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R.47. Speaking of Feminism: Today's Activists on the Past, Present, and Future of Feminism

Interview R-0873

Betty Barnard

July 24, 2015

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ABSTRACT – BETTY BARNARD

Interviewee: Betty Barnard

Interviewer Rachel Gelfand

Interview date: July 24, 2015

Location: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:10:49

Betty Barnard is the Community Education and Advocacy Manager at the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The interview begins with her background in Pensacola, Florida. Betty describes her grandmothers and the historical context of the city. Her parents are Republicans, but she always gravitated towards left politics. In high school, she had a teacher who introduced her to the Young Feminist Alliance, an after school group. Abortion access became a key interest for her and she chose to do a service-learning project at the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. There were attacks and bombings at abortion clinics in Pensacola in the 1990s, which she learned about while volunteering at this organization. Betty describes how she sees learning about feminism as an ongoing process and how her views have shifted over time. She talks about learning about trans women's experiences at the Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC). There is a brief discussion of the political climate at Smith College, which interviewee and interviewer attended at the same time. Betty describes not being politically active on campus. The interview then turns to her activism after college in Pensacola. She worked as an abortion escort at a clinic, which later burned down. She draws the layout of the clinic and explains how they supported patients. She then describes deciding to move to San Francisco. She worked at NARAL and then moved to NARAL's DC offices. She wanted to transfer to Georgia NARAL, but its offices closed and she got laid off in 2008. She then describes her years in graduate school at UGA, during which she interned at the FWHC and focused heavily on abortion issues in her schoolwork. She started an abortion fund with two women in 2011. It became a non-profit and set up an agreement with the FWHC. After graduate school, Betty worked full-time as the Community Engagement Manager at FWHC and left when her multiple roles became too complicated. She says there is a new abortion fund that recently formed in Georgia, which is explicitly comprised of donations by and for women of color. This has been a wake up call for the fund she helped start, which is mainly comprised of white women. She describes her current work as a program manager for federal funding streams for crime victim services, such as child advocacy and domestic violence centers. Her work is to connect state groups to federal funds. She tells the story of being laid off in 2008, which was an intense and emotional experience. The

conversation moves to issues of racial violence. Betty wants the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to be at the forefront of local activism. She notes the high statistics of domestic violence fatalities of African American women. She describes upcoming trainings in anti-racism and sexual identity non-discrimination. She talks about the importance of self-identification. Betty responds to questions about the role of social media. She reflects on the current political climate and the effects of the Obama presidency. He is publicly pro-choice and has daughters. He has brought attention and funding to issues of sexual assault. The interview pauses while Betty makes a work call. The conversation picks back up on the topic of feminisms. At the end of the interview, Betty reflects on how the interview fits into her current life and future work. It closes with a final question about feminism and riot grrl music.

FIELD NOTES – BETTY BARNARD

Interviewee: Betty Barnard

Interviewer: Rachel Gelfand

Interview date: July 24, 2015

Location: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:10:49

THE INTERVIEWEE. Betty Barnard was born in Pensacola, Florida. She became interested in abortion access advocacy in high school. She graduated from Smith College in 2007. She then returned to Pensacola and worked as an escort for an abortion clinic. Betty worked at NARAL in San Francisco and Washington, DC in 2008. After she was laid off in NARAL's downsizing, she went to graduate school at UGA and received an MA in Nonprofit Organizations with a Women's Studies Graduate Certificate in 2011. She worked at the Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC) from 2011 to 2013 as the Community Engagement Coordinator and was a part of a collective of women that founded an abortion access fund. She currently works at the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council as a Planning and Policy Development Specialist. This involves writing and facilitating federal grants under laws such as the Victims of Crime Act and Violence against Women Act. She works with local groups receiving federal funds.

THE INTERVIEWER. Rachel Gelfand is a Ph.D student in American Studies at UNC Chapel Hill. She is conducting research for Rachel Seidman's book project on feminism.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. The interview was conducted on a Friday afternoon at 104 Marietta Street. This is the building of the State Bar of Georgia. It had a replica of Woodrow Wilson's office in the lobby and was very much a state government building. During the interview, Betty shared her personal history in Pensacola, Florida. She then discussed her high school activism and early role models in reproductive justice. She was less involved politically in college. Back in Pensacola after school, she describes working as an escort at a local clinic and then moving to San Francisco to work in reproductive rights. She had a position at NARAL and describes how the economic crash of 2008 precipitated her losing her job and deciding to go back to school. She details how she helped start an abortion fund and worked on abortion access issues during graduate school. The interview then turns to her non-profit work at FWHC and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. She contrasts being on both sides of funding in the non-

profit world. The interview covers issues of racial violence and tensions between white feminists and feminists of color. She tells the story of being laid off from NARAL and the effects of Obama's presidency. The interview pauses while Betty makes a phone call. A grant she was working on was due at the end of the day. The interview ends with reflections on feminism, riot grrl, and Betty's current work in relation to feminism.

TRANSCRIPT: Betty Barnard

Interviewee: BETTY BARNARD

Interviewer: Rachel Gelfand

Interview Date: July 24, 2015

Location: Offices of Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:05:37.8

RACHEL GELFAND: Okay so it's July 24th, 2015. My name is Rachel Gelfand.

And we're in the offices of—what is it?

BETTY BARNARD: The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

RG: Do you want to introduce yourself?

