say it looks? And my parents had gone on their honeymoon to Cuba actually, before the revolution. So Nicaragua, I was doing Central America solidarity work and it seemed like oh, all of a sudden this opportunity kind of dropped into my lap. I had studied liberation theology, and I was finishing my doctorate, so I thought okay, somebody offered me this opportunity, I thought okay, I'll go. And it really was transformative in many ways, because while I was there I met the Guatemalan Church in Exile, which was a group of peasants who had fled massacres. This was the early '80s.

AR: Right.

BL: And they were burning down villages in the highlands, and I think I was stunned, because I knew what was going on in El Salvador, and I knew what was going on in Nicaragua, but I really was in the dark about what was going on in Guatemala. And I was in my late 20s at this point and I was starting to realize that the revolution wasn't just around the corner and that the world wasn't really changing, and that feminism really had brought us a few wonderful things and a lot of new challenges. And that struggle was probably a life long process and not something that, you know I think when I first got involved in political organizing I really thought, I believed that these strategies that we developed and these actions that we were going to take were going to lead to things. And you know you get beat up by a cop and thrown into jail, or whatever, but you'd move forward to the next one.

AR: Right.

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BL: And also I think the anti-war movement created a certain kind of headiness which was completely unrelated to what really ended the war in Vietnam. And I think being introduced to the Guatemalan struggle in that context, and at the age that I was, where I was prepared to sort of say this is a long haul commitment. Anyway, long story short, I took a job working for, part-time, very part-time, organizing trips for the group that had organized the trip that I went on.

AR: Okay.

BL: I got to go back to Central America a number of times in a relatively short period of time. I got the job at Rhode Island College and then realized that I was living a very strange existence. I was living in Boston, I was commuting to Rhode Island, anytime I had any time to myself I was going either to Mexico or Central America, and I thought gee, this movie's not going to last very long unless I can change something related to it.

AR: Yeah.

BL: And in many ways I was very fortunate, I think, in that I started my career as a relatively big fish in a relatively small pond. Secondly, I was very fortunate to have left graduate school with a few publications under my belt from having worked with Abby Stewart at the Murray Research Center. I was working with a woman named Clara Mayo who was a social psychologist and who died very unexpectedly, and I was working on a project with her which I then finished, which was a very interesting project. So I actually started my career a little bit ahead of the game in terms of publications, but I realized that I had to figure out the publication thing.

AR: Okay.

BL: And in some ways Rhode Island was interesting because – oh I know what happened. I went to the university and the first week I was there the president of the university dropped dead.

AR: Oh gosh.

BL: Which was rather dramatic. But they hired a woman as president who was a psychologist, a developmental psychologist of all things. And my work came to her attention. It's a small enough place and who knows how or why, and it was a place that was beginning to say that research was important, but it paid lousy salaries. It had a lot of faculty who worked two jobs in order to support… a lot of traditional family structures where the man worked and the woman stayed home and took care of [the family]. I was this young kind of whatever and didn't have any responsibilities for family, and I figured out that I could begin, I started to think about well, how can I do research somehow connected to this activism that I'm involved in. And it wasn't like I was going to study activism, it was more how can I document some of what I'm doing and make it real in some way. And so I put together this project to interview Mayan refugee women about their constructions of the self.



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I didn't exactly call it that because I was taking off my dissertation, and how did I make that connection? I made it because while I was still at BC in graduate school, after having gone to Nicaragua, met these Guatemalans while I was there. They asked me if I would organize a tour of Guatemalan women to come to the United States to tell the US public about the massacres, because they were convinced that if the US women knew, they would get the government to stop.

AR: Oh, so it was women talking to women who would then get the government on board.

BL: Right. Now I thought it was a dumb idea, personally, having been trying to get the government to do a lot of things over the years, however, it had an enormous attraction to me. And this is something that I realize now has defined my life in many ways. It was their idea, and they approached me, and they thought [that I,] as a North American white privileged person, had something to contribute to their struggle. And that's very seductive for me. Plus I knew, I had just come out of co-ordinating this women's studies program and I had kept all these connections, and I knew all these people in Boston. Of course I knew nothing about Guatemala; it didn't even occur to me that that was a problem.

