

**U.18 Long Civil Rights Movement:
Heirs to a Fighting Tradition**

**Interview U-0568
Claudia Horowitz
September 17, 2009**

**Field Notes – 2
Transcript – 4**

FIELD NOTES- Claudia Horwitz

Interviewee: Claudia Horwitz
 Interviewer: Bridgette Burge
 Interview Dates: September 17, 2009 (Interview 2 of 4)
 Location: Stone House, Mebane, NC

HEIRS TO A FIGHTING TRADITION: Oral Histories of North Carolina Social Justice Activists” is a multi-phased oral history project which explores the stories and traditions of social justice activism in North Carolina through in-depth interviews with fourteen highly respected activists and organizers. Selected for the integrity and high level of skill in their work dedicated to social justice, the interviewees represent a diversity of age, gender, and ethnicity. These narratives capture the richness of a set of activists with powerful perspectives on social justice and similar visions of the common good. These are stories of transition and transformation, tales of sea change and burnout, organizing successes and heart wrenching defeats. These are the stories of the Movement.

All of the oral histories will be archived in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and will be a valuable addition to the modest amount of literature about contemporary social justice activism in the South. This is a project of the North Carolina Peace and Justice Coalition.

THE INTERVIEWEE: Claudia Horwitz is the founding director of stone circles, a nonprofit organization that helps individuals and organizations integrate spiritual and reflective practice into their work for social justice. Based in Durham, North Carolina, stone circles creates opportunities for training, retreats, conversation, organizational development, and interfaith exchange. Claudia’s previous work includes developing youth leadership, supporting struggles for economic justice, and strengthening nonprofit organizations. She is the author of *The Spiritual Activist: Practices to Transform Your Life, Your Work, and Your World*, (Penguin Compass 2002) is a practical guide to individual and social transformation through spirit and faith. Claudia has a master’s degree in Public Policy from Duke University, is a Rockefeller Foundation Next Generation Leadership Fellow and teaches Kripalu yoga.

THE INTERVIEWER: Bridgette Burge graduated from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee in 1995 with a degree in Anthropology/Sociology and a semester of intensive study of oral history theory and methodology. In 1995 and 1996, Burge and a colleague conducted fieldwork in Honduras, Central America collecting the oral histories of six Honduran women. She earned her master's degree in Anthropology from the University of Memphis in 1998. In 1999, she moved to North Carolina and served as North Carolina Peace Action's state coordinator, and later as North Carolina Peace Action Education Fund's executive director. In 2005, Burge began her own consulting company to provide training, facilitation and planning to social change organizations. The same year, with the support of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Burge launched the project "Heirs to a Fighting Tradition: Oral Histories of North Carolina Social Justice Activists." The interviews from this project are archived at the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: September 17, 2009, Kat ended up not joining us. Claudia decided it would feel more comfortable for her and she'd be able to better focus if it was just the two of us and Kat came another time to take photographs.

TRANSCRIPT – CLAUDIA HORWITZ

Interviewee: Claudia Horwitz
Interviewer: Bridgette Burge
Interview Date: September 17, 2009 (Interview 2 of 4)
Location: Mebane, Orange County, North Carolina
Length: 1 track; approximately 128 minutes

START OF INTERVIEW

Bridgette Burge: Just going to get some ambient sound here for about a minute.

[pause] Go ahead.

Claudia Horwitz: I need to let him in.

BB: Stop staring at me. [Laughter] That is the--. That is quite a stare-down.

CH: He doesn't really understand.

BB: So we're talking about Zak the dog. He doesn't understand what?

CH: Like I never just leave him outside.

BB: Oh.

CH: So I wish he was more like self-sufficient, but in fact it's a very co-dependent relationship we have, me and my dog.

BB: [Laughter] Okay, that's good. Today is September 17, 2009. And this is the second interview with Claudia Horwitz, with Bridgette Burge as the interviewer. This is part of the project Heirs to a Fighting Tradition, oral histories of social justice activists in North Carolina, social justice activists. Let's see. And so Claudia will you start by saying, "My

name is

--," and describing yourself a little bit? And then a couple reminders to repeat the question, if you can and yeah, that's it.

CH: My name is Claudia Horwitz. I am a white woman, forty-three years old. I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the suburbs, and lived most of my life in the Northeast until I moved to North Carolina in 1992. So I've lived here in the South and in North Carolina for about seventeen years. I was raised Jewish in the Reform movement, which is a newer movement within the Jewish tradition. And I still consider myself culturally Jewish, but I don't really identify much with it as a religious or spiritual practice. [Sound interrupts the conversation] Oops!

BB: Oops. [Laughter] I need to make sure I've turned mine off, too.

CH: I'm sorry.

BB: That's okay. Balancing the microphone on the back of the couch is tricky. Okay, so if you would start with the, "I consider myself culturally Jewish."

CH: Sure. [Laughter]

BB: [Laughter]

CH: So I was raised Jewish. I still think of myself culturally very much as a Jew, but I don't connect with it as much, in terms of being a religious tradition or spiritual tradition that I have a close affinity with, although I do celebrate most of the major holidays, and I feel like I come to those more from a cultural perspective than a religious one, but it feels very important, like it's a big, well not big, but it's a significant part of my year, I would say. And actually the Jewish holidays are right upon us, Rosh Hoshanah, which is the New Year, is

tomorrow, and then that's followed ten days later by Yom Kippur, which is our Day of Atonement. So this is a really important time for Jews, a really important time of year. And I would say Passover is probably the other holiday that I feel most connected with because it's so much about liberation. I was raised very upper-middle class, although not from the very beginning. We started out much more middle-class when I was a kid. My dad grew up pretty poor in West Philadelphia and went to college, went to law school, and is sort of a, I think a classic story of somebody coming from not a lot to become, you know, a wealthier person, although not rich, rich, like we're not--. I'm always interested in the term owning class, because we are owning class in some very significant ways. And then when I think about owning class as a designation of actually owning institutions that are responsible for other people's jobs or income, we've never been that level of owning class, but definitely would consider myself from a very privileged background on multiple levels, always had more than enough in terms of resources and money, two very educated parents. My mom has a master's degree, and they both went to the University of Pennsylvania, and just have really instilled from a very young age the importance of education. And they're very cultured people, so there was a lot of privilege in that sense, too. We'd go to New York for Broadway musicals and museums and things. You know you grow up with things and you just assume this is how the rest of the world grows up, until you realize it isn't. So I had one of those childhoods where I think I assumed that people had enough money for vacations and trips. And at the same time, we were never spoiled people. I mean I never felt like I was a spoiled kid. I always worked. We didn't get things on demand based on some invisible code, that it felt like a number of my other kind of owning class friends got, or upper-middle class friends got.

And so I think it's partly because of my dad having grown up with so little and him getting to where he is, now retired. You know, they have a really nice income. He got to where he is only, really, because of his hard work and his, obviously his privilege as a white man in society.

BB: I was going to sneeze. I didn't want to sneeze over your story.

CH: [Laughter]

BB: But now it's not going to happen. Okay, sorry.

CH: You can sneeze at any time. No, it's okay.

BB: So will you say your parents' names?

CH: Yeah, my dad's name is Ellis, Ellis Arnold Horwitz. My mom's name is Margot, Margot Freedman Horwitz. And they actually had a bit of a cross-class marriage. My mom grew up much more middle-class. Her dad was an attorney and in politics. He died young, like in his fifties, but it's interesting to me when I think about their kind of class dynamic and how that, I think, combined in interesting ways throughout my childhood. I remember at one point there was a very short discussion about whether or not I would ever go to private school, which where I grew up was like a very logical conversation for a lot of families to have, although very ironic because it was one of the best public school systems probably in the country. And I think my dad, as a--. Sorry, is that okay?

BB: What?

CH: The tape.

BB: Yes, I'm sorry. It's weird isn't it?

CH: Yeah.

BB: I've got to pay a lot of attention. I have to keep checking the levels.

CH: Oh, that's what you're doing, okay, great. I'm glad I asked.

BB: I meant to tell you that.

CH: So, that's good, okay.

BB: "Am I boring you, Bridgette?"

CH: [Laughter] No actually, I was more concerned that like something was wrong with the tape, and I'm like, "Should I just wait to see if she figures--."

BB: No, I'm sorry. I meant to tell you that.

CH: That's okay.

BB: Okay, so you were saying--.

CH: I remember a moment where there was this discussion about school, and my dad raising the question of private school. And I think he was only raising it because other upper-middle-class people that he knew and people he worked with, some of them sent their kids to private school. And so he felt like this is something we should be doing. And my mom was like, "No way." Like we have an amazing public school system, and she's always been like a very liberal--. I mean I got steeped in kind of a pretty liberal politic from a very young age. And I think she would rather die than think about sending like her kids to private school, which is really fascinating because she can be like--. I say this with all the love in my heart. She's a little bit of a snob in other ways around like culture and you know--. [Laughter] But such like strong progressive liberal value system in a lot of ways. So that's what I would say about my identity.

I think I would add a couple things. My primary spiritual tradition or path is definitely

the yoga path. I also feel very aligned with Buddhism, the teachings and the kind of core, some of the core practices, but in terms of like what I actually study and what I've steeped myself in more, it's definitely been yoga. And it's yoga in a very full sense. So I think in the West, when we hear yoga, we tend to think of people-- Well originally we thought of people putting themselves into funny positions on a mat. Now I think it's become more commonplace that people understand it a little bit better, but for me it's really this very holistic system and tradition. So it involves these physical postures, the asanas, but it's also about breath work and the study of sacred texts, which is something I do a lot of and I'm really interested in, learning the ethical code that's at the foundation of the tradition. So that whole kind of, that whole ball is the study and the path for me.