BB: Sure. I'm Betty Barnard, and I am, well, right now I'm the Planning and Policy Development Specialist. And I guess I just said that automatically because I'm at work. So [laughs] yeah, maybe you didn't need to know that for the interview.

RG: No, but it's where we're meeting you at. So we're going to start with just a little bit about your background. So where are you from? Where did you grow up? The first question here is what do you remember about your grandparents on either side.

BB: Oh okay.

RG: So as far back as you want to go.

BB: Okay. I was born and raised in Pensacola, Florida on the Gulf Coast in the Florida panhandle, and I remember a lot about my grandparents because my family is pretty close knit. And both of my parents worked. So my paternal grandmother took care of my brother and I a lot. I have a brother who is two years younger. [She] would pick us up from day school or preschool, and then we would stay with her a lot. And my maternal

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grandmother, even though she wasn't as involved in raising me, we all lived in the same neighborhood at first. And then they moved out. It took my grandmother a little longer to move out, but Granny and Grand-Sir, Grand-Sir is my mom's stepdad—we're also really close with our family and I spent a lot of time with them and I still am, I'm much closer, I just have a closer bond I think with my Granny, but Grand-Sir died in 2011. So I don't know. They're really interesting people.

My Granny was born in southern Missouri. I don't know who my paternal grandfather is. Well, I do, but I haven't ever met him before. Apparently he still lives in Albuquerque. So related to the feminist aspect of the purpose of the interview, both of my grandmothers, even though I don't think they would openly identify as being feminist *per se*, have always had jobs out their entire lives, even when they were raising their kids. I think my grandmother, my paternal grandmother, for a little while didn't have a job, but they both worked. And when I know through my father at least when *Roe v. Wade*, the decision was passed down, at least at that time both of my grandmothers expressed pro-choice views, so to speak. I think now they're both like fundamentalist Southern Baptists so they may not.

RG: Age.

BB: They may not cop to that [now]. Their views may have changed very radically. I haven't talked to them about that issue. But yeah, I know that about them. And I think that that when I found that out in high school that sort of gave me some courage in doing the work that I was doing, and the bulk of the work I've done in the feminist movement being with reproductive rights, health and justice.

RG: What was their work?

BB: What were their jobs?

RG: Yeah.

BB: I'm not sure what all my Grandma did, or my Granny. But when Grand-Sir started construction company in, was it, mid-[19]70s or something, Granny became his bookkeeper and operations manager, and then she did that for the rest of her career. And even though she's been retired for a decade now she's basically has still been involved in that and now runs his business now that he's deceased along with my uncle. And Grandma worked at first with the telephone company when Southern Bell, which is no longer in existence but was later an educator and then worked for the Escambia County School Board, which is the, Pensacola is in Escambia County.

RG: So what was it like growing up in Pensacola?

BB: Pensacola is a really, uh—I was going to say militaristic town, but that's not the term I'm looking for. It is a military town. There is a large naval air station base there. There's also a lot of bases up and down the coast too, especially in the panhandle. But there's a big one there where all branches of the military send their pilots to train for naval aviation. It's also a very historic town. It's one of the oldest continuously occupied cities in North America, and it's the city of five flags or maybe it's six, which one's the theme park, six?

RG: Six.

BB: It's the city of five flags.

RG: Six is Texas I think.

BB: The state of six flags or something like that? Okay. But yeah [Pensacola] has been colonized by the Spanish, the French, the British, and then not really colonized by,

but well sort of, by Confederate and United States flag, yeah. I don't know why I just [listed those], that was just a mental exercise. But so it's really old. It's on the coast. There are a lot of military folks there so it's kind of a transient city, but at the same time it's also historical city. So those are two interesting things in opposition to one another. It's hot as hell. It's right on the water, which I love and miss. The major population demographics are: there's a lot of white people; there's a lot of black people. There's also huge Vietnamese and Greek populations, mostly I think because after the war in Vietnam when people resettled to America they wanted to be on the coast too. They were like, "Oh this is kind of like home. And it's cheap." And for Greek people I've heard the same thing. They're coming to America they want to be on a similar warm climate on the coast.

RG: Did you move, did your family go there for the military naval—?

BB: I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't know, I can never remember why my mom's side of the family moved there. But my dad's side, I think that his father who died before I was, way before I was born was assigned there through his job. He was a land surveyor. And he had been living in Georgia and went to UGA [University of Georgia] for his graduate education I think, and then he was a surveyor here. Then they moved to Pensacola.

RG: So did you do activism in the, like before high school or--?

BB: Yeah, that's how I got started. So being that it's very military-heavy, it's also a lot of people have very conservative political values. Not that those two things necessarily go hand in hand. But it's a pretty good barometer. And I always felt like I was in opposition to, politically, to almost everyone that I met. And I really I cannot say why

to be honest, because my parents are both Republicans and always have been since I became aware of politics. But I just never agreed with that and I always gravitated towards left and radical social and political issues. And when I was in high school, my freshman year, I had this awesome teacher who taught this class called Increased Skills, which basically is research skills. And she was also the faculty liaison for the Young Feminist Alliance [YFA]. So I started going to these meetings and I immediately felt like I had found a home and a meaning for what I might possibly do in my life for my education. And for her class she also did service learning projects. So I did stuff with fundraising for domestic violence shelters and for AIDS relief organizations. And we did debates. I remember the debate project I did was actually a pro-life versus pro-choice thing. Even though I picked pro-choice or was assigned it—I can't remember what—I actually struggled with it a lot, which I think, which is why the reproductive justice framework learning about that later made so much sense. Learning about like how it's not just a dichotomous black and white issue, how it's really complex and that there's room for more than one, for many different views on abortion, what it means to people. But all that to say that was I think maybe the first time I had meaningfully encountered that issue.

