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Interviewer: Diane Sands

Interviewee: Janis L. "Jan" Strout

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Diane Sands: Okay, this is Jan Strout and Diane Sands making another attempt at doing an interview for the Montana Feminist History Project, August 2002.

Jan is here visiting in Montana from her working life in Seattle, and I ask her first of all just give us a brief synopsis of who you are, what you do, and where you came from.

Janis "Jan" Strout: Overall or Bozeman?

DS: Well overall. Put you in a content[context].

JS: In a content. Very good I love those contents. Well, as you said I'm Jan Strout. I currently am living in Seattle and doing two really neat little pieces of work with my life and I feel really lucky to be able to do that. One is building a U.S. women's movement to normalize relations with Cuba and in the process to try to create a more progressive women's movement here in this country by focusing on racial and economic justice. That's my great passion and it's a culmination of about 12 years of activist work with Cuba itself and a broader commitment to building a local global women's movement. I'd like to come back to that. The other thing I'm doing is working with media and I'm currently managing a (unintelligible) television station and that allows me to live out my profound commitment to helping special movements understand and utilize media as a tool for social change, and particularly to change the images of women and all invisible or exploited people within the way that we are represented in the media. So having the opportunity to create our own media and bring in the kinds of programming and content that would show us as actors and resisters and not victims or not exploited is a part of that. So that comes out of my work with feminist media literacy and a variety of other ways that I can use film in a lot of my work. I've been in—

[Break in audio]

DS: And as you were saying Jan.

JS: So that's what I've been doing within Seattle for the last couple of years. I've also come out of a recent background working in philanthropy, social change philanthropy, so I was doing some work with a territory resource and previous to that was a funding exchange in New York. My time in Montana maybe most well known for was the wonderful ten year period of 1977 to 1987. Previous to that I was doing a variety of work in higher education always doing feminist activism and organizing for social change, social justice. I know I was born to do this and then I've also kind of seen what I've been trying to do is both working inside institutions to help their

transformations and at the same time trying to create the types of institutions that are what it is we are working toward in terms of a more socially just society and world. So...

DS: How did you get to Bozeman?

JS: Interestingly enough I came to Montana like so many women out of partly romance and partly falling in love with this place, a very, very deep commitment to this sense of place. I originally came to Missoula my first year because I was involved with someone. We were both working in upstate New York when I was director of student activities at the SUNY – Oswego campus. We were both working on campus and decided to quit our jobs, age 29, and be a pioneer couple, embarrassingly enough. I can really relate to this Frontier House on television, although living in a little four unit complex apartment 15-20 miles outside of Missoula doesn't really qualify as the frontier house. But meanwhile, so I came to Missoula, he was majoring in environmental studies at the university and I picked up a series of jobs at that point. In Missoula, the university had just laid off 300 people and it was a very bad time economically. Of course the overall boom and bust of Montana anyway, but at that moment it was very, very difficult to get a regular livable wage job with benefits and all. So I get some part time work in Missoula for that first year and interestingly enough, politically I hooked up with the Initiative A (?) campaign which ultimately was designed to ban nuclear power in Montana and was successful.

It opened the door for me to do, to meet so many people, to do some wonderful work. I also did some volunteer work at the Women's Center at the university, with Judy Smith, that is how I first met her and that's how I believe how I first met you.

DS: Probably.

JS: But didn't stay long, didn't connect deeply at that moment. So I was finally able to get a regular paying job at Montana State at Bozeman. So I moved there and spent the next nine years in Bozeman while I was in Montana and started at the on-campus living department and worked in housing, organizing all the programs and services for the residents of the family housing and residence halls. At that point (I) got very involved with some of the activities currently going on in that part of Gallatin County, Montana with Scottie Giebink. Scottie Giebink worked with Focus on Women and her Women Aware conferences and the Gallatin women's political caucus, which was really the most active group of political women primarily attached to the Democratic Party, but not exclusively. Marilyn Wessel(?) and a variety of other women were involved in that. And the point where Focus on Women decided to no longer continue doing their work, a number of us had raised the issue on campus about starting a Women's Center, and also raised issues around women's studies and the status of women. But the Women's Center was the first concrete place that we were actually able to achieve some success in institutionalizing a program for women and that was the started in 1982. I was hired as its first director and still was able transfer the kind of things that I was always doing no matter what job I had, whatever title its called, I'd still do the same things, pretty much. So that included working on the status of women as well as a lot of other social justice issues.

DS: Could we then, so we don't lose any of this, go back and briefly just say something about what the Focus on Women that Scottie started, and Women Aware.

JS: Yeah, Focus on Women was the organization that sponsored a number of activities including the annual Women Aware conferences. Those brought in a number of big names from Jane Fonda to I remember Coyote, you know "get your tired old paws off my body," the early prostitutes, sex workers, you would say now, organizing.

Those conferences were always statewide. They were happenings, lots of workshops. I used to do some workshops for them, but those were a really important gathering for women, I think, across the state. Probably more university-connected women, middle class women, if you will, as we think more nowadays about the diversity among women. They also ran a staff lunch seminar program. They also had a travel program. I think the main thing is that the Focus on Women program basically appealed to non-campus-based women. Some women were involved from the campus but primarily it was a lot of community women.

DS: Was it based on campus?

JS: It was based on campus. It had some support from the university. I don't think very much support from the university, quite honestly, I suspect probably space, and maybe a little bit of money. My guess is that she had to raise a lot of this money. She did it through the travel programs, the Women Aware conferences, etc., maybe grants to support some of those activities. But it was...I don't think the campus gave it a lot of support and I think probably it was a kind of "Catch 22" because without serving the students directly or campus women in general, that it was harder to make the case. Even though it's always harder to make the case within sexist society about why we should support women, why we should support gender specific programs, so I don't want it to sound like it was anything she wasn't doing but at the same time I suspect it was harder to then leverage the political mobilization that was needed when it wasn't attached and affecting the campus more directly. So by the time I think she retired or chose to move on, there was some of the framework of the Focus on Women program there, but a lot of us, including you know, Marilyn Wessel and Mary Lucan(?) and Nancy Howard and lots and lots of different women, Allana(?) Brown, all were clamoring for a Women's Center and campus-based women's programs of a number of types and wanting to really address the status of women on campus, needing specific institutional support to do so and how to leverage the resources of the institution to build more support. Out of that we did some sort of study, needs assessment, I think it was called a needs assessment, and were able to document some of the reasons why we needed this kind of program. I think frankly in the late seventies and early eighties it was a very different political climate and a different campus climate that was coming out. A lot of things were starting to go on nationally on college campuses. Mary Koss had just done her major study about rape on campus, sexual violence. Bernice Sanders was doing all of her work around the campus climate and so there were a number of things percolating around the country in the seventies and eighties that gave us

leverage to be able to say “we are not whiners, we are not femi-nazis,” all those ways that the backlash plays out. So we had some very substantial reasons to support the university and institutional resources when this happened. So . .

DS: Was there opposition to this effect?

JS: I don't recall the kind of opposition that ultimately began to play out as we got more power. The kind of political correctness, which is of course very ironic since it really started with the movement, actually started more from the way we ourselves working from within this movement and other movements were expecting behavior of sisters to be like some of us thought it should be. Other than the way it's turned out to be used by the Right as a way of bashing those liberation movements, if you like. I think the opposition question was partly because we were working in student services at this university. We had very overall really good support from within the student services area. It was run by a number of men that pretty much got it. But there was never the ability to get beyond a certain level of support, so that is really where the resistance was. It was going to be originally a half-time director and there was a bunch of politics that all played out. That frankly I don't know if I want to record all that. Not because I don't know if it's as interesting as some of the other pieces of work that we were able to accomplish.

But there was definitely the more insidious resistance of how much we were allowed to have. Back then, no matter what we did to bring in more, and I think that was ultimately through the Women's Center and then some other institutional creations that we were able to pull up. That's when we really became threatening, because we were very powerful at that time. We were able to grow a Women's Center that for some people was going to just be an add women and stir not a spot where women adjust and get warm. Rather than ultimately trying to bake a new kind of pie instead of the cake that we had.

The fact that we were able to amass large amounts of levy, large numbers of resources, both in terms of some of the external funding, the kinds of ways we were creating, you know, students against sexual assault, to a kind of ultimate committee on women, to infiltrating all the key decision making bodies from the fact that key women were on the Facilities Planning Committee so we always got more space. So we didn't know. . . it was just amazing old and young women's network that really was committed to the core of the Women's Center as the key vehicle for our feminist aspirations and to then further leverage the Women's Studies program into Athletics, created Women within the Shoe(?), which was a women's faculty and staff group, and several other areas. So ultimately that was to me the most interesting political learning process because not only how much you could leverage beyond even dollars themselves in the balance of all that was important, but we pulled that money in from a variety of grants, state grants, primarily, up to national grants for the Native American women's project.