And another thing I think is important about my identity is that I'm-- I'm what society would define as a single woman, which is not actually ever how I see myself, but I obviously get aware of it when I have to check my self off on a questionnaire or whatever. What that means for me is I'm not partnered. I don't have biological children. I don't live with a nuclear family, which I think is important. One because I would say ninety percent of my peers are not living the life I live, meaning that they are, most of the people I'm in relation with are partnered and many of those people have kids or are raising kids. So it's interesting because it's a very big part of how I live in the world. And some of it is chosen and some of it is not chosen. And I don't think a lot of people would look at me and be like, "Oh, yeah, and she doesn't have a partner, and she doesn't have kids." I'm not sure it's the first thing people would think of. I'm sure it isn't, actually, but it's really significant for me.

And it has informed my work a lot, and I would say in the most direct way is that I

have no natural boundaries on my time, the way people living with other people in familial contexts do. And so I don't have the caretaking responsibilities. I don't have the direct support and what I do have is an open-ended expanse of time every day, which can be like hugely freeing and gives me a ton of flexibility in my day-to-day life, which I love. And it also means that I tend to work way too much, which is you know, obviously an issue for me. So I just, I think that's a really important part of identity.

Another thing I would say is I live now very rurally here at The Stone House [a center for spiritual life and strategic action in Mebane, North Carolina]. It's my first time living in a rural place. Having grown up in the suburbs and then lived in cities, Philadelphia and Boston my whole life, and then Durham, which is not a big city, but it's still a city. So this is a really new experience for me, living in a rural community that I don't feel very much a part of. We know some of our neighbors, but I don't very much about the history of this place, in terms of the real fabric of like families that have been here for generations. I don't know who those people are for the most part, a handful. So I just, I think that's you know, kind of an interesting thing, too.

BB: I'm curious about some of the feelings around those things. It's very clear around the descriptiveness and sort of what it means in terms of your time and your--. But what are some feelings around both of those pieces, living in this rural space for the first time, and then the other piece around society's ideas around being partnered and time and those sorts of things?

CH: Yeah. I think, well I think the way I'll start to answer the question of how I feel

about some of my identities as an un-partnered, kind of a non-nuclear family person and somebody living in a rural area, is to say first that I think most human beings I've met have a much more complex web of identity than anything you can obviously observe on the surface or even learn about in the first little bit of knowing them. I think that we are really complex beings in that way. I think part of my complexity is tied up in this relationship between mainstream and margin, so I am really conscious of my identities that are very mainstream, my white privilege, my owning class or upper-middle class background, my education level. So there are these things that have given me like just a lot of privilege in the world. And I think I would mostly say that I feel like a person that's had a lot of privilege, as opposed to not having it.

And I'm also aware of like a couple of ways that I am in, many ways I would say, that I'm on a margin. I don't consider that a lack of privilege in this context, but there are a lot of bridges I feel like that I'm always crossing. And I have a range of feelings about that. I think it's part of me, like I think it's part of my karma and who I am and what I'm here to do. It feels very natural to me. And there's a sadness, definitely, around some of it, feeling so other from most of the world. So I would say that mostly comes up around partnership because it's probably the thing I really want in my life that I don't have. And I've been able to get a lot of what I've wanted in the world for myself, you know, and it's not like I've wanted that much, but you know, it's like I've wanted to start an organization. I've been able to do that. I've wanted to be able to just--. I don't even know what else I've wanted for myself, but I mean, I feel like there's--. I'll say it this way. I feel there are areas of my life that have a relative amount of ease in them compared to a lot of other people's lives. And this

area around partnership has been the opposite of that, where it's just been mostly pain and difficulty and a lot of suffering. And I've let a lot of it go and sort of, you know, decided like, okay. I'm leaving that up to the fates, but I feel a little bit ambivalent or almost schizophrenic about it. You know, part of me doesn't care and part of me does care.

And the rural thing is really interesting because I resonate like so deeply with this land now and what human beings can learn and be humbled by from the natural world is so unbelievable to me. It's just like, oh my gosh, like that I've never known how much rain fell in a month until I lived in a place where we were growing our own food and it really matters. Now I know exactly how many days, not because I've sat down and counted them, but because intuitively I've been paying really close attention to the fact that it rained a lot in the beginning of the summer and not a lot later in the summer. And the same with the moon, like I know where the moon is in her cycle and I know, I'm beginning to know a little bit about what happens at the beginning, middle, and end of each season out here. That feels like so important when you think about how most of the world survives. I mean I'm not sure we should probably get into this today. [Laughter] But we are in such a manufactured world in Western culture, particularly in the United States because we've made it so that we can get any type of food any time we want it. And we can heat or air-condition our homes to balance out the temperature outside and we can just manipulate things from so many different directions to meet our own needs. And I do that. You know, I have a little air conditioner in this cabin, and the summers are really hot in this cabin because of the way the lack of trees that shade it. So I participate in that, obviously. I think we all do, but I'm becoming like more and more aware of how, where there's such a warped-ness in that. So I'm just really

interested in that right now, and obviously where food comes from, how far it travels to get to someone's table to my table, what rhythms we do and don't pay attention to, in terms of natural light or warmth or cold. So I guess it's interesting in the context of identity because I wasn't raised with any of that. I have no farmers in my family, you know. No one knew anything about anything land-based until I moved here, and my knowledge could fit on a speck of sand. It's so minimal, you know. I have no training. [Laughter] I have no--. I'm just learning, you know. Everything is totally new, and I think that when I think about that in the context of the rest of the world and what people need to do to survive, and how much wisdom about the natural world is required for survival for a lot of people, I would say throughout the developing world, it's really unbelievably humbling to think about that. Zak, can you go lie down, babes? Go lie down. Go lie down. Lie down. Be a good dog. Thank you. I don't know if that's what you were looking for, but--.

BB: Yeah.

CH: Okay.

BB: Thank you.

CH: Yeah.

BB: Will you talk more about ways you've grappled with class, particularly in integrating it and using it, making sense out of it in social justice work? Huge question, so anything that comes to mind--.

CH: No, that's great. I think the whole topic of class is really fascinating and so important, and still mostly very silenced, I would say. So I have, I think, this unique combination of coming from an upper-middle class background and really having an easy

time with money and a very easy time talking about money. I know part of that has to do with like never having to worry about money, but I think a very classic upper-middle class pattern is to not talk about money at all. So for me, I almost feel like it's a little bit woven into my mission now to like really talk about money and really open up spaces where people can talk about money. And I am continually humbled by what I don't understand about what it means to not have it, or to not have had it, enough resources. So I think there are these really fundamental things about growing up poor or working class, in terms of how people relate to money, that are so important, like let's say in the context of running an organization. I make assumptions until somebody, around certain things, until somebody on the staff will say, "Well, I know I'm only working here twenty hours a week, and I'm curious what we're doing about health care." And we are trying to figure that out because it's important to me to be able to figure out if we can, a way that we can actually help insure everybody regardless of how many hours they're working, but this person's question was, "You know, I don't even know what happens if I break a bone here." You know, and in my mind, I'm like, it's so obvious to me that we would cover the expenses for anyone that got hurt on this land, like a staff person, because like why would you not do that, you know? And then I have to like totally stop myself and be like, "Okay, this person does not have that experience of knowing that there's automatically going to be enough for that injury or that health care bill." And maybe they haven't worked in an organization, even, where that's an automatic thing, and it's like, yeah, it's great that we have that culture, and I need to communicate better what that culture is, but the other half of it is almost more important, which is catching, for me, catching myself around assumptions I make about people's relationship to money. And I feel

like I've gotten to this place where I'm like, "Oh, I actually really want to remember that this is something that causes a lot of anxiety for a lot of people." And I've had my first taste of that here, which is interesting because The Stone House, the last two years of taking on this really large financial responsibility as an organization has been the first time that I've been a person that wakes up in the middle of the night and has anxiety about cash flow. It happens regularly, like a few times a month. And I realized early on that this is similar to what a lot of families feel every month with their own budget and their income. And there's a lot of parallels. It's like, "Are we going to get through the month?" For me it's like, "What's going to happen in three or four months?" I know where we are right now with our organizational cash flow, but January is-- I have no idea. And I just, you know, it's clear to me that there are so many families and individuals in that situation every month their whole lives, you know? So I think that I want to keep opening spaces to talk about money. I want to keep supporting people who have to raise money, with how to think about how to do that. And I want to be a part of-- And I am a part of like training people how to get more comfortable, but how to also recognize their own story and their own strengths, whatever class background they come from, because I feel really strongly that like every class background has incredible strengths attached to it, and some real challenges. And upper-middle class people probably have more than their fair share, more than what you would imagine, in terms of challenges, because it's that myopic sense of not seeing how other people struggle with class. And we actually just did this exercise where, when our board and staff came together a couple days ago, we talked-- We all told our money stories because we're getting ready to do another, you know, big push around fundraising and--

BB: A big what push?

CH: Just another push around fundraising, yeah. The board identified the need to really hear more about where each other's coming from. And it seemed like it would be a cool way for board and staff to connect, because I think sometimes if you're working in a nonprofit, you can have an image of a board as being like really wealthy people, which is not the case with our board at all. But it does have a lot of folks that are really comfortable with money in certain ways, and have done a lot of their own work around money and are willing to ask for money. So that was really helpful. But this one thing that came up from a few different people's stories was how, when their families, during their childhood, their families moved from one neighborhood that was a lower-income neighborhood to a little bit of a higher-income neighborhood, and with that came like this greater degree of isolation and not necessarily feeling like there was like this sense of fitting in and actually really missing a more urban close-knit environment. And I just think that's like one really palpable example of sort of how complex class is. So I'm still learning and navigating it and trying to do that without guilt, but with like a lot of humility, I think is a huge thing. And I guess the only other thing I would say is I'm--. So Mab Segrest wrote this amazing book, Memoir of a Race Traitor, and I've had people talk about what it means to be a class traitor. And I know there's probably ways in which I am one. I think my dad assumed I would be a lawyer or a doctor. My mom's friends wanted me to be a rabbi. And that's just, that is the typical Jewish middle, upper-middle class thing, right, that your kids are like the great hope and that in part means they're going to be very professionally tracked in their careers. And I obviously haven't done that, and putting my career choices aside, I've just never had a real interest in making a lot of

money. I'm not really sure what I would do with it.

