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

Interview R-0874

Park Cannon

July 23, 2015

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## ABSTRACT – PARK CANNON

Interviewee: Park Cannon

Interviewer Rachel Gelfand

Interview date: July 23, 2015

Location: 970 Sidney Marcus Boulevard, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:33:28

Park Cannon is the Black Women's Wellness program coordinator and a health advocate at the Feminist Women's Health Center. She begins by describing where she was born in Albany, GA. They lived in a military neighborhood, which was a "KKK neighborhood." Her family moved to Brooklyn and lived with her maternal grandparents. She was very close to her grandparents. In Brooklyn, she did dance after school, had fun, and grew up "hetero." After 9/11, she saw violent divisions of race and citizenship. That was an awakening and politicizing moment. Her father was a Vietnam veteran. Gender roles were very confined and their marriage was difficult. In terms of role models, she notes a teacher and her brother. She then describes going to Los Angeles for college. After two years, she left because she disliked the LA scene. She moved to Atlanta and then went to UNC. She found feminism in college through a women studies course at UNC with Karen Booth, which showed her that her experiences were worth studying. She describes an early organizing experience in high school where she coordinated an arts event following Obama's election. She also discusses advocating for herself after a racist incident. In Chapel Hill, she volunteered at the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and started a political blog called 'Make it Nasty.' Park then analyzes her experiences working at the mall in Atlanta while also interning at FWHC. She describes her daily work as a program coordinator and an advocate on the weekends. We discuss how politics is affecting abortion access and how rumors in the media affect their work. Funding is a central issue for FWHC and for their women. In terms of racial violence, she talks about being black and living in Atlanta, a black mecca. She points to recent KKK recruitment in Georgia and the case of Sandra Bland. We talk about the role of social media. FWHC is a source for many people on social media. She describes her two-day protest at UNC against the Genocide Awareness Project. On LGBT issues, the FWHC provides care to everyone regardless of sexuality/gender and has a trans health initiative.

She tells the story of the day marriage became legal. She met her girlfriend Tiffany after work and celebrated. Coming from conservative families, both Park and Tiffany have noted changes in their family since such rulings. Reflecting on Obama, she says things have been better and worse for immigrant families. She notes the importance of the first lady as a public figure, but as president Obama has not spoken about abortion or sexual assault. She understands that he wants to get out of his two terms alive. On the question of Third Wave, she wants people to just use the term and move on. She describes a workshop at Spelman College about different feminisms. She sees the biggest challenge for feminists is not getting killed. She describes how housing issues intersect with abortion access. She discusses her dreams for feminism and gives shout outs to individuals and organizations including Who Needs Feminism, SisterSong, and an abortion speak out website. She describes being on the board of SisterSong. We end with Tiffany's thoughts on feminism. She is Middle Eastern and grew up with strict gender roles. She notes the importance of using non-sexist language and how much she has learned through her relationship and volunteering.

## FIELD NOTES – PARK CANNON

Interviewee: Park Cannon

Interviewer Rachel Gelfand

Interview date: July 23, 2015

Location: 970 Sidney Marcus Boulevard, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:33:28

THE INTERVIEWEE. Park Cannon was born in Albany, GA in 1991 and moved to Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn in her youth. She went to high school in Brooklyn Heights. She attended Chapman University from 2009-2011, but then left and moved to Atlanta. She returned to college at UNC Chapel Hill the next year and was involved on campus activism for abortion access. She had a blog, protested anti-abortion groups, and worked on the Who Needs Feminism Campaign. She studied Hispanic and English Linguistics and minored in Women's and Gender Studies. She moved to Atlanta after college and now works at the Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC), where she is a project coordinator and health advocate. She previously interned at FWHC, at NARAL in North Carolina, and for Georgia Stand-Up. She is currently on the board of SisterSong, a women of color reproductive justice organization.

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 Thursday evening in Park Cannon's partner's condo in Atlanta. We talked a little bit beforehand and then sat down at the dining room table. Tiffany, Park's partner, did work at the other end of the table while we did the interview. We began with life history. Park described early life in Albany, Georgia and her family's relocation to Brooklyn, NY. She talked about her childhood and her entry into activism and later feminism. She notes 9/11 as a key turning point in her thinking on race and national politics. We discuss her early role

models and then begin to discuss her experiences in college. She went to California and chose to leave and move back to the South. She describes her desires to live in the South. She then talks about coming to UNC and her first engagements with feminism through a Women's and Gender Studies course. She describes social media activism and protests she participated in on campus. She then moves on to her current work at FWHC. She describes how the political climate affects that work and how social media is utilized. We discuss recent revelations in the case of Sandra Bland. The interview turns to issues of funding, to the LGBT marriage ruling, and to Obama's presidency. She notes both his contributions and inaction on issues regarding women of color. We discuss Third Wave feminism and how Park sees herself within feminist history. She shares her hopes for the future of feminism and we close with a few thoughts from her partner Tiffany.