And then I was in the IB program, International Baccalaureate program, at that high school and part of the IB curriculum is that you have to do a service project. And I can't remember what the exact figures are, but you're supposed to do I think it's 150 hours of general community service doing whatever. Then you do 100 hours of a very focused project with just one, one organization or one purpose. I kept being involved in YFA, and I kind of honed in on reproductive health and reproductive rights as being, was

very central to feminism because I guess as a cisgender heterosexual woman I felt like women's reproductive capacity seemed to be so central in oppression. And the only organization I could find, like any sort of collective working on this issue in Pensacola was the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice [RCRC], and I learned so much from them. I learned that Pensacola had been the site of a couple of different clinic bombings. Since then even in the last couple of years, one has been burned down. I'm not even sure there is an abortion provider in Pensacola anymore. It used to be a couple, several and then there were two and now there are none I think. Sorry I feel I'm going to sneeze. [laughs]

RG: There's a lot of pressure.

BB: A tense moment. But two doctors have been killed there and a clinic escort, and I didn't know this about Pensacola's history. So that was really interesting and sad and motivating to learn about that. And that group, the Pensacola RCRC had formed out of the clinic bombings and harsh political climate in the late [19]80s and the [19]90s where this violence had also occurred, or at the time this violence had also occurred. And they had kept going and they were, for the most part, pretty aged. The members were age range 60 to 80. So I mean I was like a golden child, Rachel. They loved me.

RG: You were like 16, 17, 18.

BB: I was 16, 17, and they were like, "You care about this? Oh my gosh, come sit next to me. Like let me tell you all about it. Here are some cookies." They were *thrilled* that I wanted to get involved. So I worked with them doing some organizing and went out to try to visit some clinics in Mobile [Alabama] and take an informal census of

what services were available along that stretch of the Gulf Coast. Mobile's only 45 minutes to an hour away from Pensacola. So it's the next, the closest option—

RG: City.

BB: If a woman can't get an, somebody can't get an abortion in Pensacola. It's really funny to think about it in retrospect because I did, I didn't do shit. I mean I tried to and I thought I was doing stuff.

RG: You were learning.

BB: Yeah, but I can't tell you what the outcomes of any of that were. It was maybe a waste of time.

RG: So you already answered a lot of these questions—

BB: Oh cool.

RG: On sort of role models was a teacher in high school, and then you had these little, this older generation sort of ushering you in. How did that—then we met and you went to college. I met you I think right when you got to college, I think right?

BB: You were my big sister.

RG: Right.

BB: My big sib.

RG: So we were, I mean, yeah. I think the personal relationship should be on the record. So you came. I met you. Then, I don't know. How did you find feminist movement? It sounds like somewhat in high school you were finding reproductive justice.

BB: Yeah, that's actually, that's an interesting question because I think I could say that I found it through that teacher, mentor person Sara Cohan. I may have found it

through her in a way, and then the person I had the deepest relationship with at the RCRC which is Priscilla L'Amour, which is, isn't that an amazing name? She's an amazing lady too. And then I really took a break from it in college so to speak and stepped back from any sort of activism or even identifying as a feminist for the most part. I took one Gender Studies class, and then I was like, I just went off on another direction. Part of it was intentional and another part was just completely unintentional. But then I got involved with [clinic] escorting when I moved home after college.

But I think that the process of discovering feminism so to speak has been like continual and ongoing. I learn so much about it constantly. I learned about the different feminisms that people have and what it means to them. I feel like I kind of soak in what resonates with me or what I feel like when others' stories resonate with me too and I come to see, like I become an ally or whatever the best term might be now. I used to be, this is hard to admit but it's true, but I used to like—I totally didn't understand transgender issues at all. I remember even at Smith [College] encountering the first people I met who transitioned to being male and to that gender expression. I was like, "What the fuck? Like, that doesn't make any sense. Why would you do that?" And refusing to call people by their preferred pronouns or names and just being really insensitive. Since then [I have been] learning about that. Again, hard to say but true—just having other encounters with transgender people, especially with trans women, working at the Feminist [Women's Health] Center, and learning about their struggle and how they can't get care there and why that was important and detrimental to the Center as being part of the movement here. Yeah, I think I've done a complete 180 on that. So that's now something that's part of my feminism that has hadn't been before. It's just occurred over

the last like five years or so. So I think discovering feminism is constantly evolving and that keeps it exciting. And it keeps it like fresh in my mind and central in my life definitely.

RG: Yeah, the next question is like, what were the major social and political issues you remember debating in college, and that's one of them, trans politics was definitely a big thing. And I don't know what else do you want to include in that question. But—

BB: I think probably the like sexual orientation politics too, but I don't know if for me it was ever an academic debate so to speak or how is it worded?

RG: Yeah, like what, it says debate but what sort of the political questions of the time?

BB: Yeah, I mean I think those definitely were debated questions. I just think for me, because I had my head up my ass, they were—it was just like things that would be discussed in a more like personal and social level. It wasn't the forefront of my political consciousness or whatever I had at that point in time.

RG: But also I didn't take any women and gender studies classes when I was at Smith, and I think part of that was there was so much already going on I just like steered away from it. I don't know why. It's just sort of what I did. But let's, so then you moved home after college.