You know, I don't really know what it is people do with money that is so compelling, but I think it's because I have these other privileges. You know, I know people that I could stay with in any cool place I want to go to, and I'm not interested in driving like a super fancy car. I mean it's going to sound so cheesy, but I'm like I feel like the only reason you make more money is so that you can actually give it away and help more people, which I know sounds very--. But I don't know. And I don't live like--. I don't live a frugal life, either. You know, like I spend money on things. I buy some nice clothes so that I have them in certain work situations where I know I need to feel comfortable in what I'm wearing. I buy books. I mean I spend money, so I'm not living like this über-simplified life, like some of my, I would say a handful of my peers, people I know are. And I think maybe the other part of it is just I don't think that much about security in terms of money. I just don't. I don't define my own personal security in terms of how much money I have in the bank. And I get for a lot of people that there's a very close relationship there.

BB: That's great, thank you.

CH: Yeah.

BB: So does anything else pop to mind you want to say about class right now?

CH: Well, I guess the thing I would say is that probably my class beliefs are that I'm maybe somewhere between like a Marxist and a socialist, in terms of like theory. And I don't know enough about Marxism, and I would never put my stake in the ground around it for a whole lot of other reasons, but I do, just the idea that like people would not share the resources they have, is something I don't even, I can't even make sense of it in my brain.

Like I can't--. I don't really understand where that comes from. I don't understand the level of fear that perpetuates it. I mean I just think--. I don't know. I don't think we own anything, like that whole concept of ownership is like really weird to me. I feel like I have a really serious connection to my dog and a strong responsibility for like his life and his health, but I don't think of myself as a dog owner. And you know, I need my car because I live like, you know, ten miles away from the nearest grocery store, but like I don't think about it as like, "Oh, that's my car, and I own that car." You know the bank actually owns the car, I guess technically, and I just pay money every month on it. I don't know, the whole thing of it is just--. Anything in my cabin, I'm like, "Oh, somebody gave me that." And well, Ellen painted that painting. Like that's really her energy in that painting. And I just don't even--. I don't know, I just don't even understand it. And at the same time like I have, you know--.

Yeah, that's getting too convoluted.

I guess what I would say about

class is that I do not understand why and why we would put any energy into perpetuating any system around class or ownership or money that does anything other than create containers and possibilities for collective use. I mean I just, I don't understand it. And I can't even--. I don't even have like a brilliant thing to say about it. There's people that could wax very poetic about why it is like that and what we need to do to change it. For me, I'm just like it's very visceral. The whole thing is stupid, and, yeah.

BB: So I should scratch out my question, "Can you describe the rise of capitalism?"

CH: [Laughter] Yeah, can you?

BB: We'll scratch that out.

CH: Can you save that for your next interview? [Laughter]

BB: [Laughter] Oh, that's great. So a couple of lofty questions, though.

CH: Yeah.

BB: Do you see a difference between activism and organizing? Do you understand a distinction there?

CH: I do. I see those--. I think there's a pretty significant difference between activism and organizing. I think of organizing as a strategy. I think it's very tactical. It has some very clear outcomes usually attached to it. And when people are engaged in organizing, it's a systematic process of building power among a group of people who have a common need or a common interest that they are coming together to fight for. And there's a clear sense of what the desired outcome is, in the best organizing work. So whether it's, you know, domestic workers who want higher minimum wage or guaranteed benefits or American Jews who believe that fundamentally the U.S. government should have a different policy when it comes to Israel-Palestine, or the monks in Burma who have, you know, periodically been moved by a revolutionary spirit to do more organizing against like a very repressive regime there. So that's how I think about organizing, that it's a way of building power to fight money in an organized form, usually, or power in an organized form, that it's kind of the power of the people being coalesced. And I think of it very tactically in that way.

I think of activism as like this really umbrella term that can cover a whole lot of activity that a lot of organizers would not consider organizing, or that I wouldn't consider organizing. So I think doing a lot of media work, writing letters to editors, putting pressure on cable news channels for example, or doing a lot of social media campaigns, I wouldn't call that organizing because it's not sitting down with human beings face-to-face, but it's

activism, for sure, you know. I think my mom, who basically worked pretty much full-time for the Obama campaign the last like six months of that election. That was activism for her, for sure. I think it was for a lot of people. I think activism can be education and really educating people about issues. So the folks that have spent a lot of time, let's say, in a place very far away from the United States and brought back stories about that place, Darfur, for example, and made incredible documentaries and created amazing campaigns to really educate folks about what's going on. That's activism. The ways in which people think about helping their neighbors--. Local farmers markets I think are a form of activism. I would never call that organizing, but I think it is activism because it's saying, "We are not going to eat food that has traveled thousands of miles. We are going to provide a space only for local farmers because we want a homegrown economy. We want to eat fresh, local food." I think that's activism.

Now is it organizing? No. Organizing is when you say, "We want six elementary schools in western Orange and eastern Alamance Counties to be serving seventy or fifty percent local food in their school cafeterias. And we want to do that by getting these twenty farmers from the Piedmont to pool their produce and figure out a transportation mechanism." That's organizing. That has a clear outcome, a clear change in the lives and livelihoods of human beings. So that's I guess how I would see some of the distinction.

BB: Do you feel like it's important to organize or be an activist specifically in the South? Is there something prescient about the South?

CH: I think there's something very unique about being an organizer or an activist in the South. And I think that any comment or commentary about the South has to be prefaced

with the clear statement that the South is not a monolithic region, but it still needs to be talked about as a region. So I think that that's like a very important, like, you know, nuance or just caveat or something, because if I consider the differences, for example, between North Carolina and South Carolina, the history of the education systems, the history of government, the history of industry, night and day, and you can see it now. You can see decisions that were made a hundred years ago in these two states and how they're playing out today, so different. And that's obviously true then, North Carolina is not Louisiana. I mean we know this, right? So I just think it's important to name it.

That said, I do think there's something about the South that is a different animal from other parts of the country. I think it's hard for me to talk about it because I think it ends up sounding like a lot of generalizations and as somebody not born in this region, I'm a little hesitant, I think, but I can share some of my observations of what I see, which is that there are some fundamental values, and I would say across race lines, actually, that are very vital here, a very vital part of the culture in the South, that if you don't understand them, you're not going to be able to do the work you think you want to do around organizing.

I think one of those values has to do with family and where people come from and who their people are. And I'm reminded of this, the introduction to the amazing biography of Ella Baker, the author, whose name I'm blanking on, [Barbara Ransby] went to see her, went to see Ella Baker when she was an elder living, I think, somewhere in New York at that point, and was really excited to kind of talk to her and interview her. And all Ella Baker wanted to know about this author, who's this very prestigious academic historian, was who she was and who her people were. That is like a Southern thing. To me, I'm like

that is a Southern thing. Like no one in California's going to ask you that, I don't think. I mean the Midwest has its own version of it, I'm sure, but I just think there's a really clear interest in how long people have been here, who in people's families are still here, what they do, that kind of thing. So I think that's one value.

I think another value has to do with, which is really related, that I've seen very alive here in the South, which is about really getting to know a whole person. So it's like really being interested in someone's story. Again, I'm not saying people in other regions don't do this, but there's a quickness to relationship in other places I've lived or visited that doesn't exist in the same way here. I think people like to take their time. They want to know really who you are and really what you are about, and they want to know more of your story, as a way of building a relationship. It's not enough just to know that we each might care about, you know, such and such a thing in this county. It's not necessarily enough. Whereas I feel like, particularly in bigger cities, it's like you can organize around that and you don't really need to know a lot of other things. And then I would say definitely the connection to land is another value. Again, people living in other parts of the country has their own expression of this, but, you know, there still are quite a few people in the South whose livelihoods rise and fall with the land and that's really important.

And I guess finally, you know, the thing that distinguishes this region is its history, probably, you know, in some ways more than anything else. I think history can be a land mine or a tool, depending on, you know, how much you know and how you think about it. And there is the legacy of civil rights and pre-pre-pre civil rights, the legacy of Jim Crow, the legacy of Reconstruction, the legacy of slavery. It's just that William Faulkner line of, "the

past is not dead. It's not even past." I don't think there's a truer thing you could say about the South. I just don't. I think that the past is not anywhere near dead. It's not even past here. And to have a sense of what is still alive and what is lingering and what forms the foundation in any particular community of the work people are trying to do, you know. North Carolina has a very different history around slavery than a lot of other states in the South, a lot fewer plantations, I mean just very different history than Louisiana or Alabama or Mississippi, right. It's like you could pick out a million different things like that and say, "Okay, that's interesting," you know. And then if you want to look at the--. So what I--.

Okay, I'll just say one quick example of this. When we were doing this conference in Asheville, in Black Mountain [NC], actually in June, I put together a little bit of information about the region for folks because it was a national conference. And it was the first time that I think I really saw the layers of, you know, the geological history, those mountain ranges of the Smokies and how old--. Obviously, I've known they are old mountains, but they're really, really old mountains, some of the oldest mountains in the country. And then you look at a map of what was Cherokee land, it's so--. I mean it's actually hard to even look at it because Cherokee land covered eight states and it's now I think like a hundred square miles or something. It's amazing to actually see these, this shrinking concentric circle, basically. So you have that reality and then you have all these Scotch-Irish settlers who were initially trying to get away from an oppressive government, but then became landowners and were interested in labor to work their land. And then you have all these Black Highlanders who, some of whom were providing that labor, some of whom were creating their own institutions in the mountains, their own, you know, functional organizations and businesses. And then

very recently this influx of, you know, the Latino population, obviously a huge shift demographically for North Carolina, including the western part of the state.