AR: Well they were coming to you, you could learn from them.

BL: Right, I thought I could do this, I know how to organize a tour. And there was a woman in our group who said "Okay I'll put up a thousand dollars" and I thought "Oh my god, nobody's ever handed me money to do anything before." So long story short I came back to the US and with the help of an incredible woman who has become a very close friend of mine, with whom I've also now collaborated in some work, who at the time was living in Washington running something called the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, we organized this national tour. We got these women visas, which was incredibly difficult, and they came, they toured the country, they were incredible. All kinds of feminist connections nationally, and left political connections, it was a great experience. And so out of that experience however, I had a very moving conversation with one of the women who was interviewed.

We had set them up in Washington to do a kind of orientation program with the Women's Policy Institute that Charlotte Bunch was running at the time in DC, so they could understand what kinds of questions US audiences might ask, and what feminism was. These were young women, one from a very rural community, and the other one who had been living, she was a psych student actually, but who had been living in the mountains with communities of populations in resistance. And when they got to Boston, I was not able to go down to Washington, so I said "Well, how was it?" And this young Mayan woman said to me, "Well everybody was very nice and people were very friendly, but it was very confusing to me," she said. "They asked me to tell my story, so I told the story of my community, I told the story of my people, I told the story of my village, and when I got to the end of the story they said well now tell me something about yourself." And she said, "I didn't know what they wanted me to say, so I just started over again and I told the same thing over again. But I could tell it wasn't what they wanted me to say, and I was nervous because I didn't want to make them angry because they were so nice, but I really didn't know what they wanted." So I thought "Gee, this is very related to my thesis."

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AR: Yeah.

BL: So that connection, when I got to Rhode Island and I was trying to figure out what do I want to do for research, and my advisor was saying you got to write up, I had written one article off my dissertation, you've got to do a follow-up, you've got to do this, so I collected data dutifully, never analyzed it. I finally threw it away last year after however many years it's been. But I set up this little project, which was to do oral history interviews in Mexico, leveraged by this woman I had met in Washington, who by that time had moved to Mexico and was working with a group

of Mayans in exile, and they were a group of activists. They weren't interested in my research, but they were interested in women's oral histories.

AR: Oh neat.

BL: So I was going to gather the oral histories to analyze for research, and they were going to use them to make popular education manuals for doing organizing with refugee populations. That was the beginning of me starting to have any idea of what action research might be. I kind of backed into it.

AR: Was participatory-action research even kind of a phrase at that point?

BL: Not in my world. Now, if I look at the history of it in the '80s, it was in Latin America.

AR: I mean, I know action research was around even in the States since the late '50s.

BL: Right, Kurt Lewin.

AR: Exactly.

BL: If you look at Kurt Lewin's work and then look at how it got picked up, in industry basically, is who really picked it up. Well, sort of small group T-group kinds of things, too, were informed by some of that systems theory, but it got picked up into the systems theory world and developed that way. Whereas in Latin America it got picked up into liberation movements and into activism.

AR: Right.

BL: And that's really where I, so I backed into it a little bit that way. Then what happened was these oral histories that we had collected, it turned out that the women we had interviewed were politically in very difficult situations, so we couldn't publish the work any place. And it was Rhoda Unger basically who was writing the book she edited on representations, who said to me, she asked me if I would write a chapter and I said I don't have any data, I can't use it. She said, "Oh. Write about the process." And I thought, oh, there's a novel idea. I thought, "What would I write about," and it was there that I decided to write about the whole informed consent process.

{54:09}

AR: Oh neat.

BL: And to go back to the experiences that I had trying to go through the institutional review board [IRB] at the university. But more importantly, what happened to me in the process, because I had used all of my feminist knowledge to bring to bear on putting together what I thought was a culturally sensitive, reflective of the power differential, and of the power that I had in the relationship, and sensitive to what I thought were issues that they would have about talking to me. And what I realized in a more Foucaultian sense now, not then, was that I had

underestimated the power that they brought to the table. And so when we got into, first of all, when we got into me trying to explain to them what informed consent was, it was a nightmare. I couldn't tell if it was, because I couldn't speak Spanish well enough, or because they didn't speak Spanish well enough, because Spanish was their second language too.