The fact that we were able to leverage money even hiring a work study position, Susanna Trujillo, for the Native American women's project was just cobbling together, as women always know how to do, just pinch our pennies, nickels, dimes, dollars, and cobble together Native American studies, the advance (unintelligible) program, and the Women's Center for all of these young women who then was able to go out and leverage lots of other resources within those three parts of the university and in building relationships with the privately controlled community colleges which were our other ultimate partners in our project to help increase the number Native American women returning to campus and build up a support system of volunteers. And then we got some money from the old Carl Perkins fund for gender equity to then create video. Sheila Stearns (?) may have some of those videos that were produced from all this Carl Perkins money, targets women in agriculture, men in home economics, does this sound corny or what, and the Native American Women's project.

DS: And who kept these videos?

JS: I could check with the Women's Center. I don't know myself. So maybe Mary, I'll check with her over at the Native American Women's project. But in all of those cases, we were able to take very little, pulled together, and again the women across the campus, even working from the highest levels who were really ultimately creating a national, a campus advisory committee, a community advisory committee for the Women's Center. So we have Dorothy Eck, I think whoever was on the city council at that time, Marsha Youngman(?), who was a counselor at that time. Those kind of women . . .

DS: State senators, like Dorothy Eck, a legislator who ran for governor (unintelligible)

JS: Exactly, exactly. Thank you. So all of those women were then able to be on our think tank of strategy, and then when we were ultimately attacked because we also chose to use our space for the gay group to meet. We were able to take messages for them because they were dealing with hate crimes, they were dealing with threats and violence, just leaving the parking lot, being harassed for who they are, that ultimately we took their phone messages, they had a mailbox in the Women's Center. Then one of the state legislators at that time, I don't remember who it was, decided to try and pull our funding. You know \$20,000 to \$25,000 we were getting from the University, plus office space, and that was the university support, with many, many more dollars. They were trying to de-fund us, and luckily we had this committee in place that was able with Marilyn Russell leading the way, at that point, assistant to the president (unintelligible) probably running a lot of other things that she should be.

DS: Director of the (unintelligible).

JS: Excellent, excellent. Marilyn leading the way, making sure that everybody knew what the Women's Center was doing as part of the larger constellation, not ever backing off from what we were doing and why. But ultimately they couldn't negate us and they couldn't remove our funding and our role at the university. So it was really the backlash and the resistance only

through which we became more powerful. So at that point I was director of the Women's Center for five years through '80s?

DS: So it was structured initially with the concept that you would have a director of some kind that would serve students and the larger university and community.

JS: Yes, and because of the funny stuff at the very beginning I ended up being the full-time director with the support staff of a graduate assistant and a bevy of work-study students. Then whatever project we could cobble together funding for from usually grants and a bunch of in-kind services then we had as many as ten or twelve staff. Everybody part-time, but me. But all these other women working on, you know women in agriculture, men in home ec, and the Native American women's project. We had a Gallatin Valley Women's Herstory Photography Exhibit. We had a history of women in film, we picked up and kinda of really jazzed up the old staff lunch seminars that focused on women that were really important and they were really the kind of bread and butter of the program and every week that we took them. (laughter) You know, levels of provocateur and that which was really fun. Raised a lot of the issues early on I would say before they were trendy if you will. From incest to breast cancer to father, umm. . .

DS: Child-support

JS: Yeah, child-support kinds of issues and violence against women, just a variety of things. So that was really, really important but it was definitely targeted to both traditional-age students, but the other place that we probably had the most impact were women returning to school. At that point, and I'm not sure if Montana is still doing it, at that point the welfare system allowed women to continue to receive their payments and the different support services (unintelligible) while being able to go to school. That was huge. In light of today's welfare reform movement, don't get me started, that made a huge difference for women to not only be able to leave abusive relationships but also made a huge difference for women not having to continue in the aid line of the feminization of poverty if they chose to leave and end relationships. So we served and supported a lot of re-entry women as they were called.

We had a number of women from the counseling center, Florence Cout(?), I remember her. Lots of women who were doing their practicums within the counseling center staff, set up lots of different groups of women, for incest survivors, or to re-entry women's issues. So it was really great that we could again take this huge layer of resources, and just genderize the whole thing. Feminize everything we possibly could. So we were able to serve those women, had a very good relationship with the admissions office, and the older student services, so we did lots of collaboration projects with them. I think that was just, again, one of our strongest suits, primarily because those women got it. Those women knew, having lived the life, experienced why seeking out services, why addressing the state is so cumbersome, why the need to look at a more gendered analysis in their lives was really important.

I think was our key audience, but we were also the place where faculty and staff could utilize our center. We had a library that we decided to honor Geraldine Fenn who has been a long, long time activist in the community and able to utilize her name and her blessing to then bring in additional support from a lot of the older women and the community women. She actually worked within the Cooperative Extension Service with the state of Montana for years. So that whole network, I mean, the thing I learned and loved about Montana is everything was at least statewide, mostly regional. So even though we were a local campus-based organization that had a wonderful town-gown relationship, the best I've ever seen on any campus I've ever worked. That truly understood that the campus is the community and you don't put up fences, you don't create anything that doesn't have good community interest in mind and in their heart. So the opportunity to do that kind of thing really brought in even more women and more contributions to the Women's Center because we always knew we were in a very fragile existence, whether we had university support, increasing space, or whatever, it was never taken for granted, that's for sure.

So some of the other things that I did within the university was to work with Paula Petrik on co-creating and co-teaching some Women's Studies classes. They had interesting programs in the summer, some special courses that people had to put in proposals for and then they selected those classes. So we put together, over the four years, a bevy of courses that included intimacy and technology, beyond 1984, brave new worlds for women and men, sexual politics in film, and then there was one about men and women of the west.

DS: Paula is a western historian.

JS: Exactly. One the leading western women's studies historians and was on the faculty teaching history in women's studies at the time. And was one of the really key founders of a number of local and state-wide institutions. And one of the most fun women that you would want to work with. So we had some very lively discussions. She was a part of the Women's Center Community Advisory Committee and also a real leader in the creation both women's studies and some of the affiliated women of MSU. So I think she was also involved with the affirmative action advisory committee. I want to just mention that whole area, the office of affirmative action was a real key player. It was one of the strongest advocates for women within the campus and again everything spilled over into the community. People like Donna Molinare (?), Donna Springer, (unintelligible).

DS: Where you there, was this the whole period in which the lawsuits and the court order ran Tom Lakin (?) down?

JS: No, I was there afterwards. So was Donna. In fact it was someone, Nancy Cook then, now Nancy Hubbard, who was working in the office that whole time. She will be a very interesting woman to talk to.

DS: If you would just say what the whole (unintelligible) was.

JS: About seven women on the campus, primarily women working in the Women's Athletic Department, but there were some other faculty involved. Women's Athletics, Physical Education Department, some other women were involved in suing the University for violating both Title IX and general sex discrimination. They went through a very long and difficult process to go through that suit, to go through the entire EEOC process at the federal level and ultimately go through the harassment and estrangement that they were feeling the backlash for. This was during the '70s, throughout the '70s, of course Title IX was 1975, so this was probably somewhere right after that. They were victorious. They ultimately created one of the most important results was not only their own individual situations being redressed with back pay and promotions because it was fair, those women were totally discriminated against in terms of pay, promotions, rank, and equally important to the students directly was the actual Women's Athletics program.

At that point, they were able to then create co-athletic directors, women's athletic director and a men's athletic director which not only gave the women student athletes more equality of opportunity, but it also lifted up women into the decision making roles so that they had equal status and ultimately I believe there was equal input. But we all know that is not the case given the worship of football and the myth that football supports and lifts up all of the lesser sports as they are called. But it did at least put the director of women's athletics, June Hunt at the time, into a place where she had access to the President's Council and all the other places that men's athletics, or the athletic director went to for a more discriminatory super-program that she was able to have.

But I just want to emphasize that I know how much the women had to resist the backlash and the kind of sexism that was not only obviously pervasive in the institutional structures that led to the problem in the first place but just to even come forward and go through this process. I think it's one of the most important lessons of the second wave of feminism that has really gotten lost and needs to be lifted up is what price women paid to create these structures to stand up for their rights and in the case of standing up for their, our, rights, it was always to ultimately benefit everyone. Including the men, who, ultimately, needed to understand how to share. So yeah that was very important and a lot of those women came together and formed the Affiliated Women of Montana State University which again was our staff and faculty group that was able to use that power of creating this organization that was able to begin to address the broader issues of the status of women more systemically.

DS: And am I misunderstanding you, didn't I understand that as a result of that lawsuit, there was, was it a governmental or a court order on MSU which may still exist?

JS: Thank you. I forgot that part. Absolutely, that was in fact a way in which not just equal opportunity but affirmative action had to be applied. That's the court order on all hiring of faculty and staff and so the affirmative action office was the place. I'm sure they must have increased both the role and the presence and the stature of that office within the University

structure as a result of the court order and their job was to monitor and implement it, that court order.