BB: Um hmm.

RG: And what did you do?

BB: And when I moved home, almost immediately I moved in with two of my best friends from high school and got a job on Craigslist that was one of the coolest jobs

I've ever had. It was only for about three months, but these people in Jacksonville had a visual real estate company. Like they were—it's kind of creepy—filming. They affixed a camera to the top of my car that was in like a plastic black trunk so it looked very--
[laughs]

RG: Sketchy?

BB: Sketchy, yeah, is the right word. And I drove slowly around Pensacola smoking a lot of weed and listening to classic rock and filming everything because it was like this camera was in this black trunk and then there were camera lenses on like all sides of that trunk, like two on each side and then one in the front and back. So it was like a complete view of wherever I was driving. And—

RG: Bizarre.

BB: [laughs] Really bizarre. So I only had that job for three months before they laid everyone off. And then I started working at a coffee shop and connected with some really awesome women who were going to the local university, and some of them were doing art and they all identified as feminists. And like half of them had had abortions before and were really into what I had been into politically and socially, but were also incorporating this artistic element that I didn't really, I don't think I had ever connected the dots with before, even though a lot of the music and art I liked in high school was like Riot Grrrl and Bikini Kill kind of stuff. I didn't, I never thought of it as being as related or that could be a political outlet for people locally. So that part was really neat. And I don't consider myself to be a creative person either. So I like being around people who think like that. So that kind of fed me. And then I started escorting at a clinic and my boyfriend at the time started escorting with me too. And that's what love is even though

that didn't work out. But I think that political activism, and that kind of like—I don't want to go down that road. That was like, that was really awesome is all I want to say about that.

RG: So what did you do? You stood outside and when someone showed up you just walked with them inside or—

BB: So the set up was horrible at that clinic. It's the one that got burned down a couple of years ago. But the parking lot was incredibly tiny and there was a huge tree in the middle of the lot. So people had to like they would come in this fence from the street. There's the tree and then they would have to like drive around it. [laughing] You can see clearly.

RG: [Looks at Barnard's drawing of the clinic].

BB: There's the tree in the middle, and then they would have to come in and drive in a loop around and drop off the patient, and if she had somebody going with her drop her off, and the clinic building was like right here. And then pretty much parked inside were just staff. There were just a few parking spaces where clients could go. So what eventually ended up happening is that at first the escorts would just kind of let them in and sort of help shield the clients and walk them in the door if they wanted and just be a calming supportive presence because the protestors were out here in the sidewalk yelling things through the gap in the fence. But eventually we started doing like a valet thing where as escorts we would the driver and the client would get out and we would drive their car across the street to a shopping center parking lot. And then we would have to walk back through the protestor gauntlet across this really busy big street in Pensacola so that they would, it was much safer for them to do that, much safer for the clients and

their drivers. So that was every Friday morning from like six a.m. to eleven a.m., and then we'd go to the Pensacola Diner and eat some brunch. And the guy who led that effort was Bill Caplinger, and he could be doing it basically since like before Dr. Gunn and James Barrett, the escort, got killed in [19]90, ninety-whenever it was. So he'd been doing it a long-assed time, like 20 years. And he kept doing it up until the point when it got burned down.

RG: So what were your other positions doing reproductive justice?

BB: So that experience working at the café and then being involved with those local women, like we started our own contemporary women's collective. We were going to do some organizing around that and volunteering at the clinic, and then I realized that—"What am I doing here?" I was drinking and smoking a lot of weed and was like, "This is not—even though I feel like there's an outlet for other things, I'm not living a healthy life or advancing myself here." So I moved to San Francisco and started working for NARAL Pro-Choice California. And then from there I moved to their national office in DC. And at NARAL Pro-Choice California, that was a really good experience. Because even though I was an office manager I got to support all aspects of their organization like with development and marketing and lobbying, helping the executive director manage their political action committee that raised funds for pro-choice candidates, and just learning more about the political process, that aspect of it.

RG: Was that like 2009?

BB: 2008.

RG: 2008.

BB: That was like for five months in 2008. I was living in San Francisco, and then I moved to DC right after Thanksgiving of 2008 and was the Affiliate Affairs Associate. So NARAL had like 23 state affiliates across the country. And what I really wanted to do ultimately was to be back in the South and support the southern, the people doing this work in the southern region. Georgia at the time was the last affiliate standing unless you count Texas, which I guess is technically southern in a lot of ways.

RG: It's all southern to me. [laughing] I'm from Massachusetts.

BB: Yeah.

RG: We used to say Philly is the South.

BB: Well, it depends on where you are.

RG: Yeah.

BB: So the southeast though is different. Like Texas is southwest. I really wanted to be doing something in the Southeast and Georgia folded right before I got there. And I was like, "I'm on a mission. I'm going to support these state affiliates. This is where, on the level of such important political things are happening that are rapidly going the wrong way." And then I got laid off almost immediately, within like six weeks. They had a big round of layoffs. The economy tanked. They laid off like 12 other people, and I was like, "Shit, fuck. I've moved across the country. I gave up a permanent position in the California office to be here. What the hell am I going to do? I'm going to go to grad school and get back in the South." So I went to UGA [University of Georgia]. I started that in August of 2009, and I did a dual master's of nonprofit management and women and gender studies certificate program. So that took me two years. And then I

interned with a couple of different places, but most of my internship credit time was with the Feminist [Women's Health] Center.