And then you take a look at that region, and you're like, wow. There's a lot of different groups of people living here, you know. And the layered complexity of those histories and the ways that they intersect with each other economically and the levels of violence that have been woven, you know, through that, the appropriation of land--. I mean it's just, wow. It is beyond--. It's beyond complex. And I do think you could pinpoint--. You could pinpoint probably any place in the world and the reality is that there's more complexity around immigration in the U.S. South right now than I think there are a lot of other places. And you mix that with the history, the violent history of slavery, and it's just like there's a lot you have to know. There's just a lot you have to know. And it's okay if you don't know it all, but you have to know that you don't know. And you have to be, I think, actively working on it on an ongoing basis, I'll say particularly as a white organizer, white activist who wasn't born in the South. It has to be an ongoing process of education or you're not really going to get much done.

BB: That's great. So I'm curious about how you think about, like work through and having conversations about race and spiritual activism. I'm thinking about some of the generalizations and the assumptions that having a practice is privileged, having land and space like this, where it's the exercise, is a privileged space. So I'm thinking about--. And you were saying, you know, you had referred to the irony of that, that the monastic life and ashrams were really, were people who had so very little materially and were so wealthy spiritually, that somehow in our culture it's become much more complex and there's some

divisions. So I'm wondering how you all, you personally and you as an organization have thought about those things.

CH: Okay, so I want you to repeat part of it, because when you first brought up the topic of race and spiritual activism, I went in some other directions, which I can talk about, but then you were talking about the privilege of practice and land. And say the thing you said after that.

BB: I don't remember. I'll have to rewind it. [Laughter]

CH: Okay.

BB: Yeah, it's a convoluted question. Let me simplify the question. Let's break it down a little bit. Let's just start with what first came to your mind when I talked about race and spiritual activism. Let's just go with that.

CH: Okay. So I think there is a really interesting question about the relationship between race and spiritual activism. I think that what I've noticed in my work is that there are, I would say, four fault lines that we can, that we easily come up against, if we don't do our homework and we don't really bring like a level of thoughtfulness into the work. And the fault lines exist around racial justice, political ideology, spiritual practice, and then spiritual or religious tradition, and then how those things intersect with each other. So I'm saying that because I think that I've certainly been in the situation as a leader or a co-convenor where we've made the mistake of either not framing some real necessary realities around racial justice, or not framing them well enough, so that once there's a conversation that's begun about spirituality and activism, we then have to circle back to the role of oppression and the role of racism. My hope is that we can get better at creating and offering an integrated

framework and theory around spiritual activism where an anti-oppression analysis and a racial justice analysis is like more embedded in that, like clearly embedded and explicitly embedded, but we haven't gotten there yet. I think it's like a next big piece of work. I think it's there, just hasn't been fully articulated. And I think that those fault lines can collide in all kinds of ways that are just, you know, really real. And I guess I can name a couple of them. I mean I think there's obviously been such a history of appropriation around indigenous practice, in particular, but I think a lot of people would say other practices as well. And I have my own, my own thinking about that. I don't think, when I look at practices like meditation and yoga, I don't-- I think you can misappropriate them, but those practices have been brought here very purposefully by teachers from countries where those are the root traditions. So it's much more complicated than people just appropriating or assuming tradition, but I think the way that you practice and teach those traditions is hugely important. And there's just all kinds of ways to do it. And I think the problem there becomes: Are you just picking this thing up like in the language of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, like spiritual materialism, and then you're just offering it back out and you don't have enough knowledge about the root or the history. You're not offering it in a context that really is a clear, not just honoring, but like a clear, you know, link to the context that it was grown in. But I think with indigenous practice, there's been just a really horrifying habit that white Westerners have had of appropriating native traditions.

BB: For example?

CH: Oh, my gosh. I mean if one more white, well-meaning white person invites me to a sweat lodge, I swear it's my hardest thing because I--. And often those sweat lodges, I

have to say, okay, so very often those sweats originated from a native teacher or elder, in most cases I would say that they have not--. They're not just white folks putting up their own lodge for the most part, but you can have--. [Laughter] You can have an original legitimacy that can stem from--. How can I--? Wait, I have to think about how I want to say this. I think I'm just going to--. I think I want to be direct about it. Okay, I think there are multiple, many situations where native teachers, indigenous elders offer some piece of their tradition and they offer it very willingly to non-native people. So for example, I know there are native elders in this part of North Carolina that have offered sweat lodges and have very clearly offered those to groups that are predominately white folks. I have certainly have been a part and been really fortunate to be a part of, to be in relationship with like a couple of friends, that don't live, that are not local, actually, who similarly offer their traditions. They're very careful about it, I'll say, very careful about it.

BB: Do you mind saying their names?

CH: I do, and I'll tell you why. So I think what happens is that these traditions are offered and then they're offered in a moment in time with a lot of trust, and it gets pimped in like a whole lot of different ways. And I feel like even me like sharing the names of like my friends and teachers right now is like, it's like, oh. Am I pimping them because I want to look like a cool white person that has, like, relationships, you know? [Laughter] It's like, no, I don't want to be that person and I feel really challenged when other white folks come to me and say, "Hey, we're doing this sweat, and so-and-so from the such-and-such tribe, you know, started this sweat." And so there's like this air of legitimacy, but really what I feel like is I don't know anything about how that came about. I don't know the intentions of that

native elder when they started the sweat lodge. I don't know how it's being held now. I certainly would never enter--. For me, I would never enter a lodge with a group of white folks. I just wouldn't do it. That's probably another conversation, but it's related. So it's like trying to really be wise and be careful about boundaries and really being intuitive about where those boundaries need to be and need to remain. So I think the sweat is one example of appropriation. I think there are many, you know, the use of sage, the making of dream catchers. I don't know. I don't really know enough about dream catchers. And I'm not saying white folks shouldn't make dream catchers. I think probably a lot of Indian folks would be like, "Go ahead and make yourself a dream catcher." But like, what is a dream catcher? Like what do people, like what do they know about that when they're doing it? So it's just, it's a little bit of a slippery slope, and I just, I love that phrase spiritual materialism, because what it implies is that we just basically pick up what we need when we need it. And I believe really strongly in the tradition of spiritual seeking and that people do need to be on a journey to kind of find their spiritual path, but that has to be balanced with a sense of strong respect and dignity around people's traditions. [Sound of a dog] Zak is drinking water. He's thirsty. My god, he's still drinking.

BB: [Laughter] Has he been licking a salt ball?

CH: He's been working hard today.

BB: Working hard staring out the window. [Laughter] It's a sweet sound of a good old Zak lapping it up. [To the dog] Does that feel good? Yeah.

CH: I mean the other thing that came to my mind about race and spiritual activism is the role of black Christianity in particular and the black church. I think most of us would at

least pay lip service to the role of the Black church in civil rights organizing. I think people get that. They know that. I think it's a very different thing when you have to understand that the whole world of spiritual activism like really includes that tradition, with all of its potentially troubling aspects for other folks. So I have a hard time in Black Baptist churches sometimes. I mean there's the--. It's awkward as a Jew. It's awkward as a white woman. I think there can be assumptions around Jesus that are just, you know, that are hard for me. And then again I'll just never forget this one African American woman who came to a workshop I led around faith and social justice a long time ago. She was working in the non-profit sector. And she just said so clearly, "I feel like I have to hide my light when I'm at work." And what she was saying was that there is such a disrespect--. There was, in her organizational culture, a disrespect for her Christian tradition. And I think that's really common.

I think we like to think of ourselves, as non-Christian people in the activist world, as being like respectful of people's beliefs, but the truth is I think there's a lot of backlash, skepticism, judgment around Christianity, in particular. And I guess to say it a different way, I think there's not nearly enough respect for the traditions people come out of and the complexity of how anyone might be trying to reconcile a deep faith steeped in the Black church that also doesn't believe in gay rights. I know a lot of Black Christian activists that are wrestling with that, you know, and trying to go back and forth from, you know, the public square to the church pew and figure out what to do, how to wrestle with those beliefs. And there's millions of examples of that. So creating like the space and the kindness, you know, for that wrestling I think is important. I think your intention behind that question was a little

bit different, though. So I wonder if you just circle back and see.

BB: No, that's it. You captured a hope I had much better than I articulated the question, but the second part of it is a little different, about grappling with the culture of the space for working-class young folks. And this kind of gets at the Seeds of Fire, no--. What's the youth group, mostly recently, that's here that's been doing--?

CH: Oh, Ground Up?

BB: That's it, yeah, Ground Up.

CH: Yeah, that was a weeklong program.

BB: So what was some of the thinking around how this space is seen, how it's created, how it feels? Is there a responsibility or a sense, some attention around pushing back against the perception of spiritual places, like as being something outside the culture of working class or people of color, working-class people of color or poor people of color?

CH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BB: But before we ask, let me ask one question. When you were talking about Ella Baker's biography, did you mean the Barbara Ransby book?

CH: Yes.

BB: Okay, Barbara Ransby. And then I need to take a quick break.

CH: Pee break?

BB: Yeah, a pee break.

CH: Excellent.

BB: Okay.

CH: Do you want to just--. I think I have something to say about this question, but I

think what would help me is if you can just say something really specific about your question, like some part of your question that's really specific, if there is a part. And I won't answer it in like necessarily just a specific way, but I want to get to the heart of what you're really asking about.