DS: Which is how the two universities differ for all of the public and perhaps a lot of the people's perceptions that Bozeman's more conservative, or MSU. In fact that court order structurally created certain requirements and expectations around affirmative action that because Missoula never went through that has not had. Institutionally.

JS: Right. I think it gets equally interesting when you look at just the differences between the two institutions and how through, if you will, in this case a gendered analysis, in other cases you'd want to do a racial analysis as well, but in this case a gendered analysis. When you look at the area of what a land grant institution, such as Montana State University, incorporates from a curriculum and a vocational standpoint, you know it's a huge collector of male-dominated fields of agriculture and the sciences and engineering and all of those kinds of things. To then generalize and somewhat stereotype over to Missoula and the University of Montana, which incorporates a lot more of the arts and literature and social sciences and all of those kinds of things, which to a certain extent that's due because the academy is male-dominated but to a certain extent there may be a few more women. But I think ultimately it was more dramatic at the level of sex discrimination at Montana State because of the nature of that type of curriculum.

DS: You might want to look at it right now and I know like MSU has hired a woman who is head of engineering, for example. (unintelligible) It's a little guess that in fact the long term structural impact of that is that MSU has more women in leadership roles in the faculty and particularly in those non-traditional areas than Missoula has.

JS: I agree.

DS: I think that's a result of taking that particular structural approach at redress of this issue.

JS: I would agree. And how also we sob a lot. Our side. I don't think that is this case today, but I think at that point we believed we had both the law and public policy and the institutions inherently were transformable and that's where I think that there was a very interesting way in which the whole inside outside strategy was both debated, challenged, contentious, and I still believe ultimately the way they have to be thinking in terms of our strategy for social change. I just want to also mention that we had the Women's Studies there not ever even as a program and it's only become a minor in recent years. But there were some amazing women and a few men doing some very important work in Women's Studies and the broader transformation of the curriculum and integrating gender across the curriculum and Native American studies to a lesser degree across the curriculum although there was a Native American studies program, not a major, but a program. Now of course we have the Women's Studies program. At that time, some of the leading advocates to address the status of women were not only doing it in their own classrooms and in the curriculum, um, I don't want to say wars, but curriculum

contentiousness of really looking at the cannon at that point and time to look at where were the women, where were the people of color, where were the working class, where were the Native American women, where was the imperialism.

DS: And we do need to look and see what the impact was of the curriculum project which Betty Smith, who was Assistant Dean at that point, a French professor, had won a major Ford grant for a women in the curriculum project and it was to serve all of the western United States, since I was the assistant program director whatever of that darn thing for nine months.

JS: It was Pepsi too, right?

DS: It was Pepsi-funded, and Ford and . . .

JS: For the improvement of women in higher education

DS: To transform the corporate (unintelligible) four year colleges and universities by including the (unintelligible) of women, particularly women of color. Hence these mini-grants were certainly given to MSU faculty but also U of M faculty, among those other institutions around the west. I was talking about it the other day about how we really need to look at what impact, twenty years later, have those actually had? Because that was a multi-million dollar project at the time and a very significant effort to do some fundamental structural re-training of university faculty, men and women, both around the core curriculum.

JS: What was even more impressive is that the kind of work that Betty and you and other faculty members did, at the time became a national model for many college and university campuses and really began to be a part of a national movement that saw the curriculum, not only as the place to challenge the cannon, what is the core curriculum in the first place, but to just, again, to kind of look at that inside strategy which is to integrate gender and women's studies and women of color into the core curriculum as well as to provide new curriculum. So those are what I think are probably one of the best models of the inside outside strategy co-existing or complementing each other within the overall nature of a particular type of institution such as higher education.

DS: Also a good example of how many would think of Montana as more of a backwater, and certainly we were a reflection of the national political whims of the women's movement and these other movement, when in fact we were not just a backwater, but also creators of some of the more interesting leadership initiatives, I think, around some areas as well. We need to be reminded of that.

JS: I totally agree. People are amazed when I'm talking about any of this stuff, not so much what I've done, but really the kinds of unique aspects from the women's lobby fund, to the restarted locally in the Bozeman area Battered Women's Network, and that ultimately was one of the leaders that created the statewide domestic, Montana Coalition against Domestic Violence and

the ways in which we created on the very campus the Students Against Sexual Assault, which was actually a co-ed team and always had a male and female co-chair because we knew we wanted to re-frame these issues. In the same way some of the ways Montana being a national model, and in other ways it was a national model because when I left Montana State and went on to Princeton University to direct the Women's Center there I took a lot of stuff from Montana that Princeton had never heard of, thought about and ultimately was able to help infuse those examples of what we created here in Montana with some of the Ivy League. So I found that totally appropriate to say, yes, we were more of a national model than we even realized and it wasn't until we left home, the home of Montana, that certainly I realized and started doing much more national work, how much Montana was a leader and how even in recent meetings with Sara Gould, who is the CEO and executive director of the Ms. Foundation, she remembers back to being so impressed with Montana women's model, as she always called it, and the kind of work that you all and we all did and that was just six months ago when I was talking to her back in New York. So it is very interesting to recognize that we were not only doing things that we knew we needed to do to meet our needs and the needs that we learned from and with other women who were in Montana, but that these same kinds of things that we were doing would resonate so much to other parts of the country.

So just to mention going back to some of the ways that we looked at, violence against women, we never even within the way in which we begin as a feminist service response agency, if you will, it always had a radical feminist analysis and it always looked at addressing the root causes of the problem. It never was enough to help these poor women leave their poor situation and treat them as victims. It was always about how do we both address what are the causes of domestic violence and to get rid of, we spent 75% of our time even when we were working to gather funds to build a shelter and support women and create the services and harness the social services and all the different agencies, courts, law, everything, that needed to respond to the problem. We ultimately were saying we have to re-frame the fundamental question. It's not just why does a woman not leave but why do men hurt/kill women? What is it that we can do to talk about resistance rather than being a victim? So it's not only how women are resisting the violence, but how do men resist the patriarchy that permits the violence to occur? I felt very good about in being able to contribute to that broader vision and ultimately through SASA, Students Against Sexual Assault...Mark Anderson out of Plentywood, Montana, bless his heart, amazing, amazing young man and Portia Everson, now in Olympia, the co-chairs as young undergraduate students, aged 20, back then that created SASA, always understood that men needed to speak out against the violence of their brothers. They needed to play this co-equal role so it wasn't just seen as only a quote/unquote women's issue, but it needed to be seen as a function of patriarchy that is designed to keep women in their social control. That was to me one of the greatest ways that we could then help through the educational process of a university, and of course a community, in both the SASA project and then starting the Bozeman Area Battered Women's Network with a whole bunch of other wonderful women, Emily Baron, Lucy Polk, Nora Strager(?) and on and on and on that we wanted to really reframe these issues and again create a whole different level of consciousness in our politics of starting up these new feminist institutions.

The other one I feel really proud about is the Montana Women's Radio show. As a media person and a media activist, I use media both through the Montana Women's Radio show and then as the co-founder of the Bozeman Film Festival and its president of the board for nine years to be able to again look at this incredible popular education medium that can, you know it's used. Television and radio and visual and radio are the most important tools that people use to educate themselves or be educated as active recipients of lots of what happens, lots of trash, that passes for programming or information, goddess forbid. But Anne Barnaby who was working at a commercial radio station but with a very, very popular disc jockey and I co-started this radio program and we wanted to use it on KGLT, the community radio station that was located at Montana State. This was back in 1979. We said wow, we know that media is really, really, really important and there's very few women working in, and still to this day, working in the media and we wanted our issues, our voices and our perspectives to be heard and we wanted to use it as an organizing tool. So we created this 30 minute program and decided to turn it into a feminist collective, of course. We had from 5 to 20 women every quarter working on these programs and identifying what we should do, who would be involved. We had a little community calendar, so that was one of the ways we used it as an organizing tool so we could promote everything going on, from the Women's Center, the Women's Caucus, the battered women's network, Planned Parenthood, you know, all the issues. Everyone knew that they could use this as their vehicle. We picked a theme every week. We usually incorporated a couple of songs from the women identified musicians at that time, again very important using music and cultural activism as a form of social change. So we would try to expose all the different women musicians that were inspiring us with their music. We had a women's health note that we had the Planned Parenthood develop a two-minute segment for every week on our program so we could educate women on different health issues. It was just a wonderful way to make sure what we cared about, what we felt were important, anytime anybody interesting came to town, we usually got a call, or we were usually the ones organizing it anyway. . .

DS: Was gonna say, you probably brought them to town in the first place.