And then my last semester, summer semester of 2011, I was interning at the center's clinic and then started working part-time as the grassroots organizer, which I eventually became—that part morphed into my job there as the Community Engagement Coordinator.

And then while I was at UGA I was like, “abortion girl.” Like every single paper and project was on abortion. And I also started, I was involved with the Women's Studies Student Organization [WSSO], was the treasurer and then the co-facilitator and then the Choice USA liaison. Choice USA is now entirely—I can't remember the name of the organization. They moved away from that “choice” language to some more reproductive justice framework. And started an abortion fund and volunteer support network with a woman I met through WSSO.

RG: What's an abortion fund?

BB: It is a—in our case is a nonprofit—but it's just like a collective of people who pool resources and/or fundraise to help people pay for abortions or related costs like the travel, the lodging if they need it, the medication, things like that.

RG: So you started that with other people there?

BB: Yeah, so April and I started that in 2011, and then we found another person to be on the board. We knew we needed at least three people on paper to incorporate in the state of Georgia. And then we got nonprofit status through the National Network of Abortion Funds. We got our first agreement set up with the Feminist Center, using the relationships I had built there. We got a sort of like an MOU [memorandum of

understanding] signed, and then because I started working there it became apparent after, I think it took about a year for me to realize that that was a conflict of interest so that I couldn't do both of those things. Because we were trying to fund those, their clients and also like help them to get abortions. So the clinic staff would get pissed at me and/or call me at my job asking for help. And I was like. "I got to keep these two things separate." And then finally was like actually I can't do both at the same time. So I stepped down, and now I just fund them, not fund them but donate to them.

And now there's another brand new organization here that for a while I had a hard time understanding. I need to learn more about it. I was upset when I heard they were forming because it was like, "Why don't they just, why don't we join forces? Why don't you just join our board and help out with that?" But from what I understand it's an organization that's like created and run by and for women of color. And if they need their own space and organization to do that work then more power to them. And it's actually Georgia() the organization I started that should help them and probably take that as a wakeup call to like look inside and figure out how to become more diverse and reflect the people we serve. Because most of the people that the fund serves, at least when I was there, was women of color. And yet all the women on the board since it was formed and to my knowledge ever since have been white women, I think with maybe like one or two exceptions. So—

RG: And what kind of work do you do here briefly if you don't want to—?

BB: Yeah, now I'm, I am a Planning and Policy Development Specialist is my title, but the way I explain it is that I'm a program manager for several federal funding streams for crime victims' services. And the bulk of the agencies that we fund are child

advocacy centers, sexual assault centers, and domestic violence shelters, and so I definitely bring my lens and my experiences as a feminist and activist to this work. I think almost all the work we do can be linked back to gender-based violence and social justice issues and inequalities. And yeah, that's what I do.

RG: So you're sort of like, you've been on both sides of the funding, being a nonprofit that's applying for funding and then being from the side of funding going towards organizations?

BB: Yeah and here specifically that's definitely the case, because we're—I work at a state agency that's a pass-through entity for federal funds. So I apply to the feds for these funds, and then I make requests for applications or instructions whatever you want to call them for locally-based agencies to apply to get those federal funds.

RG: There's a question what keeps you up at night, in this section?

BB: I assume that's related to feminism.

RG: No, it's just sort of like in your career or we can move on. [laughing] I just, someone I skipped it for one interview and they were like what keeps me up at night is blah, blah, blah. And I was like oh that's really interesting question actually. But the next section is sort of like a few sort of issues that are kind of current political issues. But yeah, I don't know if you want to respond to what keeps you up at night.

BB: Oh, I mean what keeps me up at night is probably unfortunately not related to feminism. It's [that] I really want to move on from my job here right now. I don't know why I'm being quiet. My boss actually knows. I told her point-blank. But yeah, I think the things that keep me up at night are more personal. But when I was really into my work and thinking about it creatively, it was like, what—and I hope the other funders

are thinking about this too—but like, “What can I do to make it easier on the grant recipients to manage this money? Like, how can I make it simpler for them to get and use this effectively so that they can serve more people?” I was actually just talking to a colleague this morning about the increase in funds for reproductive justice work in the Southeast that I’ve seen recently and how it’s both encouraging and frustrating at the same time to see that huge increase. It feels like they’re pouring a lot of money into something that I’m like, “Is it too little or too little too late?” They’ve been ignoring us for like decades, and in a lot of ways I think also writing us off. And now they want to pour their dollars into it. Like, to what extent will the people live here actually have autonomy and discretion to use that funds as they see fit as opposed to these funders in like California or the Northeast? Are we going to have the flexibility to use this money in ways that our communities actually need it and not just what they think we need? So I don’t know. Time will tell with that. Or if it’s a trend or if it will be something long term that we can make sustainable change about.

RG: Yeah, that’s interesting that money’s coming in because a lot of this is sort of like, what funding issues shape the work that you do? Or assuming that there’s no money, that like there is the crash and now there’s less funding, but there’s actually money coming in I guess for reproductive justice?

BB: In the Southeast, yeah I’ve seen like a significant uptick. And then I think recently I’ve also seen like a lot of positions at national organizations become open too like with CLPP [Civil Liberties and Public Policy] or with the National Network of Abortion Funds or with some like RJ Foundation [Reproductive Justice Foundation].

RG: So how do you say the economic crash affected you or—?

