

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Nancy Baker

*Interviewed by Alexandra Rutherford
Salt Lake City, Utah
March 9, 2013*

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NB: Nancy Baker, Interview Participant

AR: Alexandra Rutherford, Interviewer

AR – The first thing I would like you to do is state your full name, place, and date of birth for the record.

NB – Okay. Nancy Lynn Baker. Born October 4th, 1949. I was born in Nashville, Tennessee.

AR – The way we usually start is by having you tell us a little bit about how you developed your feminist identity. How did that happen? How did you become a feminist?

NB – My feminist identity really grew out of my activist identity. Like lots of women in my generation, I was involved first in the civil rights movement, and then in the anti-warring student movements of the 60s. I was at school in the California –in the San Francisco Bay area– in the late 60s and very involved in the student movement, the anti-war movement. The sexism of that time was palpable.

One of the things that really was sort of mind boggling was, being women students, we would get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and leaflet the entire campus with the leaflets and announce saying you know the demonstrations or the this or the thats...but only men and a few women, who were sleeping with those men, were allowed to write the leaflets.

AR – Wow.

NB – I think what really pushed me towards a feminist identity was being in a room where we're starting to talk about women's issues and one of the male leaders of the student movement said, "I think it's really important for women to get involved and go out into the community and organize women around women's issues so then we can get them involved in real politics."

AR – Wow.

{2:17}

NB – That was an epiphany moment for me because I realize that you know what, as far as I'm concerned, feminist issues are real politics.

Right about that time Daryl and Sandy Bem came to the school where I was teaching on a visiting year and I got to know Sandy a little bit. In fact, I was the President of the Undergraduate Student Association for Psychology at that school and Daryl and Sandy wanted to stay at Stanford. As the President of the Undergraduate Student Association, I was in the group that got to discuss these things. [I was among the] student representatives at faculty meetings. We also decided that year, for the first time, student evaluations - which we never done. We did student evaluations, [and] we were in the middle of one of the periodic emphasis on undergraduate education campaigns at the school. When Sandy was the top rated teacher in the psychology department that year, we used that as some of the leverage to encourage them to, in fact, make the job offer.

Just as an aside, I have sometimes said that I have felt that I had a significant role in both getting her hired and then preventing her from getting tenure, in the sense that the reason that they didn't want to hire her was [because] the men on the faculty - at that point the faculty was, could be, all men - took the position that they knew that her work was not addressing issues that would result in her being offered tenure and that's why they didn't want to make her an assistant professor. Sandy's response was...well...she was willing to come and she thought she'd convince them. She thought that they would change their minds. I think they were committed to not changing their minds. You know because I'm not sure people in power like to admit that they were wrong [smiles].

AR – Situate this for us a little bit in terms of was she doing the androgyny work at this point?

NB – They were doing the androgyny work at that point. I mean she was the first person to really start addressing things from an overtly feminist perspective that I've been exposed to in my training. In fact, I learned later that I had somewhat distressed Eleanor Maccoby because I had said at a faculty meeting that we needed a psychologist who is doing feminist psychology. I think Eleanor really felt that her work was feminist psychology but this is before Carol Jacklin... before Carol was there... Eleanor's work up until then had been more feminist in the sense of being supportive of women, rather than anything that was more overtly feministic.

AR – Tell us why you were attracted to psychology. How did you get into psychology?

NB – That's one of those sort of odd stories. I actually decided when I was 12 years old that I wanted to be a psychologist.

AR – Wow. That's an unusual choice for a 12 year old.

{6:18}

NB – As I said, I grew up in a small town in Kentucky. I was born in Nashville because that was the closest big city to a little town where I grew up, in the year of the civil rights movement. What struck me so much about the civil rights movement was how visceral

people's racism was...some people's racism was...and how illogical it was. What seemed to me was that unless we could get to understand where prejudice comes from and what motivates it, we couldn't really change. You know we couldn't really right the sort of wrongs that we were wanting to right. And so, when I thought about it, it seemed to me that the people who addressed prejudice and your rational feelings to go with it, were psychologists. And so, that's why I wanted to be a psychologist.

AR – Wow. Let's go a little further back. Can you tell us a little bit about your family of origin? And what influence they may have had?