JS: Well, it was enough that between all of the faculty who were really, again, supportive men and women alike, the community leaders that were supportive, men and women alike, we'd get a call that would say we're bringing in Natalie Zemon Davis and she's got a brand new film and the film festival is bringing her in here and she's going to speak to her film. Or we're bringing in all these amazing scholars or all of these folks that are working on women in farm and ranch, or good old life, or women in economics, just the gamut of really interesting women that were coming to town. We'd get a call and we'd go and set up an interview with them. We'd be able to usually if possible, promote the event or at least document it and air it. The idea is just had a multiplier effect that was out there. We ended up, I think, that show ended up running about ten years. It wasn't able to continue. We brought it into the Women's Center after we started the Women's Center so at least some institutional base, but I think it just didn't have enough once the Women's Center kind of was, dare I say de-fanged after I left, it became

much more of a social service. They cut the position; they cut the funding; they cut off a bunch of things. It's alive, but not too much so. They are doing good work, it's not about the women there. It's just about what it takes for the institution to support it and what it takes for women to keep the institution accountable.

I think that was an area in which, recognizing the media could play such an important role, we also did a History of Women in Film series at the Women's Center as well, recognizing again the power of the medium. We also did a number of lectures supported by the Montana Committee on the Humanities, we did something in 1984 where we brought in . . . we named it after Adrienne Rich and we brought in a bunch of national and international speakers to do a big lecture series on again sort of taking off on that (?) Friedman books for women and men. Trying to use that big 1984 imagery to really look at the state of gender relations and always trying, again, look at women's rights but recognizing the context of what does it mean if we don't look at patriarchy.

DS: You also bring up with that the question of partnerships in Montana with funding sources and groups such as the Committee for the Humanities, who really underwrote so much of this activity.

JS: Yes, and I want to acknowledge Margaret Kingsland because Margaret was the executive director for many years and again it's an example of where women and, I would say, pro-feminist men really used their position to make their processes, first of all, acceptable to us so we could get through a real gauntlet and kind of daunting idea that we could write grants, we could raise money, and we could be successful in achieving it. And our ideas could be interpreted to those agencies' decision makers and stakeholders and gatekeepers who frankly needed education and needed to understand and sometimes have translated the kinds of ideas, goals, and dreams that we had within those funding sources. Certainly people like Margaret Kingsland did that, Bill who was at the Montana Arts Council, now with the Montana Foundation and certainly Sidney Armstrong with the Montana Community Foundation. She was a really great example of that too. There were the whole way in which the state of Montana, the Carl Perkins money from the Office of the Superintendent of Instruction was a key funding source that federal money that came down to the states for re-allocation that just mainly were helping displaced homemaker programs and certainly Lynne Rochson(?) and the work she was doing starting out in Bozeman and creating state-wide displaced homemaker network was really really key for that CETA. CETA was a very important—Comprehensive Employment Training Act—federal money that ultimately became—forget its newest (unintelligible) next incarnation for CETA but it had another name. That gave us money to get to primarily the women who were displaced. It created a time of employment for all of our agencies to able to, again, build these very fragile (unintelligible) infrastructures of resources that weren't direct fund-raising dollars, but they were fundraising dollars. The way we cobbled together very creatively those kinds of things.

I think the other part that was really important is how empowered we got because we had to learn this fundraising, and we had to learn the politics and the relationships of the community partners, the state agencies, the way the state played into the federal, and the fact that much of our work was regional between the national and the Northwest Women's (unintelligible) Association and lots of other places.

DS: While you take a break, I'm gonna flip this over here.

The way you talk about these I think is so important because often what's missed in the ways that we have looked at the (?) histories is that we don't connect the—in an articulate way that you do—the events and their interpretations but also connecting them to these multiple layers of interaction.

JS: Speaking of connection, I want to say a little bit about the local global area because it is my passion and it really did start in Bozeman, MT. It started in a couple of ways. It started from working within a broader social justice movement always wanting to take women at the center but recognizing that we were a part of the national and international women's movement that was being built. While all things are local, to be effective we can't do them outside the context in which the conditions that impact women and the conditions that impact racial and economic justice are happening. I remember when I moved to Bozeman, moved to Montana in 1977, it was only two years after the first International Women's Day, not Women's Year, the events had just happened in both Houston and in Mexico City, and the fact that I first became aware of the feminist backlash that was going on because Montana had held its own international women's year hearings or testimony or something. It was before I was here...

DS: State conference...

JS: State conference here. I think there was...

DS: Delegates (unintelligible)

JS: That's when I was then hearing about this pretty significant backlash that was rising from different quarters and I think being in part manipulated by Phyllis Schafley and (?), anti-women's movement and anti-ERA work that she was leading. And the fact that clearly some women were in agreement with this, but I think it was being manipulated and mobilized by the kinds of work that she was doing. Ultimately what we began to learn in the early eighties about to be a larger right-wing movement and how they were always linked no matter how they looked like the Montana militia, anti-gay, religious right, whatever, right-to-life. All those different pieces, how they ultimately were linked to an anti-woman agenda, and that it wasn't always clear even to the people that were working on the right-wing as we moved in from the late seventies into the early eighties that it really ultimately was grounded with an anti-woman connection at its heart. I think that's even been lost today, and I just want to lift that back up for whomever to really refocus on that because it's also why the whole area that I haven't even

touched on which is reproductive rights which is near and dear to my heart ultimately the politics of sexuality has been for me a guiding theme around this work and I will come back to (unintelligible) in just a sec.

The politics of sexuality for me always were linked to women's ultimate self-determination, and if we could not determine our destiny from either the ability to walk alone at night, to live without fear from any source that uses violence as a threat, to be entrapped into a pregnancy that we didn't want, to be afraid of our family members or their friends from a childhood sexual abuse/incest standpoint, to not be able to love who we wish depending on what our sexuality is about, and to not have the right to choose to have children and have the adequate social support for them within a social justice framework, that is for me where the politics of sexuality have come together in my analysis as the most fundamental way to think about the duration of women and the duration of humankind. So as I got more involved internationally, particularly with Latin-American women, that was really—and the women that were working in Australia and New Zealand around the anti-nuclear and then the nuclear (unintelligible) movement of the South Pacific—that is where I learned that a broader analysis of women's rights beyond Agdamen(?) and Stern or yet our legal right was not enough.

I frame it in that politics of sexuality to show those connections; but ultimately, if feminism doesn't have a social justice agenda, we will not liberate women. We will not help (unintelligible) and liberate ourselves, and that is what I learned from Latin-America and that's why I feel so impassioned about both wanting to share that news because of the ethnocentricity of our own U. S. women's movements here in the United States because the United States is so ethnocentric. The women's movement simply, "We are a product of our culture. We are a product of our education at large." We tend to ignore and diminish anybody else that isn't of this country because of course we are the world. (laughs)

The great privilege I had was in my last years in Montana, I was able to get more involved in a Central America peace group and learn much more about what the liberation movement in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Panama and Honduras and then into the Caribbean with Cuba and Jamaica and other countries, Puerto Rico and Mexico, were all doing around how women who named themselves as feminists, they are feminists, how they define feminism and how they define what the conditions for their religion needed to be. It was never was legal rights alone. It always combined the need for the material conditions in which those rights to become real needed to be as part and parcel to a women's movement agenda. So I was able to travel to Mexico, ultimately able to become very involved in the solidarity movement in Nicaragua as soon as I left Montana. But it was always what I was working with in the Central American peace group in Bozeman that Charles Caughlin and Mark Anderson and Charles Caughlin's wife. I hate to say it that way; I won't say because it's probably his ex-wife. I'll say her name instead of his current wife. Anyway, what they were doing to politics and some of the other folks what they were doing to help us understand what Ronald Reagan's foreign policy was doing. Not only what his policy was doing to us domestically which we were so painfully aware of from the early eighties and beyond, but ultimately what it was doing internationally and how that impacted on

poor people around the world but also particularly poorest of the poor and that (unintelligible) families. So they really taught me that I needed to both enlarge my own thinking and my own analysis around what would constitute an agenda for women's liberation and human liberation, but that if we didn't incorporate what we were doing to the U. S. policy—what was happening in the U. S. policy with the level of seventy-five percent with all of our resources going to the military for example and of course that military was being used to dominate, hold into submission, the peoples of the world, peoples of the developing world, that if I'm about women's liberation and about feminist politics in my life then I can't contain it to Bozeman or to the United States, but because of the United States I have to be a part of that world.