BB: Oh my God it affected me so much. I mean like I got laid off from NARAL. Like NARAL downsized a lot. I think coming to [University of] Georgia it definitely, I think it affected my financial aid. It also, starting the abortion fund at the same time I saw how much it was affecting people locally and people's ability to pay for and access abortion services. It definitely impacted the Feminist Center a lot too. They had some really lean times. The salaries still I think remain very low and stagnant for the staff there. I think it also lowered the amount of funds they could get for full-paying clients, as opposed to clients with insurance, as opposed to providing discounted services or grant-funded services. So I think it put a huge strain on people's resources on multiple levels.

RG: So how did you—you just were going to your office and you got like a memo that we're laying off.

BB: No, it was—

RG: How did you find out you were being downsized?

BB: It was a Friday afternoon. It was Friday before Obama's inauguration. So we actually had that Monday off. Was it MLK Day?

RG: It was really cold. I went to DC, and I remember it was like January.

BB: It was super cold. I do remember that for sure. We were downstairs going through the NARAL's archives storage area in the building and wearing our sweaters and jackets because it was cold down there too. And yeah, we were going through all these files. And then our director came downstairs and was like, "Everybody upstairs. Everybody in the conference room for a meeting." And then, my position was union. So they told the non-union people separately from the union people. And the union rep, Amanda read off the list of union people and I was just in complete shock. I was like,

“What did you just say? How can this be?” And I also felt really, really incredibly fundamentally alone because I had just moved there and just started a new job. So I knew barely anyone on a personal or professional level. And all these other people were like hugging one another and crying and I was just sitting there in shock, reeling very physically, emotionally, in every way alone and totally fucked.

RG: Wow.

BB: It was really intense experience and I remember spending that entire weekend basically sobbing. I didn't go to the inauguration. It felt basically like maybe the worst breakup you could ever have. And then, because I was union I got two months' notice. So it was like living with that ex who just dumped you heartlessly and coming to work every day and crying pretty much every day. It was really, really, really rough. I'm glad that that's over with.

RG: Yeah, the drama of having names read off a list is like—yeah.

BB: Yeah, didn't take anybody into an office separately or anything. It was just like, “Okay. Here are those names.”

RG: Wow. I'm going to just move through these things because I want to get to them. This question is basically—I'll just read it. “The recent past has seen a series of horrific events that have brought racialized violence to the forefront of people's minds. How have you engaged with these conversations through your work, or how have they shaped your organization's approach, if at all?”

BB: Well, I just shared about like the abortion fund and I think like the work that they need to do. And maybe, I mean I guess as a former board member and founder I could take a lead role in encouraging them to do that. But here it's been very frustrating

because as the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council we are the statutorily authorized leader on policy funding and research. If anyone in the state besides the Governor, we should be the ones to say this has got to stop and this needs to change and here are the resources to do it--lead action plans and lead community forums and put forth press releases and briefs on this issue here. And it's not happening. And I, it's been a while, but I talked to my boss about it. She's a black woman. She has two black sons. She has a black daughter. She feels very strongly about this, but she's also—I've tried to broach this before, and I did broach this with our former executive director who was also a black woman, and she's like, "It's too politicized in this still very white conservative state with our white man governor, white conservative man governor." So basically nothing has happened except that I think as part of [President Obama's] initiative we did get some funding for like body-worn cameras or something. But I kind of think that that's bullshit.

One thing that has been coming to the forefront of domestic violence organizations in this state is the disproportionate incidences of domestic violence-related fatalities that African American women suffer from. And so I know that the Domestic Violence Coalition has recently done some anti-racism workshopping and actually had a consultant come down and work with their staff, and they've made it a statewide priority for their agency to work on that. And even though I'll be gone by that time, in my role I coordinate the state's, what's called our S.T.O.P. [Services Training Officers Prosecution] VAWA [Violence Against Women Act] Implementation Plan. It's like a source of funds for domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking exclusively. And I'm working on planning workshops for anti-racism and another one for gender identity, sexual orientation non-discrimination, how to comply with this new provision in the law

in that regard. But the anti-racism one I think is something that I think CJCC should do internally before we ask our sub-grantees to do it. But in my position I can only offer that to sub-grantees. I can ask people, but I can't make them.

RG: Do you like hire, do you go run the workshops or do you have—

BB: I bring in the experts, yeah.

RG: And then they go to shelters and organizations and run—

BB: We'll convene them. We'll have a meeting here. For the coalition though they brought in the TA [technical assistance] provider to work with them just like one on one so to speak with their agency. But this will be like a group collaborative effort.

RG: With the legalization of gay marriage is sort of the next thing. Has that, has the LGBT rights movement, how does that movement intersect with your work or this organization or reproductive justice?

B: I think that it has impacted it a lot. I think that—well, okay, so the immediate question of gay marriage. I think that has yet to fully bear out, but the fact that—I guess what I'm thinking of the most, maybe two things, is that the staff at the agencies we fund will need and should already have had training on equal treatment and non-discrimination. They also need to know how to ask the right questions in a respectful way to make sure they get the services they need. Because now this will open up a large segment of the population who has been deliberately disadvantaged and oppressed economically for their sexual orientation to be able to get social services. Because when they can link families through marriage through that kind of partnership, they can in some ways have more access and navigate the bureaucracy more effectively to get those social services and social funding assistance. Yeah, I mean that's what most immediately

comes to mind is both the training and helping them get the assistance within the scope of work that I'm doing now. Yeah.