NB – Clearly my family had tremendous influence on me. My parents were both really terrific people. My mother was a first generation Italian American. In fact, [she] was the first person of Italian descent to live in the county in Kentucky where I grew up. Her parents had come from Italy with nothing but the shirts on their backs. I mean in steerage. And [they came] separately. They met in Wyoming in fact, which is where they both ended up living. My grandmother had been widowed when my mother was only two, so she'd been raised by a strong woman. My mother's family were really sort of the "American success" stories in the sense that my mother's oldest brother didn't graduate from high school, and my mother graduated from college, as did her next oldest brother.

My father's family had been in Kentucky for a really long time. I come from a long line of what we refer to as dirt farmers, but my grandfather had a dicey heart and had been unsuitable for work in the fields. And because he was unsuitable to work in the fields, he had to go to school, and that allowed him to become, for our little town, [a] fairly successful person.

My father, however, had been born with a very serious birth defect. In fact, [he] was the first person in medical history for whom that birth defect was fully corrected when he was in his late teens. And the surgeon at Johns Hopkins, who did the surgery, basically said, "I don't know if this is gonna kill you or cure you, it's gonna do one or the other." and my father chose to have that surgery at seventeen.

So they were both pretty courageous people and both very progressive people. They both...I mean my parents were very much supporters of the Civil Rights Movement. I mean when you're twelve, if you're civil rights supporters, [it is] because your parents encourage you to be. And my brother who was two years older than me was also a very progressive kind of a guy. I first walked precinct [as a supporter] for John Kennedy when I was in the 6th grade and that was because my older brother had me out walking with him. To do it, and so it was...that's the kind of...it was a great family to be from.

AR – Was there anything by way of gender role messaging? or...

{10:39}

NB – That was interesting. I mean I think on the one hand my grandmother was an incredibly strong woman - [on] my mother's side. I mean when she was a widow, she

became a rancher. This was in the nineteen teens [1910s] in Wyoming, which was you know not exactly [a] genteel society - although Wyoming is the state that had women's suffrage first. Wyoming had women's suffrage as a territory, so from my mother, I got the messages [that] women could do everything they wanted and my father was very supportive as well - although we fought about sexism kind of all my life.

But I think the best story of my father was when I was in the 5th grade. My father gave me a typewriter and he said, "You really need to learn how to type because when you go to college" - because we were encouraged, we're gonna go to college - "You go to college, you'll need to type your papers, but don't let anyone know you know how to type because you're a girl. And if they know you know how to type, they will make you a secretary. If they don't think you know how to type, they'll listen to your ideas." So it was that kind of mixed messages that I got from my father. Not that there was anything wrong with all the women who were going to be secretaries, but that I had ideas and so I should escape.

AR – Right. You want to avoid that fate somehow.

NB – So it was a funny mixed message. But I think, all in all, he was certainly supportive of women's rights. I think one of the biggest fights he and I ever had was [when] he couldn't believe the statistics –white women made less than black men– because he was so powerfully aware of racism and how destructive it was. He couldn't believe there were any circumstances in which sexism could be as powerful as racism. But you know for his time, he was a pretty progressive kind of guy.

AR – I would say. So how did you make your way into Stanford?

NB – Well...actually my mother ended up at Stanford. That's where she went to college and she thought it was the most wonderful experience of her life and so then my older brother ended up at Stanford. And so, I think I sort of assumed that's what you are supposed to do.

AR – [Chuckles] Everybody went to Stanford.

NB – My story is a little more complicated than that because I went there as a sophomore transfer, but it was a good place for me to go. It was certainly that particular point of time in Stanford, I think, [that] had to be sort of the golden age of psychology at Stanford. The people that I got to know and work with and be influenced by you know they were like the Who's Who of psychology.

AR – Walter Mischel was there.

{ 14:05}

NB – Walter Mischel was actually one of my mentors. He and Philip Zimbardo were my two real mentors. I took hypnosis from Ernest Hilgard. I did my first research work with

students who were Eleanor Maccoby's doctoral students. I got to be part of a Walter Mischel's research lab. He and Al Bandura sort of worked together and David Rosenhan joined in the last year [that] I was part of that lab. And then, I also got to work in Philip Zimbardo's lab with Christina Maslach and Phoebe Ellsworth and Mark Schneider and Abby Abbison and Craig Haney and Michael Mahoney and Tony Ziese and Bob Zeiss were there at the time in Walter's lab. It was you know it's like...and did I mention also Phoebe Ellsworth...it was like you know...and then the people who were in the faculty. Those folks were mostly graduate students while I was there and also Geoff Loftus was there too.

AR – So with all that, you should have become a social psychologist.

NB – Well...I originally was in social psychology - social and personality. In fact, [I] started off to graduate school in social and personality, and that's what I thought I would end up doing for the rest of my life.