AR: Right.

BL: But it had a lot to do with the fact that signing your name on a piece of paper is not something you do if you've just fled a country and your husband is still in the country and there are bombs being dropped on people's heads. But also, from their point of view, they had agreed to talk to me because an intermediary had introduced us to each other who was someone they had confidence in. And they knew that that person had confidence in me, and so it was a trust relationship that had been built on interpersonal connectedness, and political solidarity.

AR: Right.

BL: This piece of paper was rupturing

AR: It's an intrusion into their trust.

BL: Right, right. And so I wrote about that. And as it turns out, that's probably one of my most reproduced pieces of work because nobody writes about that issue. It's such a strange thing.

AR: It's so funny, it is strange. Oftentimes, I mean sometimes I feel even doing these kinds of oral histories, especially when people volunteer to be interviewed, like they want to be interviewed, and then I come along with my forms and things and it feels very artificial. Now there's not a power imbalance issue, or a political issue, in my project, but it's a weird thing sometimes. And then all the added layers in your situation, wow.

BL: And that also sort of introduced me to a whole set of, you know I started reading more about methodology, I started thinking more about it, and situating it around feminist ethics and thinking about issues from a feminist point of view was very useful, because it gave me some other body of material that was beginning to emerge in thinking about these issues. But I really didn't set out to become a methodologist or to think of myself in any way, and I set out, if anything, to kind of try and combine activism with scholarship.

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AR: Right.

BL: To try and see if you can live in both of those worlds simultaneously. And for me, activism has always been about the interface of gender, race, class, and in some ways sexuality or sexual identity, but not nearly as primary a set of contradictions as the first three. And it's been really important for me to continue to work towards deconstructing the kind of racism that I was raised [in], the structural and systemic racism that characterized New Orleans as I grew up.

AR: Okay.

BL: That's a lifelong process. The decision to work in Guatemala had everything to do with the timing of getting to know that community and it also had to do with the interface of the issues. It had to do with the fact that I got introduced to them through a group of people that were somehow connected to some religious sentiments, which I was still somehow connected to and I thought the main reason why I didn't know anything about what was going on in Guatemala was racism, because they were killing indigenous people and nobody cared.

AR: Yeah, yeah.

BL: I think there's a deep racial dimension to the discrimination in Guatemala that's not quite the same in El Salvador or in Nicaragua, although there are certainly racial issues in both of those countries. So I started my career at Rhode Island College in psychology.

AR: I have two things that I want to make sure you talk about at some point, so I'm just going to introduce those.

BL: Sure.

AR: One is the period you spent in South Africa, the two years there and kind of the impact of that on you; what you saw there, and from your point of view, the status of a growing indigenous South African psychology, I'm very interested in that. And the second of course is how the Photo Voice project kind of evolved. So take those in whatever order you'd like.

BL: All right. Maybe I'll talk about the Photo Voice project and then the South Africa experience. So I worked on these oral histories in Mexico and towards the end of that process, I guess I worked in Mexico for two summers, the women there said, "Well, now will you go to Guatemala?" I said "Excuse me?" and they said, "Well, we would like to know, you know we can't go back to Guatemala now and we're really concerned about the children."

AR: Had any of them left their children behind?

BL: No. They weren't concerned about their own children interestingly enough, they were concerned about children sort of globally; what's happening in the society that is at war for as long as the war has been going on there, and what's happening to a generation of kids...

{1:00:07}

AR: ...who grow up in that.

BL: Right. And that was a question that emerged frequently in these interviews that I did at the time, and it's a very critically important question as we know now, although at the time there was not much going on in psychology in terms of children and war.

AR: Yeah.