RG: And that's also gender identity training?

BB: Yeah, yeah, definitely. I just didn't relate that to gay marriage necessarily because it's more like a sexual orientation issue, but I guess it can definitely impact.

RG: Yeah, that's kind of just the next question about sexuality, sexual identity, and trans issues shaping your work.

BB: Well, that, I mean I kind of feel like in my role here as a state employee, like it's kind of frustrating sometimes or like I think I've snuck a lot of things in. And some of them I didn't even sneak in. I just did them and then people signed off on them. And then I didn't know that it was a big deal until people came up to me later and were, "You're awesome. Thank you." And I was like, "What?" And they were like, "A couple of years ago nobody would've done this." I really appreciate that. Like the biggest example is for that same thing, the S.T.O.P. VAWA Implementation plan, where even though we're required to give statistics on race and poverty and sexual orientation and all those identity markers, and I just did it. And we're like, "Here are the statistics. Here are the disparities. Here's why this is an issue in our state. Bam." And people were astounded and grateful for that and I was like, "Wow." I'm glad I made a difference, but it's discouraging to hear how bad it was that people were afraid to speak out honestly about it even just put it on paper. And then, I don't know. There's been other things, like one of my first little victories was on an intake form. For a project I coordinated, I was editing their intake form and I took out the male and female box and wrote gender identity, blank space. But I don't know. That might be the most I've really done, except for just advocating for the

training to be done in December along with the anti-racism training, and I don't know just whenever I feel it's appropriate just pointing out this is my gender identity issue.

Oh, I thought of one other thing. Recently—we have our sub-grantees complete program reports, quarterly program reports on the use of the funds. And when they revamped the system about a year and a half ago, they went from male/female/unknown categories to adding a transgender category. And it's one of the poorest reported statistics. And I think we, me and the statistical team, think it's because people aren't asking that when they get on an intake form. They're just like, "Oh, female."

RG: Oh like the intaker is just checking the box.

BB: Yeah, they're not asking the people to self-identify. We think the same is true for disability statistics too. We've been training people on the importance of self-identification for everyone, but also for victims to be like, this is an empowering thing to be like, "I am this person," and also we can provide them with more appropriate services and referrals if you know what their values and what their accessibility are. So that's another thing related to that I think.

RG: How about social media? How is that—

BB: How is that going?

RG: How is that going for you?

BB: [laughs]

RG: How has that changed or shaped your work—benefits, challenges?

BB: I think that, [pause] I think that it has, it's, I'm trying to think of how to say it. I think that being a part of Facebook specifically has enabled me to read and be exposed to other media outlets and other articles and resources about various issues

involving and related to feminism that I wouldn't have encountered on my own. So I think that that has been a net gain. Some of the challenges might be, I don't think it's the most productive forum—the best forum for a productive and challenging dialogue. I think it is too easy for people to like slide into unproductive conflict. Yeah. That would be the con, but the pro for me would be seeing and being exposed to so many new things.

RG: Yeah, I think it's—I've interviewed one person a few years younger, a few years older and Facebook and social media is sort of like, you've existed without it and with it, but sort of coming to the professional world basically with it. So I thought it was interesting to think about social media in terms of the—

[door knock, interruption]

BB: You were saying about social media.

RG: I don't know. But more generally what's, what do you think is going on in the political climate today. How do you see that shaping your work, like what's going on either locally or nationally that affects you?

BB: I think it's an interesting volatile time in politics where like coming out of the Obama presidency, I think a lot of left and radical people feel really jaded. But also energized by the injustices that have been occurring, so it's out of this profound disappointment in political leadership and society and the failure to change, there might be hope and action and change coming from that. But at the same time I also think there might be a significant conservative backlash. So I guess I feel like, rising tide lifting all boats kind of thing. It's just, it feels like things are escalating rapidly, but that it might not necessarily be like a left versus right kind of thing that will result in social progress. It just seems like those two things are in such, I don't know.

RG: What do you think it's meant to have Obama in the White House?

BB: What has it meant to have Obama in the White House?

RG: Or—

BB: I think—

RG: The, literally it says how has it shaped your work if at all.

BB: Well, I think that I'm not sure how it shaped the funding that I do now, but I think it is important even though in a lot of ways I think he has been disappointing, I think it's been important to have somebody who is publicly pro-choice, who has daughters. Oh you know probably the hugest thing for the work that I do now is the sexual assault. President Obama's leadership on sexual assault has had and will continue to have a huge impact on the awareness around this issue as sexual and gender based violence and funding, like changing people's attitudes and beliefs that this is not acceptable and the amount of money that's going towards holding offenders accountable and serving victims. That has actually been a huge sea change, and I hope that it continues.

RG: Because of statements that he's made?

BB: Um hmm. I think statements he's made and also like the leadership that he can have over the Department of Justice that releases a lot of funding for this issue. I think there's also funding from Health and Human Services, but in my role here I'm not as familiar with that. I just know from the DOJ side there's been an enormous increase in funding. Last year for the sexual assault services there were two grant programs related to sexual assault. That's when we started to see the upswing. And we applied for and got

maybe like a little over a million dollars. This year [pause] it's over three million. That's big.

RG: Tripling.

BB: Yeah.

RG: Yeah.

BB: That's big.