And you know a funny thing happened on the way to becoming a psychologist, which is that I got fed up with psychology. The downside of psychology at the time was that it was very locked into a logical positivism zeitgeist. My exposure to feminism and my activism made me uncomfortable with that. Uncomfortable with the way that...and as a graduate student, I was spending half of my time protesting the Vietnam War and the other half of my time working at a lab that was funded by the Department of Defense to do attitude change research. And obviously I'm going hmmm, something about this doesn't fit together.

The talk I got from faculty was - this wasn't in Stanford, this was in UCSD [University of California, San Diego] - was that well psychology is abstract, is pure science, and it is value free and what have you... and I was also then participating in study groups with the Women's Liberation front and with Herbert Marcuse and in that whole social movement. And the notion that anything could be value free just struck me as impossible. Frankly, the readings we were doing and the thinking we were doing and the theorizing we were doing in my women's liberation group was much more interesting and exciting than anything that was going on in academic social psychology. It was just pretty boring.

AR – Well...what kinds of stuff were you reading that was..?

NB – I actually have a bookshelf full of everything from Robin Morgan and all the early women's liberation writings and I have it in mimeograph form to some extent. And also you know...I'm terrible at names and the older I get worse...Simone de Beauvoir's book; Shulamith Firestone. We were reading all of that stuff. And some of the people who were doing that stuff were the people writing that stuff too. My women's liberation group included Helen Longino, who's a feminist philosopher, and Sandy Dijkstra, Carol Becker, who's sort of in the arts side of things. It was just a really rich and exciting kind of space. And so much more interesting than doing attitude change research. My problem with social psychology at that time actually, as I said to people when I decided to resign my NSF [National Science Foundation] fellowship...

{19:06}

AR – It's a gutsy move.

NB – You know...well...I mean...it turned out to be really eye-opening to see how privileged I was as what I thought was sort of an underpaid doctoral fellow. Once I wasn't a privileged graduate student anymore, I got a real sense of what life was like for most people.

I spent 12 years being a machinist and an elected representative in the machinist union before I went back to graduate school in clinical. Some of the research that was being done I mean [in] Craig Haney and Philip Zimbardo's prison study, one of the rooms they used had been my office at Stanford when I was President of the Undergraduate Students Association. But that research had seemed to me quite methodologically unsound. It was an interesting demonstration but I have lots of criticism of it as really methodologically unsound research. On the other hand, the stuff we were doing that was quote "methodologically sound" had the social significance of a chess game. None of that really resonated with me and none of it was getting me to what I wanted to be doing, which was working to make the world a better place and ending oppression...which was what I thought psychology was going to help me do. I decided that being an activist would help me do that more, or at least it seemed that way at the time.

AR – You were caught in the crisis of social psychology. This is around the time when a lot of folks were looking at the field and saying exactly what you said about it.

NB – I think another thing for me...another part of it was not only was it very difficult to be a woman in psychology at that point in time, but [also] that I'm a lesbian. And you know homosexuality was still in the DSM.

I was in graduate school in one of the UCs [University of California schools]. In 1974, the UC system was still firing tenured faculty for coming out as gay - and that was men. The general message was that in order to be in academia, you had to be deeply in the closet. In fact, if you look at psychology, to my knowledge, until 1990 - and I was in graduate school in the early 70s - no one in psychology, no women in psychology, got tenure as an open gay person. There were some gay people who got tenure and came out afterwards, but no one who was out got tenure until after 1990.

I will never forget being in the lab and our faculty advisor came in with letters from the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society. They were two early gay rights organizations. They were offering to make their membership available to us to study if we were willing to study healthy homosexuals. My lab mates, I think in retrospect, they probably uncomfortably or nervously were laughing at the notion of a healthy homosexual. Now, I wasn't out to them. But, it certainly sent me a loud message about the likelihood that they would be uncomfortable with my being out to them.

And so, I'm looking around and here is this vibrant exciting intellectual activity that is also talking about being in the service of people that I could be part of, versus this sort of boring "We believe science is value free and we're spending all our time getting people to move their checkmark from this side of the Likert scale to that side of the Likert scale" -like this really means anything.

The thought of having to be at that level of unopen...plus just the level of sexism...I mean in the graduate program I was in, there were no women faculty. In fact, most of the men were married to women who had been their graduate students or undergraduate students at some time or another. Sometimes, those were their second wives. There was an undercurrent message that the road to success for women in psychology was to marry some famous male psychologist and get to be his lab assistant, or get to teach at the community college while your husband had the appointment at the important school. And that did not sit with my feminist side. And B, that wasn't exactly an option for a lesbian and so...