BB: There is a perception or an image of spaces like The Stone House. It's on the land. It's about spiritual activism. It has a space for yoga and meditation and Buddhism and people who have no path and people who have many paths, that can be stereotyped as a very privileged space that doesn't relate, doesn't feel like a space for an urban kid of color or a working-class kid. So groups will think, "Where am I gonna--?" The YWCA of the Greater Triangle--"Where am I going to have my workshop for my teen parents with these southeast Raleigh almost all African American girls, a couple of Latina girls, working class, you know what I'm saying?"

CH: Yeah, you should totally bring them out here. They'll love it.

BB: [Laughter] Great.

CH: I'm serious. Okay, so we should talk about that.

BB: Okay.

CH: So there's this interesting question about spiritual spaces and the privilege that can be attached to them in people's perception. And I think what's interesting about that is there's half of that, half of that is what can we do to change people's perceptions before they get here. I think we don't really do probably a very good job about that. I think we try to do a good job around some of that. I think we could do more, in terms of like really communicating maybe differently. I don't know. That would be interesting to just get more

feedback on or something from folks. I think the reality of what I've experienced here is that the most surprising thing, I would say, about The Stone House, is the range of people that feel comfortable here. I don't think I had ever articulated that as a hope or a concern before we moved. I mean it certainly was subconsciously, we want a lot of different kinds of folks to come to the space, to come to the programs, but I am consistently amazed by how people find what they need here, regardless of who they are. And I think it's because of a couple different factors. One, we don't have a lot of rules. So I think you go to a lot of spiritual centers and they're held in a way that I think they would say is like very reverent or whatever, and really what it means is it's a very uptight environment that is very much in the spirit of white supremacy and control. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't times here when we hold a very different kind of container. So for example, when we're doing longer practice retreats, like in particular, silent meditation retreats, there is a need for a really strong container for those types of practices. So there's a schedule for those retreats and there's silence that's held in the common spaces for those retreats. And people show up on time for each practice session and it ends when it says it's going to end. There is like a structure, a form that actually gives the people who are practicing like a tremendous amount of freedom because you don't have to worry about what the environment is like, the practice environment. Similarly, there's another totally different group here that comes out of an indigenous tradition that does their ceremony here. And they create a very tight container around their ceremony needs. Every time they do something here, they completely set up the space in the way that they need it set up, and then they completely take it down.

So I do believe really strongly that for deep spiritual work, like an environment needs

to be created for that work. That being said, we don't have rules. So you can come here as a person of any age and any background and whatever you need or want to do here with just a couple of limits around drug use and alcohol, you can do it. And what that means, practically, is when we ran this program this summer for all kids of color around food and food justice, these were all urban kids from Durham, high-school age. The most amazing, unpredictable part of that program was that they spent every night running around outside playing games, using like a huge amount of the land to play tag and whatever else they were doing. I don't even know, you know, outside running around games. They actually can't play in their neighborhood, you know? I mean it was really beautiful and powerful. And I never would've predicted that. There are so many examples like that, you know?

Vivette [Jeffries-Logan], who's a good friend of ours, she is a really strong leader within the Occaneechi tribe. This used to be part of their land a long time ago. We've been in relationship with her since we moved here. She's being interviewed today by Cara Page, who's doing this, building a network of healers doing social justice work in the Southeast. And Vivette lives in Burlington and Cara was in Durham for the work. She lives in Atlanta. And when Cara said to Vivette, "You know I want to interview you." Vivette was like, "Well, let's do it at The Stone House." So while we're having our interview here in my cabin, they're actually up at the main house, meeting space next door doing, interviewing Vivette. That kind of thing happens all the time here. It's just like people want to do something and they're like, "Oh, I think we could do that at The Stone House." And that doesn't mean that there aren't elements of dissonance for people that we work through. And what's interesting is that a couple of the harder spots that we've run up against have been

around the food that we serve and particularly with folks of color from the cities. That's been an ongoing conversation and inquiry that we're in. So I think I'll give one more example. And I'll fold in something about that. There's a national network called Gathering for Justice. They do work around childhood incarceration. And it is a network of really badass organizers from all over the country. I didn't know most of them, but they met here like three weeks ago. And it was really powerful to have them here. And I was really curious, like, is this space going to work for them? They ended up--. They're a very relationship-based network and a very spiritually based network in a lot of ways. So they did a lot of ceremony themselves. They had an amazing time here, like the space just really, really worked for them. And I loved meeting them, I mean just these really incredibly vibrant, engaged folks, I would say mostly all folks of color.

The thing that came up here for them, and it's come up a couple of other times for us, is a small group did not like the food because they're just not used to eating a ton of vegetables, home-cooked, the kind of meals that we serve. That's common. I mean we had another woman, organizer of color, actually trans person, not woman. And he had never eaten a squash before coming here. I mean these are the kinds of things that actually happen much more often than anything else. So it opens up this opportunity for us to have a real dialogue about it. And what we realized when Gathering for Justice was here, is that we want to do a better job of orienting people to the way we think about and use food, why we grow what we grow, why we serve what we serve, how it's cooked, because once those handful of people, who were, we realized, you know, getting in their cars and running up to the highway to get McDonald's for some of the meals, once we kind of realized what was going on, there

was an attempt by our cooks to try to adapt, you know, within reason, but once we all realized what was going on and there was a brief kind of exchange with the group about it, people--. I mean it was like once it was put in that political context really, of like what is food, who grows food, what does food justice mean, it totally shifted the whole conversation for them. They weren't that much more interesting in eating the food, but the whole dynamic was different. So I think we learned a big lesson about really with new groups of people wanting to, with anyone who comes here, wanting to introduce that in a particular way.

And I just, I think we have gone to such deep lengths here to create an environment that is very casual and very, but clear. I mean we're not just loopy goopy, like, "Oh, anything goes at The Stone House." Someone described it as like a real atmosphere of trust. Like we just trust people to hold the space in a good way and that people are going to do that. So we've created this environment where, you know we talk about this notion of radical hospitality where it's just like there's a warmth that people are invited into. People are basically going to be taken care of without being pampered. There's no pampering that goes on here. It's not a fancy environment, but you're going to have everything you need for what you came here to do. So for the person who's here on individual retreat, that means we're going to really leave you alone and check in as you want to check in. For the kids that are here to press apple cider, like they did last Sunday, that means it's going to be set up really well. There's going to be a ton of adult supervision, and you're going to get to taste the cider at the end and take some home. And you know, so it's like it's really super thoughtful, I think. And I think the original part of the question around--. I'm just, I'm curious about the perception people have and how much work, if any, we should be doing to correct that. I

mean I really want people to get a taste of what this place is about and how easily it can fit for ninety-percent of the social justice work that folks want to do. We can accommodate it. We're not an easy group for people with disabilities, just the way that the facilities were built, unfortunately, it's a super simple space for that, but I would say almost anything else is like so doable here. So, I don't know if you have a follow-up question or not.

BB: No, that's great. Thank you.

CH: Okay, okay.

BB: Do you want to switch a little bit back to kind of your chronological story?

CH: Sure. I like this. This is keeping it interesting.

BB: [Laughter] Okay, let me take a second to--. Okay, so tell me again, when you were born and are there any birth stories that were handed down to you?

CH: I was born July 16, 1966. I don't think there are any good birth stories, although my mom, who I think for a long time really, you know, was hoping I would have my own biological kids, she loves to tell me how easy her labor was. [Laughter] And how quick it was. I think mostly what I think about with my birth is, for any of us born in that time, that we were just born into this like really tumultuous time, with a lot of grief in the country and that's kind of what I think about.

BB: You have siblings? You have one brother, right?

CH: I have a younger brother. He is three years younger than me. He's married and has a ten-year-old daughter, my niece Fifer.

BB: Will you say your brother's name?

CH: Yeah, his name is Stuart, Stuart Perry Horwitz. His wife's name is Bonnie Kane.

And my niece, her name is Fifer. And they live about an hour outside of Providence, Rhode Island. My brother has actually done a lot of study of Eastern traditions. He's learned Japanese and has done a lot of work on kind of Japanese poetry, but he's an event manager for a private event venue. And my sister-in-law is a psychologist. And she's actually done quite a bit of work with at-risk kids, although it's not her primary vocation.

BB: Where did you go to elementary school?

CH: I went to Merion Elementary School in Merion, Pennsylvania, which was the best elementary school on the planet to go to. [Laughter]

BB: Why?

CH: It was the era of open classroom. This is another one of those things from my class background that I just, like my class background where I'm like, "Didn't everyone go through elementary school with open classroom?" Like the fact that there are kids, twenty or thirty years ago, now my peers, right, who were in an elementary school with like bolted-down desks, and the fact that that still goes on, is like one of those things that, I'm just like, I don't even get that, because my elementary school, there were no doors. Every piece of furniture was movable. My fourth-grade classroom had a bathtub in it that we took turns reading in for reading hour. I mean, and the entire, every classroom was circular tables with chairs around them. And it was like we did activities. And I mean, if that's not enough to steep, you know, revolution and rebellion later on in life, I don't know what is, because it's like the minute you get your ass to do things more traditionally, it's like, "What?" So I loved that school, loved it. It was such a progressive approach to learning. Everything we learned was a combination of, you know, visual, audio. We did a ton of projects. We learned by

doing, you know, a lot. So it was fantastic. And then I went to junior high at Bala Cynwyd Junior High School, which was right in the process of becoming a middle school. So I was only there for two years. So that was a little bit awkward, but we were all there for two years, my peers and I, definitely a more traditional place, but still very student-centered learning. I did some theatre there. I was like in a couple plays. I played lacrosse. So it was like about this time of sort of trying stuff out that didn't really stick, but I'm glad I tried it. I wasn't great at lacrosse, but I loved being on the team, same with gymnastics, actually. I ended up being the manager, because I had done gymnastics as a kid, and I loved it, but I was never--. I wasn't going to be good enough, you know, by the time I got to high school, to be on the team.