So I was able to negotiate a sabbatical for a semester in New Zealand that the last year in Bozeman, my last year in Bozeman, in 1987. At that point my objective was to go there and to study women's leadership and the anti-nuclear movement because I had gotten very involved in the anti-nuclear movement and the peace movement as part and parcel of what we're talking about within Montana and within Bozeman. All again stemming out of those early years of the anti-nuclear movement and the environmental movement. But going to New Zealand and the meeting with all kinds of anti-nuclears and all kinds of women working throughout the anti-racist movements that were going on there, the way in which the anti-racist movements in New Zealand were very equivalent with the Maori indigenous peoples to what a lot of us were trying to address in terms of looking at Native American issues what (unintelligible) modeled for us so well in doing work with Native American education here and the anti-racist work that you've always incorporated into the feminist agenda. And to also see what women were doing in an international policy for peace and justice using different creeds and different ways to create the resistance that was going on led by New Zealand in the (unintelligible) Pacific to all of the anti-nuclear colonization strategies in both the United States and France, in particular we're doing...

DS: Refusing to allow...

JS: Any ship carrying nuclear weapon or having any nuclear capacity at all, they refused to allow them in to dock in their harbor. Of course the U. S. was (unintelligible) our government was punishing them and threatening them and all of those things. So I really...That was...That just sort of cemented my internationalism. Once I left there and realized how important and how groundbreaking for leadership of women in some of these other places were in Latin America and in...

DS: New Zealand was the very first country in the world to give women the vote.

JS: To have the vote, exactly. It was no accident, no coincidence.

DS: You made quite a few connections coming in from Australia, who was the woman...?

JS: Oh, the woman...You're not thinking of the woman from New Zealand who—Marilyn Waring?

DS: Marilyn Waring.

JS: Marilyn Waring who wrote some (unintelligible) on economics, the one that had the word count in the title...

DS: She came in here several times.

JS: Definitely. There was always a very interesting New Zealand-Montana connection because there's so many parallels both culturally and geographically to economies and to our two political landscapes. But she was a legislator, very young woman, elected to the Parliament and did some amazing things for women's rights, commercial justice and then again this whole way of having women count, particularly having women's work count. She was one of the precursors to the kind of wages for housework in her national movement that are going on, particularly very prominent in Beijing where I had a chance to participate. Again, a part of the way in which women in other countries have so closely linked economic justice to a women's rights agenda. That was one of her many contributions, and her whole goal was to get of course more women in leadership (unintelligible) in Parliament as well.

DS: You also went to the International Women's Conference in Beijing?

JS: Yes.

DS: How did that expand your perspective.

JS: (laughs) Well, it was like coming home. It was one of these things where I knew it was important; I thought about my role being that, "Oh my gosh, it was so far, so expensive, so out-of-touch." Having now done the work which I started in Princeton, to start a group called the Armadas(?) and we began organizing women's delegation to Nicaragua and creating a sister-women's kind of relationship between the Women's Center of our sister city, Princeton-Granada and the Princeton University's Women's Center and solidarity group and the Women's Center of Granada, and then from there starting, organizing, women's delegations to Cuba in 1990, I was so internationalized at that point particularly with those parts of the world that when Beijing came along in 1995 I thought, "I really should go to Beijing. I'm doing this international work. I understand the value of local, global movement building. I should really try to go." Another young woman who I was working with at the (unintelligible) at the time with back in New York really said, "We should go." She pushed me and was the real drive of, "Okay, we should do it." I'd been working on a project called the Women in Film...Women's Resistance to Violence Against Women and Girls in Film...What it was is a feminist literacy project which took film clips of Hollywood, independent and international films and uses those to—in a workshop, interactive fashion...Excuse me while I take a sip of water. Uses that to help people,

primarily women, to talk about violence against women and girls in a way that they don't do in other formats. In other words, to organize the discussion about violence against women with a few exceptions, nobody wants to show up. Either it's too painful, nobody wants to out themselves and they presume they will be outted if they're showing up for this, or for a lot of other cultural reasons. So advertising this as "Come to a discussion about film clips" because we're all film fanatics and then we can talk about this in a more displaced way because we're looking at images on a screen to say, "Oh in *The Color Purple* or in *Fried Green Tomatoes* or *Thelma and Louise*."

DS: And what those images say about the cultural context of it versus the personal experience.

JS: Exactly because the whole point of the workshop is to talk about what helps and hinders women's resistance to violence. When you talk about women's resistance, that's when you already shifted that paradigm. So we're not again talking about those poor victims but what is it that either prevents women from resisting or facilitates our resistance. It radicalizes the whole thing and it ultimately, I've found in doing this for faculty development seminars to juvenile detention facilities to the usual places that you would find this kind of workshop, high schools and colleges and women's conferences and all that stuff, what I've found is that it shifts the discussion from a privatized problem to a public health problem and a social problem as you're saying. So it's (unintelligible).

So anyway I've been doing this several other women, another woman named Jennifer Manlowe who's a women's studies professor back east. We've been doing this all over the place, singularly, together, training other women to do it etc., and we've got our film class and now we take on two different dimensions. So I proposed to do this at Beijing, and ultimately got some funding from the Sister Fund and a couple of private donations for she and I, young Lydia and I, a young Latina woman, to go to Beijing with our way paid to do this workshop. We go to Beijing, and for me, Beijing was so significant because I just felt like I had come home, politically, spiritually, women-loving relationship-wise. It was, "Of course we're working globally. Of course women are doing all kinds of creative things to advance their rights and their agenda. Of course the kind of creativity of the..." primarily I was involved in the NGO conference, although one of my organizations, International League of Peace and Freedom, is an official NGO and had delivered a status and was involved in the official U. N. [United Nations] conference. But I really didn't want to spend a lot of my time in those kind of meetings—I'm glad others did—but I wanted to be where the action was and involved in the peace tent and the lesbian tent and the Cuba-solidarity work that was being done and organizing.

Meanwhile we presented our workshop, it was pouring rain. It rained half the time; it was muddy half the time. All those tales are true but who cares. Forty-thousand women from around the world, and it's exciting, amazing, fabulous and stimulating, and the biggest turn-on you could ever imagine to just see what these women are doing and how they're doing it. So we do this workshop, pouring rain, and we're in a room with about a hundred, capacity for about a hundred women, and we have women, two-hundred-fifty women show up. They're

hanging out the windows looking in. They're dripping wet from everybody's still wearing their rain jackets. We have one television monitor for everyone to see. We've got all the language challenges, of course, because we don't have official translators for workshops, only the planning sessions had that, multiple translation (unintelligible). So it was very challenging and we just...And we had made copies of our own videotape in the different systems of different video technologies so we came with PAL and Beta and VHS. So we were able to give those to women who wanted them along with our worksheet. We ended up, we hope, having this big multiplier effect and so women came up to us from Iran and from Greece and from Europe and from Latin America and from Asia who all wanted copies of our workshop. It translated so well and of course we incorporated international film, always do. But we still pretty much had about half of it from the U. S. because we dominate the media industry. It was just great to see how they picked up on it, and how all of these women who were working on issues of sexual violence in their countries thought this could be an amazing tool.

Here's the piece that was most important about Beijing. There's two pieces, and I've actually written about this. One is the fact that the way in which the women's movement in the United States has been denied and criticized as being a white middle class U. S. based movement only is totally shattered by Beijing. It had been somewhat shattered by Nairobi but I think by Beijing...Nairobi Conference in 1995, but Beijing was over forty-thousand women and plenty of other women that were turned away. The vast majority of women from the so-called Third World of the south, the U. S. did not dominate this conference, white women did not dominate this conference, middle-class women did not dominate this conference. A strong presence of women, again, from all of these developing, southern countries said, "There is a huge international women's movement." In fact the way in which sometimes race and class play out in this country around the women's movement also I think allowed the other women of color from this country to go and recognize the level to which women of other colors and cultures are organizing for a feminist agenda around the world. I think it gave women of color in this country even more permission because I work in Seattle with a women-of-color organization with my Cuba work there (unintelligible) Cuba. It even gave them more permission to say, "We are embracing the Beijing platform for action. This is our agenda, and we see that our sisters are working around the world for a women's rights agenda that includes a social justice vision." So that was important.

The second thing was the media and how the media coverage or lack thereof was absolutely horrifying and why we must reclaim the media as feminine. I, and my mother...my mother generously clipped everything that came out in the mainstream press while I was there, and I went back and I analyzed the media when I got home. There were only two things the media reported. The media reported all the horrible muddy conditions and how incompetent the Chinese were and the only reason the Chinese got this conference is that it really didn't mean much because they couldn't get the real conferences or the real Olympics or whatever else they supposedly wanted so they did just this really incredibly crappy job according to the media—I'm not saying this—on the Women's Conference. I personally disagreed with that assessment anyway, but it was just recorded in such a white middle-class privileged country way of, "Oh my

God we had to walk over the mud on these boards. All of the bathrooms..." You go to any event and you're going to these little portable bathroom things anyway (unintelligible) "Hello, don't talk to me about bathrooms." Yet it was so expected somehow we were going have these pristine flush toilets or whatever at a conference for forty-thousand women. Again, the privilege of our amassing two-thirds of the world's resources in this country is astonishing to me, and the only other thing I focused on was (unintelligible). The number and kinds of women, our agenda, the platform, the analysis, what women had to offer, what women were doing around the world was practically lost except by all of those that came back and wrote about it in our own limited media. Of course I gave lots of presentations and read reports back.