RG: Do you find it bizarre to have these huge numbers coming in now to this office? I mean—

BB: Yeah [laughing] yeah. It's pretty wild. If I thought I could ever put on my resume that I managed aspects of grant programs totaling over twenty million dollars, then you could knock me over with a feather. I didn't think about it or care, but now I'm like, "Huh."

RG: Yeah. It's, I mean it seems like a huge amount, but then there's a lot of, I can see from this thing on your wall there's a lot of organizations or issues that are where the funding's going.

BB: Yeah, and this is, all the decisions are made with markers on flip charts on the wall. [laughing]

RG: In colors.

BB: Yeah, it's color coded.

RG: So how do you think your work, how do you see your work in relation to the history of feminism?

[door knocking—interruption]

Yeah I didn't want to have to deal with two different files so I left it running.

BB: Okay.

RG: But we can wrap. Basically the last questions are about feminism, your thoughts on—

BB: My thoughts on—

RG: Your relation to third wave terminology, challenges facing feminists and your hopes. So whatever you have time for.

BB: I don't even know anymore. This kind of stuff used to fascinate me but the third versus fourth wave. We're probably in the fourth or fifth wave or something at this point. I don't even know what third wave is although I guess if anything might resonate with me most because I associated that more with like a social and cultural punk ethos approach to feminism rather than an academic thing. Although I guess that fed the academic sphere of feminism at the time too. See I don't even know anymore. It's almost overwhelming but it's also encouraging and exciting where feminism is now or at least as I think of it or feminisms, yeah.

RG: What do you think its challenges are?

BB: I think the challenges are how to integrate like all the different feminisms and concerns and identity politics to unify and have a common goal. But I also don't think that that's necessary. Yeah. I think that it will require and does require a lot of different strategies in tackling oppression from different angles to get it done. I guess the biggest challenge I see that—I hate it when this happens, and I know I've been complicit in it—but is when like goals of one group, of one oppressed group come to supersede or push back the rights of another. I'm trying to think of a more concrete example of it, but do I have to. You know what I mean.

RG: Yeah.

BB: You know what I mean when, like I think it happens a lot in the reproductive rights movement because so many people, like I was saying earlier and how it resonated with me in high school, associated with like cisgender heterosexual women like getting pregnant. You need an abortion, you need contraception, whatever. And that view and that history can like eclipse the more complex reproductive health and rights needs that other people have. So—

RG: Is there anything else you want to add to this that we're, gaps in your story or this issue of what's kind of going on today that, how that relates to feminism?

BB: I don't know if I do. I don't think I have anything profound to say just that you asking me to do this is an honor and comes at an interesting time in my life where I feel like sort of in college maybe, like feminism for me has ebbed and flowed as being in the forefront of my consciousness. And I feel like in college I took a break so to speak and then working here I thought I was taking a break and ended up bringing that with me, and now I want to get into that again in my next career move. I want to do work that relates more directly with the reproductive justice movement again. It's interesting how things flow in cycles like that and how this interview feels like it's coming at a very significant time for me. And talking about it and reflecting on it—which I almost never make time to do in one cohesive sitting—is definitely inspiring me to explore that more. And also I feel like I've been speaking really broadly and just from my experience and that I'm kind of out of touch with what's really been happening, and I need to look outside of myself and listen more carefully especially if I want to do this kind of work again in a meaningful way. Yeah.

RG: Well, that kind of sums everything up. So I'm kind of hesitant to jump back in, but I have one kind of question, which is you mentioned the, I just like thinking of you as listening to Riot Grrrl music in Pensacola and like that being a moment, and I don't know if you still listen to that kind of stuff. But like do—

BB: Yeah, when I started having a really hard time here at this job, one of the things that I took up about that same time was jogging, or running because it sounds more bad ass to call it [laughing], and listening to my old like Riot Grrrl punk albums while I jogged, sometimes ran. And how much that both fed and placated my anger and frustration.

RG: And so that goes in cycles too.

BB: Yeah, maybe.

RG: The Riot Grrrl.

BB: Yeah, I keep going back to that.

RG: I just keep thinking, I never listened to that stuff, and then when I got to college and realized other people grew up listening to bands of women I was like, "Wow that's like a, it's radical or something."

BB: My current boyfriend is really into music. He loves music so much, and he's exposed me to a lot. And it's brought music more to the forefront of my mind. And then when I share my favorite music with him or am looking through music just like at work or something and trying to find new bands to listen to, because I feel like I easily get stagnant in that. And I'm like, "Oh, you know what, this seems like a Captain Obvious thing, but it's almost all exclusively like women-fronted or women-only bands."

RG: That you're drawn to?

BB: Yeah. Absolutely. It's like the sound and the content and the feel of it is just, it just makes more sense to me. It sounds good.

RG: And your parents must've been like, "Okay."

BB: I don't think that they—

RG: Because I met them once.

BB: That was really funny. I was actually thinking about that the other day.

RG: Do you remember that?

BB: And how like my parents ate at Lamont with your parents.

RG: Yeah, it was like two old lesbians [mothers].

BB: It was like what a world; what a world. Yeah.

RG: Two Republicans from Pensacola and they hit it off. [laughing] And we were just sitting there like, wow. But that's my memory of it.

BB: Yeah, pretty much me too.

RG: Well, I really appreciate that you sat and shared and for this interview.

BB: Thanks.

RG: And maybe there will be more to follow up on, but I think we covered a lot.

BB: Good deal.

RG: So cool.

B: I hope that it's good stuff for you and your professor.

RG: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

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