And then I went to Lower Merion High School for ninth through twelfth grade, and again, a fantastic school. I don't really know what high schools are like these days. I don't spend a lot of time in the world of education. I hear about it mostly vicariously through parents who have kids in high school. I know it's a mixed bag, but I used to live right across the street from Durham School for the Arts when I lived at the warehouse building. And those kids looked pretty happy, I've got to say. That place has a good, really good feel about it.

And that's probably what I would say about my high school, really amazing professors who like, teachers just cared so much about what kids were learning. My history teacher, Mr. Feliciani, taught history, Revolutionary War history, from the perspective of like: What if the British had won and the colonies had been, you know, put down? I mean we were just taught to think, you know. It wasn't just about learning or memorizing, but we were

really taught to like grapple with stuff and think about stuff, which I really appreciate. And I think high school is just a shitty time for a lot of people. It was for me, in a lot of ways. I think the whole process of maturation and going through just so-- I had so many insecurities. I didn't really have a lot of boyfriends in high school, but I kind of ran with like the mostly in-crowd, but I was definitely on the fringe of that crowd. You're always making decisions about what you're going to do, what you're not going to do, you know. So for example, like most of the kids I knew smoked weed in high school, and I definitely did. But there was a very small sub-set of kids that did a lot of coke. And I never did that. I just wasn't interested, but that was-- You know, it's like things like that happen to high school kids, you know. You're making decisions about drugs. You're making decisions about sex. You're making decisions about other illegal activity, right? The kind of person you want to be, you know, how hard are you going to work at school? Who are your friends going to be? Who are you going to stick up for?

It was a pretty integrated school. It was probably fifteen or twenty percent black, and for a suburban, you know, high school in the Northeast, more integrated than many, I would say, largely because of (1:24:38). I think it's the reason that you get integration where you wouldn't normally, as athletic teams. And I honestly, I mean this is like the honest to god truth, I really do not think that I thought that much about the difference between the white folks and black folks until this one incident happened. There was a white woman dating a black guy a year older than me. I guess I was a junior. They were seniors. And this small crazy group of white kids, I think that they thought it was a joke, like burned a cross on her lawn. I know. So that, and that shocked people so much because it was just so out of left

field, you know. I mean there was the horror of the actual thing, that this happened to this girl, that oh my god, these kids would think to do this. It was just so crazy in the environment of our school. It was just not--. And maybe because I don't, I didn't know those white kids. Like I don't know who did it, and I didn't have friends that were raised like that or anything, you know? So that was definitely the burst of the bubble for me, because I was like, "What the hell? Like aren't we all just here--?" I just had never--. I mean I knew there was black and white, but I never really--. It never occurred to me that there could be such a level of hatred or a lack of awareness around something, even if it was like a quote unquote joke. It never even occurred to me until that happened. So that was a marker for sure for me. And yeah, I don't know if I have much more to say about high school.

BB: And what was happening in the transition from high school to college? What was involved in your decision to--?

CH: Yeah, that's a tricky one. So when I was right before my senior year in high school, I did this summer program at Brown University in Providence [Rhode Island]. And I loved it. I was so convinced that I wanted to go to Brown. I needed to go to Brown. They needed me. I mean it was like--. And that was the era where, and I think it's still true today, that Brown was interested in really creative, unique, different kinds of kids. So I came up with this idea to make, to write my application on--. I took strips of paper and I made a quilt, and then I water-colored it and then I wrote my application on it. I mean it sounded like a great idea at the time. In retrospect, I'm like: do you think you were trying just a little too hard to stand out? [Laughter] I did not get into Brown. And I was trying to make the decision. I had applied to Penn [University of Pennsylvania]. I was very unenthused about

going to school there because it was twenty minutes away from where I grew up. And I got into there and I got into Northwestern. And I have to say, I don't know if I actually ever applied--. That was the first time I started thinking about North Carolina, and for whatever reason, I was really drawn to UNC. [The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill] And I knew it was a long shot because of being an out-of-state kid, my chances were just slim. So I think I might not have applied, but I'm not even sure. I'd love to be able to remember what even made me interested in that. Anyway, so I got, I had to choose between going to [Northwestern in] Chicago and going to West Philadelphia, and I will never forget this. This is probably the most emblematic thing of privilege, class and education privilege, my dad has ever directly said to me, but we were talking about my choices, and he said, "This is your choice, and I want you to make the choice, but I want you to just remember that you're going to spend four years at a place and you're going to spend the rest of your life being from that place, that school." And he was clearly saying, "You have the chance to for the rest of your life be a person that went to an Ivy League university. And you need to really think about that." [Laughter]

BB: No pressure, though.

CH: No pressure. [Laughter]

BB: That's Zak snoring in the background there, too, just to make a note.

CH: Which is kind of sweet. [Laughter] And so I chose Penn. Did I choose only because of what my dad said? No, I didn't. But I think it was a factor. I did not love Chicago. I was not, you know, that enamored by the area. So I ended up going to Penn and I--. You know, my parents were really clear. They were like, "You're away. You are away at school.

We are not going to expect you to come home.” And that was real and I didn’t go home more often than anybody else did. I did waitress all through college, so I was twice a week on a train out to the suburbs to this waitressing job at this fancy restaurant where I knew I could make a lot of money. I did that most of my college career. So that was different. And I don’t know how much would be interesting to say about Penn. You can decide what you want me to say.

BB: Did Penn shape you in any way politically?

CH: [Laughter]

BB: Were there political awakenings there? Were there professors that were--?

[Laughter] You sort of shrugged and wrinkled your nose.

CH: I know.

BB: So not the most inspiring epic in your life period?

CH: Not the most inspiring. So I think I have some sadness when I think about college. I don’t know if I would quite call it a regret, but I think I would’ve been much better off at a very small liberal arts college, rather than being thrown into this very large urban university where there is so much pre-professional tracking. Everybody I knew was like pre-law, pre-med, pre-business, everyone. So that off the bat was just hard. And I wasn’t ready. I just, I wanted to say very clearly, and I think this is--. My guess is this is true for a majority of kids. I just was not emotionally ready for college. And if I’d taken a year to work or travel or study, you know, outside of that environment, I just think I would’ve gotten so much more out of all the money my folks were spending, the amount of time I was putting into it. I think I was so concerned about fitting in and making friends and am I going to be dating anyone,

and all this stuff, but to the total sacrifice, I would say, of knowledge, which doesn't mean I didn't learn anything, but a fraction of what I could've gotten. So I know it was a really formative time for me, but mostly what I would say is it was formative in the ways I got away or--. It was formative in spite of things, rather than because of them. So my junior year, I decided to go study abroad for a semester, went to Italy. That was a life-changing thing because it was just getting out from everything I'd known and realizing that how much I could create a life that I loved, and I loved living there. I loved, you know, Florence, there's like nothing not to love. And the people I met and the language and studying history there. I did a lot of photography. I feel like I became an artist for a little while. You know, it was just like all these things. There was a moment where my photography teacher called me out of class because these photos I'd taken and produced in the dark room the day before, he thought were so good that he had to tell me. And I was like, "Really?" I mean it was just like, you know, nothing like that had ever happened to me before. But I just, I loved Italy. I loved, loved, loved living there. And when I got back, I was so-- I traveled around Europe for a little bit with friends and then I was just--. I came back and I was really bereft and really did not know what to do with myself. And that's when I went to the volunteer office on campus back at Penn. I was like, "I'm looking for something to do. I need some--." You know, it was kind of too late to find a good summer job and I was going to be just doing temp work. So the woman in the volunteer office handed me a brochure for this event called the Great Hunger Cleanup, which was a fundraising event for hunger-related programs, locally and abroad. And it was run by a group called the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness. I had no idea what it was, but I was like, for whatever reason, I think that was

probably the most significant moment in terms of my life, the track that I am on, my path. That was the beginning because, for whatever reason, I took the thing from her. She was like, "Why don't you take it home and think about it? It's kind of a big project to organize," because there was a lot involved in it. And I was like, "I'll do it." And she was like, "Okay." And basically what that meant was that it was a yearlong organizing effort where I met with a lot of different communities, neighbors of the university, mostly lower-income African American communities. We developed I think three or five cleanup projects in their neighborhoods. And then I recruited a ton of students who would then get sponsors. So the idea was it was like a cleanup-a-thon, but the money was all going to hunger awareness. So we did a lot of education programs around hunger relief, too. And there had never been an event in Philly before. This was a national thing. And we raised a lot of money. And so of course I got a call from the national office, and they were like, "We want you to come work here." And I was like, "Okay." Well I hadn't been offered any other jobs. I hadn't applied for any other jobs, because at Penn you had to stick your resume in the slots to get interviewed, and who comes to campus to interview? Big companies, so I didn't put my resume in any of those slots. But I interviewed with the national campaign and they offered me a starting salary of \$11,000. I was like, that is more money than I have ever made in my life. [Laughter] This is 1988. And I was like, "Okay, I'll do it." So I moved to Boston to start that job the following fall. And that's where I really learned how to be an organizer.

BB: What stands out as like a real lesson learned? Which one pops to your mind first?

CH: From?

BB: From your time there with that organization.

CH: From the campaign?

BB: Yeah.

CH: I'd say two things from that time. One was an analysis of capitalism that I did not have, and a political and economic analysis of this country that I did not have. And then just learning the actual tools and skills of organizing and what it takes to build relationships and how you stay in touch with folks, how you work--. I was going to be working with other students. So, how do you support people to do what they're doing? So it was a lot about leadership and organizing, I would say. I could probably get into more, but--.