DS: It was the first of the international conferences where we had such a significant Montana contingent. Over twenty women from all over Montana went, and following it and so many of them were for better women's programs (unintelligible) all kinds of different aspects of the state. When they came back there was a very organized effort to do a series of education programs all over the state where people went and packed in to here what had happened. It was actually the first time I had seen that happen as a result (unintelligible). It was really quite astonishing and it had such a significant impact on the feminist community as a large I think really felt and participated in Beijing both from watching them trying to listen to it via more alternative media and the Eastern media. But those who returned across the state and held these different programs. Women turned out to hear what had happened and wanted materials and wanted to talk about it. It really did...That was our little conference, and I think it was quite unique.

JS: I do too, and you've really pointed out probably from the standpoint of the United States the most important impact that it had is that it helped mobilize our (unintelligible). I think that was a huge wake-up call to the U. S.-based feminists that hadn't incorporated more international realities in their work, again for all the culture reasons we talked about before. It was a huge, huge thing for women in this country, and particularly toiling in the fields of women's movement and women's rights agenda, to recognize how much our sisters were doing and under the limited conditions that they are doing them again from other parts of the world and that we aren't alone and we (unintelligible).

DS: It is important for people to raise money and send people into (unintelligible)...

JS: All those reports back were just the same all over the country. It was really, really exciting to see that level of interest. The fact that thank the goddess, there had been an entire movement over alternative feminist media, and over the media that had grown up along with the Internet and the electronic sources that we actually had an alternative to the commercial media which wasn't recording us or recording us in these horribly inaccurate ways and limited ways. So we at least could control some of the information ourselves, absolutely.

DS: Which is probably why the Internet and all created an international feminist connection in ways that...I mean, it's amazing that prior to the Internet international technology

(unintelligible) how much international activity went on, and that is always in many ways been international movement acting locally. But the energy that people have put into trying to be connected to other experience of women and recognize the commonalities and the differences has always been part of the movement.

JS: You'll allow me to just be a little weird about my biggest organizational commitment which is the Women's International for Peace and Freedom, and how they ultimately crossed the ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, to try to stop World War 1...

DS: Our own Montana Jeannette Rankin.

JS: Jeannette Rankin absolutely being the lead and the fact that she recognized the international implications from the beginning coming from Montana, both times, against war is truly another place that Montana is again a leader in women's rights and women using their power, their rights to be able to affect a much broader social agenda, social justice agenda, and a peace agenda for the world. In fact, I want to let you know that I'm working with a woman who is another person I'm to refer to you, if this is okay. But I want you to meet this woman to highlight this piece on Jeannette Rankin. This woman, Judith Ehrlich, is a filmmaker. I do a lot of work with filmmakers as you can tell. She just produced an amazing film called *The Good War*. It was on PBS, and it was aired, amazingly enough, in January of this year, and it was about the men who resisted fighting World War 2. She and Rick Flores-Tejada who made the film about Cesar Chavez, both incredible prominent filmmakers for social justice education, made *The Good War*. Now she is in the middle of starting a film project that is looking at Jeannette Rankin and Barbara Lee, so I've told her all about you and I will be sending you her stuff as well.

DS: I think one of things that has always been interesting about Montana, as much as most Americans think Montanans are disconnected from our history, in some ways and kind of unique way many Montanans live in their history. People have commented particularly around Rankin that people bring that history with them and are somewhat more conscious of it, and I think within the feminist movement both because Freida and Belle, the Fligelman sisters here were a living part of our early feminist experience here and that consciousness of Rankin and some people having known here were still very active is that some of that history has always informed in the present our contemporary work in a way that's more connected than just...

JS: Right. I think that's the way in which I've felt and want to honor the notion of our fore-mothers always being a part of the way that you have always incorporated that into the work of the women's lobby. There's been a real intentionality that it's not just an afterthought but it's really to say that we recognize that Montana is a special place (unintelligible) Alaska (unintelligible). But it truly is the take that I think we have recognized as feminists in Montana doing this work that we are following in the footsteps of Jeannette Rankin and Belle and (unintelligible). But we are following the footsteps of these amazing women who pioneered,

the verb not the noun, so many movements for people's liberation and our liberation as women that I think there's always been a very conscious intentionality to that.

DS: Just something that's very true in the Native American...is that constant living in the continuity of time....

JS: Thank you. You just read my mind. We are standing on the shoulders of, and we are the seventh generation (unintelligible)...

DS: That's why I think this project is important having these tapes and interviews. We are really speaking to the seventh generation, and two women fifty and one hundred years from now may want to look at this movement and have it inform their work which is why I think it's so important to give people we're interviewing the chance to speak to people who are not yet born. What is it that we want them to know in the course of this? What is it they need to know more about what we have done and what we need to do and who we are and who we hope they will be?

JS: I would say looking ahead (unintelligible) closing, looking ahead I think our challenges right now are, today in 2002, are four-fold. What you and I have been talking about off and on and that is young women. How do we be allies to the young women who do things, many times, very differently. (laughs)

DS: As I'm sure we've always done (unintelligible) women above who are older than us.

JS: Exactly. How do we make the space in terms of leadership, how do we honor the different strategies and analyses that we may or may not have? How do we better mentor? I'm really thinking a lot about that in my mid-life period, which is always, as you know, I really want to figure out how I can do what I can contribute to and how do I make space and bring in and create a very multi-generational leadership structure in the work I do and how do I get the hell out of the way and allow the women that are in their twenties and the most part maybe some teens to create what they need.

I think the other challenge that is the same type of challenge is for (unintelligible). Again how do we get the hell out of the way, how do you support their efforts, how do we create again leadership structures and movement building structures that give them the space and the resources to define the issues and frankly do the work? In both cases the ageist work of not respecting youth and this racist work of removing our white privilege to really build a true diverse women's movement and liberation movements for all.

The globalization of our work is and always needs to be there. We're living in a globalized world. You're resisting a globalized, capitalist economy. I just think if we don't figure that out in a way that is intentional, just as we want to honor our fore-mothers, if we don't figure out the local global connection, there will be perhaps always getting some gain or at least resisting the

dismantling on the backs of our sisters in other parts of the world if we're not figuring out how to build a way to transform the national priorities and policy of globally (unintelligible) domestically.

Then finally, we have to look at nine-one-one as not only the...the September 11th 2001 events, not only as a hideous assault on civil liberties and the build-up of militarism and the ultimate domination of the world for all of that that's not enormous enough; but I think it's the solidification of masculinity and patriarchy. Even if they named liberation of the Afghan women as part of their agenda. As the Women of Color Resource Center Linda Burnham says, "The Pentagon will never liberate women. The Pentagon will never be the liberator of women here or anywhere in the world. Only women are going to liberate women themselves." Ultimately I think what happens with militarism—and now we are living domestically under siege with militarism and its being of course tied to the domination of the world—militarism at its heart is about the glorification of all that is linking masculinization to violence. This could not be the most oppressive fact for women and anybody who chooses not to be a man in a way that's linked to domination of others and the glorification of violence.

We, as feminists in this time, have to figure out how to make sure that our analysis of strategies and to incorporate that into understanding. As I like to say, this is no longer your mama's feminism; and we have to be extremely real, we have to be extremely in the foresight, and we have to really recognize what those challenges mean. We have to figure out how to have fun and how to keep Emma Goldman in our hearts and minds and say, "I can't dance but I want to be a part of your revolution," then if we can't figure out having fun while doing these very serious important things...

DS: Say something about that because we talked about all these serious and heavy topics along those main events someone in the future is going to think, "My God did these people ever have fun or have lives or whatever," so what do you think is fun about all this? What do you do for fun?

JS: What's fun? I think in a broader sense what I've always appreciated about Montana women feminism organizing, there has always been a community building component to everything that we have done. Always been about creating a community of women, about deepening community, about relationship and community, and for me that's really fun. It means that I feel supported, I have women at my back and at my front, that we laugh as much as we cry, we could really work within the personal as political which builds intimacy and relationships, and build for community. So that's fun for me; that is very supportive...

DS: (unintelligible) in such odd ways.

JS: Everything was a potluck, everything was a dinner, a wine and cheese party...

DS: Or float...

JS: (unintelligible) floats, the chocolate and dessert party. The women's clothing exchanges got us for (unintelligible). I remember starting out on Clancy which all these women brought all of our clothes that we couldn't fit into anymore or we didn't wear anymore or for whatever reason, and we exchanged them all the while having dessert and champagne and the remaining clothes were given to the battered women's shelters. That was just really very minor example. The Women's Center—what we started—was a pasta extravaganza and that was our annual fundraising event. Women and men cooked up amazing amounts of pasta. We fed over three hundred people at these dinners. We outgrew houses, we outgrew other concert facilities, and we had to go to bigger and bigger places. We had the conviviality, we had the eating, we had political satire, we had humor. We had singing and music and acting and all those kind of things. I think even in every type of way we would always try to combine one type of fun, community-building, relationship building kind of activity and a lot of it revolved around food. A lot of it revolved around play and being with people.