{24:55}

NB – You know I think some of the other things were discouraging to me. First of all, the experience at Stanford had been wonderful and getting to work with people like Walter Mischel, getting to work with Philip Zimbardo, but also getting to work with Phoebe Ellsworth and Chris Maslach and Sandy Bem a little bit...although I never really worked with her, but to be able to engage in conversations. I think if I had had those kinds of women mentors available to me as a graduate student, I might have made different choices and figured out a way to navigate psychology differently.

Although the level of homophobia was really quite...you know [I was] getting very strongly the message that I would have to hide who I was if I wanted to be in academia, and hiding who I am just doesn't fit with my character very well...sort of never has. Although, I did very much in those days. One of the things I am still grappling with is sort of the remnant in my personality of what it meant to have to grow up in the closet and have to spend a lot of time trying not to let the world know who you were. You get very good at separating your outer appearance from your inner emotional life, which is not necessarily something that always serves me well in my life.

But that aside, the sexism at UCSD in those days was just unbelievable and this was before sexual harassment had been articulated as a cause of action and it was also before Title Nine really existed. We're talking 1971, 1972, 1973. I will never forget being sent down to tell one of the members of the faculty –the visiting professor who was there with him– it was time for them to come upstairs for our afternoon colloquium. I walked up to a table in the commons where they were seating, having coffee. [I] walked up between them and said to the professor, "The chair of the department says it is time for you to come upstairs to the colloquium," and he reaches over and puts his hands on my hips and turned me sideways and said to this visiting faculty person, "This is Nancy, one of our graduate students. Doesn't she have a nice ass." I was somewhat shocked. When I later complained about it, about this having occurred, what I was told was, "What's the

problem? You do have a nice ass.” And, that’s sort of the attitude. That gives you a sense of the level of sexism.

There were faculty members who, it was well known, routinely had affairs with undergraduate students for whom they then wrote glowing recommendations to get them into top graduate schools...and that sort of thing.

For someone with any sort of feminist sensibilities, that’s pretty appalling. It’s like, “Is this really a profession, a discipline, I want to spend the rest of my life hanging around and hiding who I am so that I can fit in with this?” It didn’t seem like a really good idea.

AR – No. And this was really the very same time that the more senior people, women, were just starting to kind of voice some of this stuff right?

NB – And that again...I had happened to end up in a place where there weren’t any women faculty. And so, there weren’t any mentors in psychology that I could...who were articulating any of this stuff. I think it might have been different. This was just at the time when AWP [Association for Women in Psychology] was coming into existence, when women in Psychology were starting to say things. [It] might have led to a different road if I had been at a different place. It’s one of those things where accidents of space and time determine all sorts of things. On the other hand, what I did was really fun and interesting.

AR – Well, that’s where I want you to go next. To tell us where that road did take you for the next 12 years.

NB – ...really into the working women’s movement. I got very disgusted with mainstream feminism. Another one of those things I’ll never forget [*is*] being at UCSD in Revelle cafeteria listening to Gloria Steinem. Gloria Steinem came in and she said, “I really want to tell you [that] it is important for you women to go out and change the world. You need to take your degrees and go out and get jobs. If they say to you who’s gonna clean the house and raise the kids, you tell them you can hire someone to clean the house or raise the kids.” And I sat there thinking, “Who are we going to hire but other women who aren’t home cleaning their houses and raising their kids.” The lack of class consciousness among feminists or at least mainstream feminists, and the lack of consciousness around feminism or class among psychologists, led me to say “You know what, I need out of academia, I need out of the university, I need to be part of sort of these independent organizations of activists and social change agents that are really trying to make a difference in the world.”

And that’s what I spent the next 12 years of my life really doing, and being part of the working women’s movement. I ended up - you know I’m sort of proud [of this] - in a local that was 96% men, I got elected the head of contract enforcement, which I was very proud of.

I also got involved in the Coalition of Labor Union Women [CLUW] and was elected the head of the San Diego chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. I got to serve on

the national executive board for about 5 years for the Coalition of Labor Union Women until, in fact, I left to go back to graduate school in psychology.

One of the things that really shaped that decision was [when] I was heading up a national task force for CLUW on the problems of women in traditionally male blue-collar occupations. I was working with women from all around the country who were dealing with what we would now call 'hostile environment sexual harassment,' but we didn't really label it that way at that time. They were going, many of them, to see therapists to get help dealing with these experiences, and really being re-victimized by therapists, who lacked awareness of blue-collar realities.