BL: And so I thought, okay, sure. You know it was the same thing again: somebody asked me to do something and I thought yeah, I can do that. And it's interesting. Sure, I should go to Guatemala. I've read a lot about it, and the war is still going on, but I'm thinking people are going down there all the time, I can do that. So I started finding people in the US who could make that happen and connect me to people in Guatemala. I met this incredibly talented young man who was doing a lot of work with a health organization. Long story short, I ended up going to Guatemala and spending a lot of time in the country side going to the places where these women were from and talking to people. I mean it was a very intense and tense moment. But I made a connection with a rural health organization with which I was affiliated for quite a number of years and worked as, I guess fundamentally as a consultant. And it was there that I began to develop… I collaborated with a woman named Margarita Melville who is an anthropologist, on a study looking at the impact of war on kids. She worked in refugee camps in Mexico and I worked inside Guatemala. And as I began to interview kids about their experiences in war, and then came back to the States and was transcribing these interviews, I began to have serious concerns about my own mental health, because it was horrific

AR: Oh, I bet.

BL: The experiences that these kids had lived through. And also, I was not a clinician, as I've said before. I knew a little bit about counselling, and I was finding that I was either sobbing the whole time kind of uncontrollably or I was in a kind of raging fit. And it was impossible to kind of find, and yet I was surrounded by people going around about life as if nothing was happening, nothing was wrong with the world. So I was very conflicted in the process. And in that period of time I had the good fortune to go to a conference in Cuba actually, the Interamerican Psychological Association, and there met numbers of extraordinary people.

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BL: We decided to form a network of people committed to human rights, psychosocial well-being, mental health, etcetera. Through that process I began to learn more about [Ignacio] Martín-Baró's work. Elizabeth Lira was working with children whose parents had, in Chile, where there had been a lot of political prisoners and displacements and exiles, people themselves who had been tortured, in Argentina they were working with the children of the disappeared.

Those experiences had a lot more to teach me, I discovered, than anything that I was learning in the US or anyone I had connections to in the US. So I took a leave from the university and I went to Argentina and lived there for six months and studied psychodrama with a guy named Eduardo Pavlovsky, who had been an exile in Cuba for many years and taught psychodrama there.

Basically, for me it was a transformative moment because most of my education had really been from the neck up and I was not particularly connected to the possibilities, I mean I was certainly well aware of people sort of carrying pain and trauma in their bodies, but I had not been involved in any kind of expressive anything. And the second thing it did was reconnect me to the arts, in a

way that I had grown up with at home, but that I hadn't really been connected to much at all in my adult life. They were using a lot of drawing, and a lot of drama, and a lot of creativity in working with these kids whose parents had been disappeared. We had been using drawing in these interviews we were doing, but as an interview technique, not as a group process or way of facilitating a group coming together in some way.

So out of that six months and out of the connections with those others in Latin America, we decided to do a four country study on how the use of creativity and the arts with children and youth might contribute to kids being able to tell their stories in some way about what was happening, and maybe even deal with some of the impact of living in war or in the context of military dictatorship. So we got a grant, worked on a project together. Unfortunately, Martín-Baró was killed right at the beginning of that process, but it was through that process that I had been doing some consulting with a rural health organization and that's who we worked with in Guatemala.

AR: Okay.

BL: I had developed these training workshops for working with kids. That whole process was an extraordinary opportunity of, on the one hand, beginning to understand more deeply some of the impact of war on kids and their families, but on the other hand, seeing the resources that the arts bring to survival and also seeing the role of creativity in helping people jumpstart their lives in some way after horrific experiences. And that lay a foundation for the photo voice project that was really important. When I finally decided to do work in Guatemala, if I had had my druthers, I had wanted to work with women and I wanted to work in a rural village.

AR: Okay.

BL: The war was going on at the time and it was, as they used to say, it's such a nice expression, "It's inconvenient for us to have you here." And they were right; it was like calling attention in a way that wasn't protection but higher risk for people. But secondly, there wasn't a lot going on in terms of women's organizing in Guatemala in the early and mid '80s. The women's movement had jumpstarted in El Salvador, also in Nicaragua, for different reasons, in different ways. But there was a big challenge between the urban areas and the Latino population and the rural areas and the Mayan population. So I had worked with this health promotion organization and I learned a lot.