DS: (laughs) The camping trips.

JS: The camping trips right.

DS: I remember several meetings at your house all in the hot tub or people would come and they would stay with each other. It was much more 19th century than it is now.

JS: Exactly, I would never imagine staying in a hotel. People back in...I think I probably stayed, other than those state-wide domestic violence, displaced domestic homemaker meetings that Lynn Roffeson always organized that were always held either at Chico or up at the...

DS: Choteau Hot Springs?

JS: the hot springs places, other than that you always stayed at people's houses. It would just a be a foreign concept to stay in a hotel. Maybe if it was attached to a major conference and you needed to do that. Even then you stayed at people's houses, and every house became an activist B&B kind of thing, a feminist B&B.

DS: And the long driving trips to get there, which we were so famous with the National Women's Studies Association where we were loading up several carloads of women and driving to San Francisco and back.

JS: Exactly and don't forget Hers West. I'm just remembering Hers West because I'm thinking of driving to Salt Lake City or other...Denver, Colorado. We always drove; we couldn't afford to fly. It was way before planes go deregulated and nobody had that kind of money we had to pile up in the car. So it was the process of getting there and being there. Then you always looked for the women's bars at night if you wanted to go dancing and again, just built in that kind of fun energy.

DS: Driving down the road singing.

JS: Exactly. I remember those Montana women's gatherings that brought in Annie Gage who was a feminist comedian and Robin Tyler and a lot of the early (unintelligible) women. Comedians all year, of course all the music so I always used what is more formally called now, cultural activism as the method by which we wanted to both combine the political education—its role as a tool for organizing to link it to something concrete, some action that people could take away—with a wonderful time. That's why so many of us did constant promotion, we did theater, we did photography. All of us did movies. We combined food and music and humor. All of those things work together, and it's sort of what separated us from the left whether those of us are doing this would consider ourselves left or social (unintelligible) or whatever. It is always a very different way in which the community building, the cultural activism for the most part and the relationships, both on a personal, political as well as just needing to have a good enough relationship to be able to go and ask each other for (unintelligible) bartering and exchange of goods and services that built the institutions that maybe survive today and others lasted a good ten, fifteen, twenty years.

DS: They lasted for the ten weeks we needed them to last for in the year.

The creation of many of those organizations (unintelligible) back and forth are really interesting when you think about it, how trying to explain to people the very difficult concept of these networks of individuals and organizations in the state (unintelligible) and how they actually functioned.

JS: It's one of my continuing frustrations that I'm trying to mellow out as I get older about people who are (unintelligible). People who build organizations for their (unintelligible) advisement or a kind of competitive hierarchy that I'm this or that—of course none of these will be named. (laughs) Ultimately the exceptions that did not understand that we have this common thread this common ground, that if we don't support each other and frankly we don't build a movement, we can't talk about movement building if you're building an individualized single organization (unintelligible). That isn't going to work. So while we might call them networks or barter-exchanges whatever, in terms of what we sort of remember them as and still use them for, honestly we were doing (unintelligible), and I think we need to claim that as our political understanding and as our impact in what we did because partly it was for survival. You did not do anything by yourself, a rural, isolated state and region. I never thought about doing anything by...even by the local community standard. Even if you network across your community, you were still thinking about networking across other communities and what is going to be the state-wide impact on the legislation of public policy or resources or rallies or civil disobedience or whatever your particular strategy was at that time. You always thought about it from a multi-faceted sort of way, and the fact that we had to do it from our political and geographic terrain and we wanted to do it as women who like to do things in relationship for the most part is why we were so successful.

DS: The isolation people think of in the state, which I don't always view us as isolated, also created both a need to do that but also the desire to do that, to break out of where you were.

The other aspect of this...I think that you're somewhat uniquely qualified to talk about although I intend to interview Lucy Dayton and some of the others, the founders of this and what parts they played that you have the role of working for foundations that fund this work and that funded work in Montana. Can you briefly address that because it's often invisible to people when they look at the resistance? These are actual partners in the creation of these movements.

JS: For those that are working within the progressive philanthropy and the women's philanthropy, feminist philanthropy movement, I think there's been a desire to both recognize the way in which it's not this anonymous person with their money although some people do do that, prefer to be anonymous about how they share their resources that way. Ultimately the goal of some of the institutions like the funding exchange and a territory resource and my (unintelligible) and some of the other....

DS: Actually I'm going to stop this tape and put that in and just talk for even if it takes a half an hour to do it because I think that is a critical factor and to make visible particularly ATR as a regional funder (unintelligible) funder for women's groups. We talked briefly about Committee for the Humanities which was such an important role as well as the federal and state government of these things but the rest were intentional progressive funding community that had an impact on us.

[End of Tape 1]

[Tape 2]

JS: Is it going?

DS: Oh yes, sorry.

JS: (laughs)

DS: Because you've held the position both (unintelligible).

JS: What I've done—and actually still forever will be raising money and trying to help share it—is I worked first through the Funding Exchange which is a national progressive foundation and a network of community-based foundations located in thirteen parts of the country. Unfortunately none of them in Montana...

DS: Based in New York.

JS:...but based in New York City, exactly and some of the other places are the Haymarket People's Fund in New England, Hawai'i People's Fund, Chinook in Denver...

DS: Portland.

JS: Portland with the McKenzie River Gathering, and on and on. There's that, and in that role I was both a program officer working directly with organizations and we're the sort of lead partner in trying to reduce the inherent levels of power that do exist between those who have the money and those who are trying to get the money. That is there psychologically; that is there in actual, real structure. Our role isn't to try to be that rich, and so our role is to try to keep abreast of what the issues are, what the movements are doing, what the movements are meetings, the trends, the impacts that affect the existing work. In the case of donors in which that was my primary role, it was a lot of donor education to help them understand why funding for Montana was important, why funding social movements in the rural Northwest was important. Why, as we talked about earlier, the work that Montana was doing in particular was both a harbinger of what was to come and would be useful for many parts of the county, but how we were actually national (?) for many of the innovations and issues that were lifted up and addressed.

That was a key role, and frankly it was why the Funding Exchange hired me was because I had the Montana and the Northwest background. It wasn't (unintelligible) university I can tell you that. (laughs) So I felt a particular responsibility working at a national level to make sure that I kept in touch with what was going on in this part of the world, this part of the country and that I could share what I knew not only from working at the Funding Exchange but what I began to learn with all kinds of other foundations, national funders, what they would be able to do to both share that with my colleagues in the progressive philanthropy world and the women's

philanthropy world but also to share that within grassroots people like yourself that were on the ground to say, "These are some initiatives going on or this appears to be...They're fickle and they're only going to have funding for three years," or whatever I could do to be that kind of informational bridge. And to help translate some of the work that was being done here. Like, "How come they're so white?" Well because there are ninety-seven percent of the population is white in Montana. You're not going to see the kind of environment that the Funding Exchange resembled had on looking at issues or people of color as far as participation and the leadership of an organization when in fact you got both the whole cultural way the Native Americans in their own nations choose to do the work and the way in which racism and building an anti-racist movement plays out in the places Montana resembles.

The other thing that I was able to do is to leverage the role that I played at the Funding Exchange and to work with other funders nationally and regionally to put on a Montana funder's conference. I organized a two day conference in the summer of 1996, Resources for the Rockies we called it. That was to help bring together on the first day, a hundred activists from across the state to meet together to do their own movement building, across constituencies and across issues. I hired some wonderful people, Nancy Owens, Alec Sweeney and Mary Lukin to do all of the groundwork, to identify the issues, structure the conference, create the issues areas, identify the constituencies, the key organizations. They ran it from that point. My role was to get the funders there. We then could use our leverage as funders to get all these other people to come together who sometimes have historic difference or fall into that single issue...sorry, fall into that "I'm gonna do my own organization and not work with other," kind of syndrome, and other scarcely mentality issues that keep people separate. We got them together and then in the meantime I organized the funder's tour. The funder's tour actually started at the conference and the funder's tour brought together about ten or twelve (laughs) all women funders from grantmakers and donors. So they grantmakers, reader of the National Network of Grantmakers was there, the executive director, individual grantmakers, therefore individual grantmakers...sorry, individual donors were there and then grantmakers from Needmor [Fund], of course the Funding Exchange, Seventh Generation Fund...

DS: HAR(?).

JS: HAR, thank you. I think those were the key players that were there in person. Then we had a number send all of their literature out so we had Public Welfare [Public Welfare Foundation] and a variety of other funders that were supporting social justice organized on a national level and lots of other resources that we could bring.