So they either told people that they had rights that they didn't have - for example, most mental health professionals had never been in situations where you had to get permission from a boss to go to the bathroom. But, if you are working in an assembly line in a factory and you leave your job to go to the bathroom without permission, you will find yourself unemployed. Lots of well-meaning mental health workers had no sense of that. On the other hand, situations that were really ubiquitous for working women in particularly traditional male environments, like attempts by their male co-workers to hurt them physically, were viewed as paranoid fantasies by therapists. Or the notion that if you were off work with a soft tissue back injury and you'd been labeled as a trouble maker that you might be being followed. Well the reality is...if you were off work with a soft tissue back injury, and your employer views you as a trouble maker and you don't think you are being followed, you're probably out of touch with your reality. Thinking that you are being followed, at least in those days, was in fact a rational and reasonable assumption.

So women were being victimized, and that was one of the things that led me to decide that maybe it was time for me to go back to school. Well...it was time for me to leave my local, it was either to go on staff with the international, which I was being encouraged to think about, or it was time to go back to school. I got to represent the US chapter of the International Metal Workers' Federation at the International Metal Workers' Federation Women's Committee meeting in Geneva in 1986. I was the US representative at a meeting where it was simultaneously translated into 7 different languages and the proceedings were being recorded, which was an interesting experience for the summer before I went back to graduate school. [I] went back to being treated like I didn't know anything about it either, which was a fascinating experience.

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AR – Before we get into that, I wanted to ask you about your experiences of homophobia when you transitioned into the workforce. Did you have similar experiences there or different ones?

NB – Well, I didn't actually walk into the shop with a rainbow flag on my hardhat. At least in part because actually we didn't have rainbow flags in those days. People forget that Stonewall [riots] happened in 1969, the first gay rights marches didn't start

happening until 71, 72. I actually marched, I think, in the first Gay Pride march in San Diego in the early 70s. But, I didn't necessarily announce that I was a lesbian. On the other hand I never made up a boyfriend, and I never had one. When you are in the same place for 12 years, and everybody knows you haven't had a date, people draw their own conclusions. And the people in the shop pretty much let me know that the word was out about that and that what mattered to people was for the most part that I did a good job of doing contract enforcement and I stood up and fought for the rights of my co-workers, and the same thing in terms of the working women's movement.

In fact, when I first ran for president of CLUW, one of the other woman in the labor community decided that our CLUW chapter should not elect a lesbian as the president of the chapter. Now I wasn't running as an open lesbian. I wasn't making public statements. But pretty much people knew what the score was. And so, she decided to do this campaign to keep me from getting elected, [based] on homophobia. But her mistake was [that] the first person she called to enlist in this campaign was herself a quite closeted lesbian labor leader, who was president of her local union, and one of the most powerful women in town in terms of the labor movement. I don't know if this woman would've been particularly my supporter, but when she found out that the move to keep me from being elected was going to be based on homophobia, she made it her personal mission to get me elected. And so, I was elected quite handily to be president of the CLUW chapter.

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AR – So that pretty much backfired.

NB – Yeah. Now there certainly was homophobia in the labor movement and homophobia in CLUW. There was all kinds of really ugly stuff...it could happen. At the time, 'lesbian rights' wasn't the critical issue.

My sort of personal compromise, in terms of openness, was that if gay rights was ever the issue, and my being open was something that needed to happen, then that was something I was going to do. But as long as it wasn't the issue...I actually think that who I sleep with actually ought to be my private business...and my openness around my sexual orientation, is really purely because I think it is a politically appropriate and necessary thing to do. But actually, I would rather live in a world where it is nobody's business but mine.

The issues we were fighting for then, were really more about dealing with sexual harassment, dealing with overt sex discrimination, dealing with the inequality between what women were paid.

When I first started in the working women's movement, we were still fighting against protective legislation. We were still fighting against those rules and laws that said that women couldn't do certain jobs because we had to be protected from having to lift heavy objects. All that kind of stuff. In fact, at the International Metal Workers Federation meeting, in Geneva, where I was representing the US, the Metal Workers Federation Women's Committee was taking up that very issue of protective legislation, which still

existed. I don't know if it still does, but [it] still existed in much of Europe. Women weren't allowed to do certain jobs because we were being protected from having to lift more than 25 pounds, or being protected from having to work overnight shifts. It is interesting...I'm not sure that women nurses were protected from working overnight shifts, but women metal workers were [smiles].