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We did a lot of interesting things, I made some great friendships, but every time some women tried to start a project in that organization, it got squashed for one reason or another. They kind of tolerated me as a feminist, because I guess I was an outsider and I was no threat to anybody. So it was time for me to move on.

AR: Okay.

BL: They were a wonderful organization, but I couldn't quite figure out a way to… And by fluke I bumped into one of these women who had been in Mexico when I had been working in Mexico. She had returned to Guatemala, she was from this town of Chajul, but she couldn't go back to the town, because of some political activities that had taken place in the town when she was there during the war. She had a sister up in the town and she knew that women were trying to start a women's organization, and she knew of what I had been doing in Asecsa with these workshops and creativity. She said, "How about if you go up there?" and I thought, "Oh wow, that's perfect timing. I'll say goodbye to Asecsa." So I did, and there were six women, or seven women, or eight women, or five women, I can't remember exactly how many, and I said "well, what am I supposed to do?" And she said, "Oh, just do what you do." So I thought okay, so I ran a workshop on women. I thought well I don't really know enough about this place to do anything, so we'll run a workshop about them and they'll tell me about themselves in one way or another.

AR: Yeah.

BL: Long story short, that was the beginning of a many year relationship. The first few years that I was up there, I was not up there full time at all. I was up for a week or two weeks, or the summer, and I basically facilitated workshops, while they were starting their organization, becoming a non-governmental organization, learning all about how to legalize themselves, growing, starting a children's project, which I did help design and help start. And they wanted their first project to be a corn mill, because the town needed a corn mill and they felt like economic survival was a key part about feeling better about themselves.

It was really up there and with these women, that I began to rethink the whole notion of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the notion that you've got to meet material needs first and then you get to the highest which is the spiritual, and to begin to see how in the Mayan community and the Mayan peoples, because they have such an intense connection between spirituality and materiality, the material and spiritual are all one, and the psychological is a piece of that oneness. You don't meet one and then the next and the next; they are dialectically interactive in ways that are very complex. So I began to think also about how psychology, with people who are living in extreme poverty, has to connect to people's material well-being if it's going to have a contribution to make. We can't think that we can do something that's related to mental health that's not related to economic development and well-being.

AR: Right.

{7:33}

BL: I learned that with these women in Chajul. And the research project, the Photo Voice project, came many years later. I had been up there for a long time, they knew me, I knew some of them; the organization had grown to 120 or 130 people, so I didn't know them all by a long shot. And in the meantime I had met Caroline Wang, who is a public health researcher who was at the University of Michigan, she now lives in California. [There was] a project that she had done in rural China using photography with rural women, and she had a huge grant funded by the Ford Foundation and connected to the government in China to look at health issues among rural women, and threats to health, and to make changes in policy around women and children's

health, prevention around health issues. And I met her through Abby Stewart and I had invited her to BC, and I had been very taken with this book she had put together with the women there in rural China. And I took it up to Chajul and I said, "Hey look at this, look at what I learned this year."

AR: Yeah.

BL: And they were like mesmerized by it, in part because I told them that women like themselves had taken the pictures. They couldn't believe it, because basically Mayan women, it's not like they weren't familiar with a camera, some of them had actually been photographed and put on calendars or postcards. So they, on the one hand, knew the camera as the object of foreigners gaze, but they also knew the camera, because in Guatemala there are professional photographers called Los Ambulantes that move around the countryside at the time of the fair, that's the festival for the named saint the town is named after. People take very formal pictures; they have a backdrop that they roll down and it's often the cathedral from the capital city. Those pictures took on a whole new life during the war as more and more people were killed, because they were the only sort of image that people had.

AR: Yeah, right.

BL: On the other hand women, Mayan women in particular, had never taken pictures before, so it was a novelty. So they said yeah, good idea, let's do this. So then I spent the next two years trying to find money so that we could do that. And I was lucky, I don't have a lot of luck with grants, but I finally fluked into some money from the Soros Foundation, which was setting up an office in Guatemala. Then, get the whole thing organized, go through the whole IRB, get up there with the cameras, and then nobody wants to touch the cameras, because they're all terrified.