BB: Not feeling interested in getting into it. [Laughter]

CH: Yeah, not really.

BB: I wonder what that's about.

CH: I think it's just about wanting to check in with you about what else you want to talk about today, because I think there's probably some other interesting stuff from that era, but I don't know if--. I'm happy to leave it and move on to like a couple other things before we wrap up, or I don't know. What do you want to do?

BB: Um, let's see. So we've been talking about an hour and thirty-five minutes.

CH: Oh, okay.

BB: Are you feeling--? I want to do what--. I want to honor how you're feeling, like how your energy is. Do you want a break? Do you want to--?

CH: I need a break.

BB: You just want to know what direction, where the conversation's going the rest of

the time today?

CH: Yeah, I guess I'm curious if there's like other things that you have on your mind to get into.

BB: I do, but one of the pieces of work is sort of following the chronological piece.

CH: Okay.

BB: So, the work, and then how'd you get to Duke, and then like what was involved in those transitions, and what were some key lessons from those. So that's kind of the chronological path.

CH: Okay.

BB: And then of course, I--.

CH: Then I'm happy to keep talking about the campaign.

BB: Okay, we'll do that, then.

CH: What were you going to say? Sorry.

BB: Um, yeah, that's kind of how it goes, chronologically, and then of course, I mean the questions that always excite me the most are these guilt came up in my mind earlier. You had talked about class guilt and white guilt and I'm always really interested in capturing people's thoughts who've been doing organizing for a long time around those questions.

CH: I don't think I have that much interesting to say about guilt, honestly, but I'm happy to try.

BB: [Laughter]

CH: I don't have a lot of it, so I don't have a lot to say. I don't have a lot of patience

for it, either.

BB: [Laughter]

CH: I could talk about that.

BB: I think that's very interesting.

CH: [Laughter] I'm sure you do.

BB: So, chronologically, does that--?

CH: Yeah, I guess so, yeah.

BB: What's the hesitation? I'm curious.

CH: Honestly, I'm trying to figure out what is what you want to do, that's all. I'm sorry, okay.

BB: I really don't have an attachment. We can keep going chronologically, unless you're feeling bored and you want to hop back to those bigger questions. We could do that, too, or if you think those other types of questions are more interesting. I'll get some water while you think about it.

CH: Ponder.

BB: I'm not being very helpful, am I?

CH: No, that's okay. You're being honest, which is much more important. I think we should finish, I think we should do the chronological thing.

BB: Okay.

CH: I think that the more you can like pop in with a question so that I'm getting to stuff that's really compelling, that would be helpful. I mean I could start talking about the campaign a little bit, and then you can--. Does that make sense?

BB: Yes. What you're saying feels very compelling, though.

CH: Okay.

BB: So tell me more about the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness.

CH: So, my first job was the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, and I was hired to be the organizer for the Southeast, which was very interesting. That was the beginning of my connection with the South. And there were a few significant seeds, I would say, that got planted during that time that are all different, although very related. So the first seed has to do with leadership. The guy that recruited me was a guy that had been like a mentor to me when I was doing the work I did in college around hunger issues.

BB: Who was that?

CH: His name is Bill Hoogterp. And I kind of was really enamored with him, like his level of commitment and just things about him, I just was really, like, "Oh I want to be that kind of person in the world, you know, that's just--." Yeah, the first week I got there, literally the end of my first week, he was like, "Oh, I want to talk to you." And I was like, "Okay." And we sat down in this little room and he was like, "I've been offered a position at COOL," the Campus Outreach Opportunity League, where his mentor was running things, this guy Wayne Meisel, who's still a good friend of mine, had started that organization, was running that organization. Bill had always really wanted to work for Wayne and with Wayne, and a job had opened up for him there, and he was like, "I'm leaving." And he was leaving like pretty immediately. And I was like, "Are you kidding?" Like I mean I don't know much. I'm

twenty-one years old. I'm not super schooled in the way of organizations. I had no idea what had been going on behind the scenes, but I was pissed. I was pissed. And in the end, that was like the best thing that could've happened to me because as a result, I got so much more leadership responsibility, ended up working really closely with the woman who was the director of the hunger campaign. Her name's Leslie Samuelrich. She was a wonderful first boss to have. She was so, such a good mentor trainer. I mean she taught me so much about how to balance short-term and long-term, how to build relationships, how to find your way to the best person in any given school, because we were working all with college students. I just, I learned a lot from her. So there was a seed around leadership and responsibility. And when Leslie came to me and said, "I think your job is going to change a little because Bill's leaving," I just had no qualms about it. I was like, "Okay." I mean I was just more pissed that he was leaving, because I felt this personal relationship with him and I felt like he'd made a promise to keep mentoring me, even though, of course that hadn't been an explicit promise, but I was happy to like jump in.

I mean I've just always had initiative. I've always had confidence on that level, right? And that I'm sure is partly a function of privilege and education and class and, you know, one of the greatest things about my dad, even though I wouldn't call him like super progressive, I mean he's very liberal around social--. His social values I would say are fairly progressive, fairly liberal, whatever. But as a girl growing up, I never felt any sense of limitation, of like what I could or couldn't do. And there were a lot of explicit statements about, you know, "You can do anything you want," and those kinds of things. So I think that's stuck with me. I was like, "Sure, I'll learn how to use this PageMaker program and

start doing our newsletter.” And you know, within six months, I’d created this advocacy program around hunger issues that students could plug into around the country. I mean I just sort of like was, I really thrived in an unstructured, “You have a lot of responsibility. Go make it happen,” kind of environment.

BB: Oh, there’s a theme here.

CH: I know, and I’m really learning now that not everyone does, so like when I think about the other folks on staff at stone circles, I’m like-- I mean most people need a little more structure than me. [Laughter] And then there was this seed around analysis. And we were a project of the PIRG’s [Public Interest Research Group] national organization, Political Interest Research Group, started by Ralph Nader, doing mostly advocacy around consumer and environmental issues, had really won some huge victories on different state levels. MASS-PIRG was one of the biggest statewide chapters, so we were sort of a project of theirs. So I got to learn a lot of organizing from them. I had to go around and canvas one summer, which I hated. So that’s like going door to door. I went to D.C. to work on that canvas and you had to go door-to-door and ask people for money to support the Clean Air Act or that was mostly what we were working on that summer. But that is democracy. That’s democracy, fucking showing up at someone’s door and knocking on their door, and being like, “Do you give a shit? And if you do, will you give us thirty-five dollars?”

BB: Capitalism and democracy.

CH: Yeah, but it’s like, bringing an issue to somebody’s front door just doesn’t happen that much. So that was good training, as much as I didn’t like it.

BB: What did you not like about it? Is this the introvert thing?

CH: Yeah, my god. I mean the only time I think I've actually been okay with that kind of door-to-door stuff is when I was canvassing for the Obama campaign in Mebane. And even that, I wasn't, you know, overjoyed about, but I felt really strongly about it. It's just not my favorite thing, showing up at someone's front doorstep and being like, "Hi, I'm not sure what you're doing in there, but I thought we might talk a minute." [Laughter] It's so weird. So that job like made me so much of who I am, in some ways. I mean my ability to kind of go into so many different kinds of environments and situations and get along with people, I mean you just never knew what you were going to find when I showed up on a college campus and met with their group. Every group was different. Every college atmosphere was different. So something about like, you know, being comfortable with the strangers, quote unquote, and new environments. And I really enjoyed it a lot, and what happened there was that the needs of the PIRGs as an institution always overshadowed the needs of these, what were to them, these small side student projects, like the Hunger Campaign. And I had been connecting and really building like a small leadership group of students from around the country, and we wanted to do more around--. We wanted to do more advocacy and we wanted to do more organizing. And the PIRGs were like, "No, this project is really about education." And it was a way to just bring people into the PIRG world, but they were not interested in us getting political, which was the biggest paradox. And it was very frustrating. So that's why I left.

BB: What year was that when you left?

CH: That was the very beginning of 1991.

BB: So is this when you moved to the [Philadelphia] Children's Network?

CH: That was a part-time job that I--. Yeah, not part-time, but I did take a consulting job, but that's really when I started Empty the Shelters, after that. And PCN was like a paid consulting work to kind of--. I don't remember the exact timing of what happened when. And the one other thing I would say about the Campaign job and leaving there was that I had, another seed was just this growing clarity around my own health, physical, emotional health. So the culture there, which was the culture of the PIRGs, is to work twelve to fourteen-hour days, and then to go out for pizza or burgers and beer with your coworkers, and then, ideally, to be sleeping with one of them. That was like the way that--. That was the norm.

BB: I'm not sure it's changed that much from what I know about PIRGs.

CH: I bet it hasn't changed that much.

BB: Interesting.

CH: That is interesting.

BB: So what were you learning about from that?

CH: So it's fascinating to me, because it's very easy to fall into that. You want to make friends. You want to then, you know, keep the friends you have. And for a while, I wasn't interested in doing anything else with my time, so it made perfect sense to work really hard. I was really into what I was doing, and then blow off some steam. I think that there was just an accumulation for me of like real suffering in that, because my health started to suffer. I started to get really bad migraines. I was eating like shit and putting on weight. I wasn't really exercising that much, but it would come and go. And I had, it was probably the only period of my life where I mean I would--. I'm going to use the term like "sleeping around," like I did that, you know? So there was a lot more casual sex than I had had in college, and

then I was--. Yeah, so that probably continued for, you know, a couple years after that, but that environment just cultivated that.