{41:49}

AR – Yeah. If it is gender typical versus gender atypical.

NB – Yeah. I mean it was interesting stuff. So those were the issues, as well as remembering that reproductive rights means the right to have children, and to be protected against forced sterilization, and to be assured that there was child care that makes it possible to have children and be able to support them at the same time. Those kinds of things were the agenda of the working women's movement and I think need to be the agenda of feminists.

That has always stuck with my side of feminism. I've always resonated with the perspective that says if you are not looking after the least privileged, the most oppressed, then you're not doing it right. And that as long as there are a group of people who don't have rights, any rights that we have are temporary.

AR – I want to get you to talk a little bit then, before we stop, about your transition back into academia after this incredibly rich kind of world that you were in with the working women's movement.

NB – I think it wasn't, first of all, transition back into academia. It's another one of those things, if there is anything that life has finally taught me, it's never say never. Because every time I said never, I've been wrong. But, when I left school, I thought I would never want to go back, and I never intended to...but particularly the experience of working with women around the country, who were trying to get help from therapists and really being re-victimized...

I had frankly always looked down at therapy as being passing out band aids when society needs major surgery. Because so many of the changes that I think really need to be made are at the systemic level and therapy isn't a systemic activity, it's at the individual level...but I also came to realize that it was important for people to not bleed to death when we're trying to do major surgery on society and that there was a need for what therapists provided.

I thought that to some extent, as someone who has had 12 years of experience in the machine shop- I even have the scars to prove it - and in the working women's movement, that I was in a position to help Psychology grapple with some of these issues in ways that it hadn't. I really intended to go back and really become a therapist and do it from the practice side.

Unfortunately, my 10 years in graduate school in clinical work sort of coincided with the rise of managed care, and the end of really the freedom to do what I thought I was going back to school to do. And then, another one of those serendipitous things...just sort of how my training shaped out, and where I ended up, and what I ended up doing, and I ended up really reaching...and the other thing that happened was that I love ideas. Ideas are really one of my favorite play toys and I also came to realize that the most effective way to really help make the kinds of changes that I wanted to make in psychology was at least in part to be involved in the training of clinical psychologists or clinical and counseling psychologists, being part of training. You kind of have to go back to academia to do that. Certainly, my earlier experiences had left me quite cautious about that.

In fact, when I got my degree - I got my doctorate in '89 - my father used to like to joke that I had been involved with psychology the entire time. Because in some ways, being an organizer is just really being an applied social psychologist, and that I just spent a lot of time doing field work, starting my PhD and ending it.

But when I got my PhD in 89, there still weren't any open lesbians who had gotten tenure in the field of psychology so it's not like looking for an academic job was top on my list of things to do and I sort of backed into being an academic and more taught [as an] adjunct. In fact, I didn't take my first full time academic job until 2003 and even then I picked an institution that's a fairly atypical institution because I have some ambivalence about academia.

And really the ambivalence comes from that sort of class-conscious perspective. I think one of the functions that academia serves in our society is to perpetuate the myth of meritocracy. People get to go to places like Stanford and Yale, Princeton and Harvard, you know elite schools, and get to get their PhDs from elite programs because they are the smart ones right? The truth of the matter is that for the people from poor, and working class, and ethnic minority backgrounds, who get to go to those schools...they do get to go to those schools because they're really smart and they work really hard. Even though there's lots of really smart people who work really hard from those communities that don't get in, certainly only really smart, really hard working people from poor, and working class, and communities of color get into those places, but there's lots of other people, particularly men, and particularly white people, and particularly people who come from families of privilege who get into those institutions, not because they are really smart or work really hard, but because they are really privileged. The whole system functions to get us to buy in to the belief that if you got a degree from one of the fancy schools, that means that you deserved it. And if you, conversely, don't have a degree from one of those fancy schools, it's because you are not smart and you didn't deserve it.

I would watch that play out on the shop floor in a totally different way because I watched the people who came in the same time I came into the shop, who were working really hard to make supervisor. And the truth of the matter is nobody made supervisor who didn't work really hard and wasn't really good at it. But it was also true that for everyone who made it, because their sister was dating somebody who was a supervisor or they happened to go to church that the plant manager went to or some other serendipitous kind

of thing, there were 25 other people who worked just as hard, but they didn't get that opportunity. So, it really was a visceral education in the way that the myth of the meritocracy operates and the way the gate works - to only swing one way - and to really convince us that what is privilege is actually owned.

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