AR: Yeah.

BL: Also, a lot of the contradictions that I had gotten so mesmerized by; how excited they were about the idea and the whole project, but these cameras were cheap cameras from our point of view, but they were expensive from their points of view. What if they took a camera and what if their kid broke it? Or what if it broke? All the things you can imagine. And then all the ethical considerations of how do you ask somebody if you can take their picture, and what kind of permission do you need, and what kind of permission did I need from them to have them participate as co-researchers in the process.

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Actually, I now know, because I have just been through the IRB with a current participatory-action research project I'm doing with immigrants, that project would have never been passed by today's IRB.

AR: The Photo Voice, yeah.

BL: Because the infrastructure that they require for backup, if people are distressed through participating in the project, doesn't exist in a rural community. And also, you can't be a co-researcher unless you can go through the federally approved government's IRB training.

AR: Oh wow, well that pretty much…

BL: And even though that's in Spanish, the first five lessons are in Spanish, these women, many of them didn't speak Spanish, and most of them didn't read and write.

AR: Yeah.

BL: So they could have been subjects, but they couldn't have been co-researchers. And that was part of the huge contribution of that project, was that those women themselves took the pictures, did the interviews, and together we, well I developed the methodology, but they created the stories.

AR: So you're talking about the difficulties of doing participatory-action research, especially now, but maybe just to sum up or end, what was the greatest sort of end product from that project? What do you think was the most important thing that came out of that project?

BL: That's an interesting question. I think that for the community, it created an opportunity for people to, for a sub-group within the community, to try and tell the story of the community from their point of view. There is a truth commission that talks about many of the horrific events that took place there, but that book is organized in a way that talks about the violence, talks about the Mayan culture, it talks about work and the importance of work in peoples lives, it talks about children, and it talks about the women's organization as a response. Those women wanted to participate somehow in telling their stories, but they themselves said we want to tell about the past to construct a better future, and if it can't be about building something better in the future, then we don't want to just talk to tell what happened; we're not victims, we're protagonists of our lives and we have children and we want life to improve for our children.

AR: Right.

BL: For a small number of people who participated, it's also about 'nunca mas,' never again. We want people to know what this is about, because we want to say that it can never happen again. I've been back up to Chajul several times to interview people about what they see as the impact of the book and the project in their lives.

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It's been a mixed experience for me because a certain sub-sector of the people who participated say we want you to come back, we had so much energy while you were here, you bring so much to the process, it's really important for us for you to be here, which is kind of exactly what you don't want to hear, because it's kind of like all your anxieties about paternalism and how you try as hard as you can to create… But there are other women that I interviewed who talk about what they learned how to do and how, now they've gone on to start a women's marimba group

through the church, or another woman who is very active in another organization. Several of them are still active in the organization that they formed, and another woman said to me, "What this project allowed me to do was, to know the person who lives next door to me, who's lived next door to me all my life, but that I've never talked to in the ways this project created." Or another woman who said, "My own father was killed in the war and my mother had tried to tell me about it for many years and I couldn't listen to it. But after going out to the villages and hearing what had happened to people, I was able to go home and listen to my mother tell my father's story."

AR: Neat.

BL: Secondly, I think it gave these women - I was talking to a student earlier this morning who talked about when he's out in rural communities, he realizes he can go almost a year with never looking at himself in a mirror, because there are no mirrors. But the photo gave people a mirror, and going out into the villages from the town gave them a sense of relativizing their own trauma and loss and sorrow. All of those things I think are critically important for being able to situate the story of horror in life and towards the future. And there's no doubt that the horrors, it's hard to imagine how horrific life was in this area of the countryside for many, many years. So I think for me that's the sort of most powerful aspect of the experience, that the women and many of their children and many other people in the town have kind of created something, not just the book, but a set of relationships for each other.

{16:18}

{End of DVD 2}