When I left, I was trying to deal with the migraines and then I just hit this like really intense wall of depression that led me to get into some therapy. And it was pretty serious, like there were definitely like some suicidal threads popping up for me. And I think my parents were worried. I think I was worried. I don't want to blame the PIRGs for any of that. I don't want this to sound like that. I think that it was a really awesome job, in more ways than not. I learned a lot, but it was the first experience I had of like completely sacrificing personal health for work, and the effects were pretty, pretty huge on a few different levels. And I just assumed it was me, that I was, you know, "Wow, it's a bummer I have these migraines." "Wow, it's a bummer I'm depressed." Da-da-da-da-da. So, I didn't do much other than try to fix some of these things, like I didn't come to any wisdom about why this was going on. It would take another couple years to really start to put it into a larger, more interesting frame around spiritual needs, emotional need, sustainability, but that didn't come up then.

BB: Not in therapy?

CH: No, because I ended up--. I'm not sure how this happened, but I ended up doing a cognitive behavioral therapy, which is very practical. It's like you learn these tools for shifting your thinking, and it didn't quite work for me, so I wasn't there for very long. So I'm going to get fuzzy on the time, but there was some of this sort of living back with my folks and doing some of this work around the depression. And I got some consulting work from the Philadelphia Children's Network, and I can't remember how that--. My mom would

remember. Which was great, because it was a great sort of transitional thing. And then the idea for starting Empty the Shelters came about, which I don't think I put on there. Did I? Okay.

BB: You mentioned very briefly, "became founding director of Empty the Shelters." And it was sort of two years.

CH: Yeah, so I started to reconnect with some of the folks I'd worked with when I was at Penn, and some of the younger people I had met since, students who had been organizing around hunger and homelessness, and some of the students there who really wanted to be doing more political and politicized work. And we started meeting and talking about what we could do, and we were connected with some older grassroots, formerly homeless activists, folks that had come out of the shelter system, and were now like just these amazing advocates and organizers in the city. And it's amazing to me looking back that they were even interested in us, but I guess we'd had a little bit of a track record at that point. And we were having dinner one night and we were talking--. And they were telling us some stories about Freedom Summer and we were talking about the power of young people.

We just came to this notion that what we really needed was to start some kind of summer program where young folks could come to Philadelphia and work with homeless folks, because Philadelphia at that point was a city that had about as many abandoned buildings as it did homeless people or something like that. I mean there were like thirty thousand units of either abandoned housing or abandoned buildings, and about that many people living in the shelter system, something crazy like that. So we came up with this idea. And I need to remember this guy's name. Chris, somebody. I have it written down. [Chris

Sprowal] Older guy, formerly homeless guy, he was like, “We just need to empty the damn shelters.” And I was like, “That’s what we’ll call it. Empty the Shelters.” And the second line would be “Fill the Homes.” And we created this amazing program. Six months later, we had forty students from around the country come for eight weeks. I think it’s one of the best things I’ve ever done, like because it was such an amazing collective effort, and this partnership between--. It was actually all white, younger organizers, myself and like three or four other people, and then these homeless advocates, formerly homeless folks, we just were able to create something really special. And then we linked up with George Lakey in Training for Change. And so that was the first time I met George, who became like a huge mentor force of my life for a really long time. And they developed the training component, which is what ultimately I think made it much more transformational than it would have been.

BB: Can you describe the training component?

CH: Yeah, so the whole thing was, it was eight weeks. Students lived in these group houses at Penn, and each of them were placed with organizations around the city that were doing work on homelessness. And as much as we could, we tried to only work with organizations that were being led by low-income people. So it wasn’t--. They weren’t service placements, for the most part. They were organizing placements. And somebody had recommended that I talk to George, and he, I think, right away got the power of what we were doing, and organized, sort of proposed to me, basically, this weeklong, like this initial weeklong training that the students would go through. And we loved it. I mean it was like right away, I was like I totally got, you know from the PIRG experience, like I got how

important it was. And that training combined a lot of stuff around oppression, so a lot of examining of early messages around race, a lot of caucusing. We did a lot of caucusing around gender, as well. A lot of more experiential, personal growth-type stuff.

I think one of the most powerful things we did was have a speak-out downtown on a street corner. So we had to prepare like these three-minute little speeches about something we were concerned about, but we weren't told why. And then the next thing we knew, there was George with a milk crate, and he was like, "Okay, we've got a subway token for everyone." And we all got on the subway. We went down to the busiest corner in downtown Philadelphia at lunch, and he just turned the milk crate upside down and got on top of it. I guess he must have prepared us a little bit of like what a speak-out was, but we spent the next two hours just one by one getting up on the milk crate and--. I know! Having to talk about something. People stopping, people walking by, people listening, a little bit of heckling. So it was things like that, way out of your comfort zone. And then the rest of the summer, we brought him back, I think, once a week. We had trainings, but mostly they were working placements. We did a lot of direct action that summer, a lot of protests. There was a lot going down. There were welfare cuts happening in the state welfare budget. There was a lot of work with the Philadelphia Housing Authority. There was a very poignant moment at a town meeting, town hall meeting we called it, that we organized for a lot of folks living in some of the shelters. This one woman got up and told her story about how long she'd been on the waiting list, I guess for Section 8 housing. And another woman got up and was like, "I've been on that waiting list." And then another, and then another, and it was like, "Okay. It seems like there's something that needs to happen with this damn waiting list." And the next

thing, we were all down in front of the Philadelphia Housing Authority a week later, this huge action. We closed the street, and of course the guy that was the head of it wanted to buy these women off, basically give them their vouchers. So there was like a whole other next phase of like, you know, “Wow, what do we do? We want these women to be taken care of. They need housing for their kids, but that’s not, that wasn’t our goal. Our goal isn’t to change three family’s lives.” So there was that whole process of--.

BB: Was that tense?

CH: It was, but those women were amazing. And they knew what was going on. They knew the deal, and they were like, “No, this is not about us,” basically. This whole thing, not just our work, but a lot of other things led to this kind of full-blown investigation of the housing authority, and yeah, I mean we cannot take credit for that. We were a part of it, but there was a lot of other things happening. So empowering for the students, and so many amazing, authentic relationships built that summer between the students, between the students and the low-income folks, I mean it was just like--. It just became kind of one group, not so segmented like it normally is.

BB: You think this is the summer of '90, '91?

CH: '91. And then they ran it again in '92, and I was a little bit less involved. I was sort of--. I knew I was going to be going to grad school. And I think I was a trainer that summer. I think somewhere in there I sort of realized that I was a better trainer than I was an organizer, which I think is definitely true. So it sort of made sense for me to do that, but I helped, you know, helped them put it together. And then it started sparking--. It sparked programs in other cities. So a couple of the students went back to Atlanta and started one in

Atlanta, in conjunction with the Task Force for the Homeless. There were a couple of students at Stanford [University] who started one in San Francisco. And I have to say that one of those kids is Chris Daly. He's now a supervisor for the city of San Francisco, which is like their city council. He's on the board of supervisors. And the other one is a guy named Steve Williams, who runs POWER, which is like one of the most effective organizations made up of low-income people. They're based in San Francisco also, still. It was a training ground for these like incredibly badass kids, a lot of whom are doing really awesome work.

BB: What a phenomenal impact.

CH: Yeah, it's cool. You just never know what's going to happen. So it'd be fun to track down all those folks and see what they're up to now. That's where I love Facebook, like I can find every single one of them. I mean I'm in touch with a handful of them.

BB: Can you say a little bit about who George Lakey is?

CH: Yeah. George Lakey is now technically retired, is the founder of an organization in Philadelphia called Training for Change. And Training for Change basically trains people in non-violent social justice tactics, but what they mostly do is train trainers. So, I'm trying to think of the best way to describe it. They have these kind of signature programs, training programs. So there's a training for social action trainers. That's their basic weekend training. And then there are a lot of advanced training programs as well. They also have done a lot of work in conflict spots around the world. So they'll-- You know, George will get invited in to train the leaders of the underground gay/lesbian movement in Russia. This was like ten years ago, which was a very, and I'm sure still is a very persecuted group of people in Russian society, and very hard to organize. He's done trainings at the Burmese-Thai border for

people. You know, this is George's life. He just like, he has--. I wouldn't say he has no fear, because he does, but he just works with it in a great way. He's able to go into almost any situation where people are fighting for justice and make them stronger and better at what they do. And that's kind of who he is, I would say. I got to work with him in the Balkans a couple times. We did work with a group of young people that were from, you know, eight or nine different Balkan countries. This was right after the war in '91. So this was a little later in the '90s. Anyway, it's a whole other thing.

BB: Talk about the front lines.

CH: Yeah, I mean, not risky, because the war was over and these kids were trying to move on, which that was like the thing there, like, let's move on, and you have so much post-traumatic stress and not a real willingness to work with that, understandably because there just wasn't a lot of resources around to work with it. So instead it was like, "Let's move on. Let's build community projects." And you know, it was good, good impetus.

BB: Is that what you were doing '92 to '95?

CH: No, I was in grad school. So in 1992, I moved down here to Durham to go to graduate school at Duke in public policy. And I didn't start working with George in the Balkans 'til much later. But I had, you know, stayed in touch with him and we were--. I'd go to trainings. I mean we were sort of in and out of each other's lives.

BB: Let's take a break. Do you want to?

CH: Yeah.

BB: I need to get--. Let's take a break here. It is about--. So we recorded just about two hours and five minutes.

CH: Oh.

BB: It's about 12:25.

CH: Oh, yeah. You mean like we're stopping, right?

BB: Um, I don't know. Let's talk about it.

CH: Okay.

BB: So we... I had a and we've decided to stop here for the day.

CH: Because I was exhausted. It's my fault.

BB: [Laughter] No, Okay, thanks Claudia.

END OF INTERVIEW