Then the second day...So the first day was the organizers with the social justice organizers educating the funders and each other in the process of the way that the conference was structure and coming up with an agenda of meetings to communicate the funder nationally about what Montana and the Rockies needed.

The second day was then the funders educating the participants. So we had a large panel-discussion in the morning that talked about how to access the resources and what the state of progressive philanthropy was like and all of that. Then in the afternoon we held a bunch of workshops based on getting specific funding for specific kinds of organizing. I remember I did one on media-arts culture and how to get funding for that. Other people did it on different issue areas, and those were all done by the funders. Ultimately we came up with a written report that was published in the National Network of Grantmakers newsletter; and while we never were able to publish that report, it did influence A Territory Resource when I became the executive director there. That was frankly one of the reasons they wanted me to be there because I had these connections nationally, I had kept them up regionally and had my own Montana activism that grounded me. So I spent almost a year as the executive director there, left for a variety of reasons...

DS: (unintelligible) located out in Seattle and served this region in progressive funding.

JS: Thank you, right.

DS: And has for twenty-some years.

JS: Close to twenty-five years, very important. Basically has the same kind of funding mission and guidelines as the Funding Exchange and a number of folks which is to look at the root causes of social problems and ultimately work to build people's movements that will address them, will both identify and address them. Always looks at funding structural change, never social services alone, never individual kinds of...But it's always about building organizations and movement.

In the capacity of working with ATR [A Territory Resource]—and I still remain active as a member of ATR—the area that ATR began to increase its work was to begin to make inroads to the Montana donors to build the Montana leadership and to increase the number of members in ATR. That was one of the contributions I feel really good about in looking at both Montana and Idaho, never did get to Wyoming, but ATR is pretty much based in the Puget Sound area. Most of its members, most of its grantees, most of its major donors live in that part of the region, so it's always supported and it's been a crucial partner to Montana organizing. But it's been a continuing challenge to educate the rest of the members, the staff is always out of Seattle pretty much. I think that remains its current challenge is how does the understanding. Now they did just have a meeting here in Montana, and they had a report back in Seattle which I wasn't able to go to, but...

DS: (unintelligible) is on the board.

JS: So is Lucy Dayton.

DS: Lucy Dayton served as the...

JS: President.

DS: President or co-chair whatever you call it...

JS: Co-chair of the board.

DS:...for a while. I think those connections (unintelligible) really strongly. You've been going back to the early stages when my earliest memories of doing this work were when ATR first started with its first or second director, giving them names and trying to do some connections of people here who were impressive funders and individuals. It's been a long connection.

JS: It has been, and Carol Pencke, the previous executive director did an amazing job. We also have had very good relations in Montana Community Foundation, began building relations with the Women's Foundation of Montana with the idea that again we want to grow a pot because between progressive philanthropy in general, between all of philanthropy in general it only is about three percent of who gives in the first place. Progressive philanthropy is a tiny blip on that landscape, and ultimately what they are funding in Montana is, you can barely find it.

DS: And since there are so few foundations...Well, there are more foundations now, but they're not progressive funders so it's much more limited here (unintelligible).

JS: No, and tax shelters, and I think the real challenge is going to be to really hone the individual donors and particularly the individual donors that have wealth and living in the state part time is a key segment, and increasing some level of corporate contributions given the fact that most of them aren't paying taxes.

DS: I think that is one of the changes as you look at these feminist organizations and progressive organizations is how they've emerged is that they have (unintelligible) light on individual, small contributions for the most part, which in this state if you've got a few hundred or a thousand you're a rip-roaring success.

JS: Exactly.

DS: As a base of people, but that contribution cannot sustain the most minimal organization in this state if it's gonna have any staffing. (unintelligible) to work successfully in this state, particularly if you're trying to do any regional state-wide is just not sustainable with an organization having one staff or no staff or as many of them have that are part-time. So that needing to think about the funding resources and to not just have ATR which has really fairly small grants, often five, ten, if you're lucky three-year grant \$25,000 which is very significant. The impacts of the September 11 event now also run on foundations and their resources and their ability to give; it's put a huge drain on these organizations. So very few of them in mind, perceptions still have done the kind of branching out to larger...I mean everyone has a few

handfuls of their favorite donors, a thousand bucks or something. But in terms of contact with corporate it's because Montana has (unintelligible) corporations so it's difficult when you look at the history of the women's movement and for us the organizations of the state, how they do manage to survive and often figure out just how to make do.

JS: We've got to also look at the fact that the federal and state budgets have been shrinking intentionally by the anti-government forces so the kinds of million-dollar grants that were funding the cutting-edge work either funneled through Carl Perkins or through the Curriculum Transformation Projects and a variety of other areas that could come out of education or coming currently out of science, interestingly enough, science and engineering.

DS: Domestic violence is quite well-funded.

JS: Through the Justice Department right? (unintelligible) But of course what has happened in all of these cases is that part of where the other challenge is is that even if there are some few pots of money left, they are not funding the kinds of progressive work as we have defined earlier that's going to ultimately work for group causes.

DS: Or even systemic work often.

JS: That's what I mean. Anybody that's looking at changing the system and pointing to the structural change aren't likely to even get a dollar of that thing. I know that's one of the areas as we look at another challenge is how the institutions that have been created and are still surviving in some form such as the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault programs and the Displaced Homemaker programs to name a few, those were all feminist action, social change projects that on the one hand were meeting the immediate needs of those who they were designed to serve, and at that same time designed to ultimately put themselves out of business if we could actually stem the root causes so we didn't have—ideally down the road centuries from now—we wouldn't have these problems because of the other parts of work that those organizations were set up to address. Well, now we've seen the co-optation of many of those organizations by a variety of reasons and a variety of forces that ultimately mean that they are just another slog of putting the band-aid on the appendix that's bursting by serving the victim but not really keeping her, not moving from victimhood to survivor to agent of her own liberation. Ultimately those folks that are now taking the money, getting the money, I'm happy they've got something there, but I think ultimately it's a really big conundrum for us to either think about do we either want to reclaim these organizations and move them back to having some sort of a political agenda within but how to do that in a way that can still access some of the resources and who's got the energy for it and who's got the interest to actually lead that or some other strategy.

Interestingly enough...

DS: In the domestic violence organizations we've at least retained an identity as a women's group; although I think it's with many of their actions been taken over in some cases churches, in some cases groups that have no political agenda—in most cases no political agenda at all. Some of the core still does, but within the economic area and displaced homemakers that no longer exists at all and has been almost totally submerged within the ideas of either economic development, corporations or human resource development councils. That focus on women specifically is not only gone, but certainly any building of a base or a movement or a consciousness about women or an analysis is not there. It's become getting women jobs straight up kind of a program...

JS: And not liberation of gender, either for the women or for the structures that bind us. Sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off.

DS: And what that means, I think, is the lack...You can't have movements without some kind of institutionalization, some sort of...You got to be able to find it to find it, the phone book...Charlotte Butts used to say, "Look up women in the phone book and what do you find." It becomes very difficult as these whole arenas of feminist activity become submerged within the mainstream and lose all identity.

JS: It's interesting because Andrea Smith who started INCITE!, the violence against women of color, grew out of a conference that she and Angela Davis organized about three years ago in Berkeley has now been started specifically because the original analysis didn't incorporate how violence impacted women of color to the degree that was needed they felt, and I agree with. Secondly, the fact that—

[Telephone rings; break in audio]

DS: So?

JS: I was just gonna say the work of Andrea Smith, INCITE!, the violence against women of color, I think is trying to address that where they have both been able to expand the analysis, look at how broadly violence needs to be defined in order to incorporate the needs and realities of women of color. Incarceration, colonialism, imperialism, economic violence, poverty, and sexual violence, and the way in which racism is played out in terms of intra-racial, intra-personal violence plays out is all a part of their agenda which is quite...It's been quite amazing and quite thrilling to actually see this whole new, very again radical going back to the roots area. We're seeing lots of this stuff. I think the good news is that we're seeing lots of these new initiatives that we may not recognize as your mama's feminism, but it's there nonetheless and it does give me reason to be hopeful.

DS: Any last words you'd like to share with the future generations about what it's meant to be a feminist all these fifty odd years?

JS: It saved my life. Feminism saved my life, and I know that between the personal situations that feminism gave me the analysis to understand and to do something about ultimately led me on this path that I am so honored and thrilled to be a part of that I urge it for everyone. When I work with my sisters at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom who are in their eighties and nineties who are still chaining themselves to various gates and stopping or preventing people from entering and out there with (unintelligible) and trying to prevent the latest world war and invasion and bombing of Afghanistan and Iraq and Cuba, and normalization of relations, I know that this work and claiming this vision keeps you young for a long period of time. Don't forget to have fun, women, and keep dancing at our revolution.

DS: (laughs) Thank you, Jan Strout.

[End of Interview]