## TRANSCRIPT – Park Cannon

Interviewee: PC PARK CANNON

Interviewer: RG Rachel Gelfand

Interview Date: July 23, 2015

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Length: 1:33:27.8

### START OF INTERVIEW

RACHEL GELFAND: Okay. So it looks like it's recording. It's July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.

My name is Rachel Gelfand. And—

PARK CANNON: My name is Park Cannon.

RG: So do you want to say your current position?

PC: Currently work at the Feminist Women's Health Center as a Program Coordinator and I also work as a Health Advocate.

RG: So it just basically begins with a little bit, tell me a little bit about your background. The first question is what do you remember about your grandparents on either side? So you could go into that or you could just say where you came from.

PC: Cool [pronounced kewl]. I grew up in Albany, Georgia. That is three hours south of where we are right now in Atlanta. And that's a very rural area where it's segregated. So there's like a black side of town, and then there is the KKK side of town. I grew up more on the KKK side of town just because my dad was in the military, and he wanted us to be at really good schools and speak really proper and say yeah—he never wanted us to say yes ma'am and all that kind of country stuff. He wanted us to just speak as if we were in the military. So that's what we did. It's my brother and I. He's two years

older than I am and he lives in Vermont. He's a New Englander. So I guess after living in Albany, Georgia, going to school there, definitely experiencing a good amount of racist stuff--. Like I vividly remember the confederate flag flying around and some people in our neighborhood being uncomfortable with it because there were kids around, and it was just a weird kind of white privilege, patriotic thing going on. It wasn't like we are celebrating the Civil War; it was like we don't actually like black people.

So we moved to New York. We moved to Brooklyn. So that's where I grew up mostly. So I spent about ten years living in Brooklyn, New York. That was totally different. Like I literally learned my first curse words there and I was living with all these urban kids who were just mixes of like Puerto Rican and Black or Italian and Greek and helped me better understand that people are made up of so many different types, and it's not just white or black. So that was really nice.

We actually lived with my grandparents, my maternal grandparents in Brooklyn. And they would take me to school every day. My grandfather was a taxicab driver who liked to gamble. And my grandmother loved to go to church and cook. Those are pretty much the two main things. Unfortunately they both passed away like within the past five years. My grandmother became severely confused by dementia and that went into Alzheimer's, and so my grandfather was her caretaker, but he actually had a heart attack before she did, before she died. So it seems as if there was probably a lot going on with him taking care of her that was so stressful that he literally ended up just like dead in the apartment. And she didn't know for like seven days. She had no clue. She's just walked around.

RG: That's horrible.

PC: I know it was weird. When the police found his body, it was ridiculous. They had to fumigate the entire half floor of the apartment complex and remove my grandma. But she didn't know. And she had not eaten for those seven days, and she was in perfect health. So my family is very Baptist religious mainly because they grew up in the South. So they think that God kept her. I think it was just her spirit. She's awesome. Yeah.

RG: Not eating for seven days is pretty—

PC: Yeah.

RG: Hard core. So you remember them as sort of a kid hanging out in Brooklyn.

PC: I do. They were very influential in my childhood. They actually, my mom has revealed to me recently that they were very sure that my mom was the better parent of my mom and my dad. And so they wanted to make sure that we were with my mom and that she had custody of us. So they did everything that they could to have us move there, be safe. My mom even shared with me a story recently about them safeguarding us from my dad, like literally picking us up from school and taking us to a family member's house and not bringing us to their house specifically because they knew that he was going to come and look for us for a full week. So they were very close to me and mean a lot to me. I wish that they were still here. I really do.

RG: So how would you describe yourself in the school years in Brooklyn?

PC: I was growing up hetero. Like growing up as like a black hetero church-going extracurricular having girl. Like I said I have a brother and so he was doing the sports. And I was doing dance. I would go to, it was literally called the Brooklyn Dance Center and put on my shiny costumes and dance to Mariah Carey and Michael Jackson songs. I was pretty happy. I was blissfully happy. I had like no clue of anything that was

going on in the world. I was not a child that was raised politically aware. I was made to believe that being black was fine and that no one had a problem with it, only people in the South and we were in the North. So we didn't have to worry about it, which I was rudely awakened because we moved to New York before 9/11 happened. And so when that took place, ideas of like ethnicity and like social class and like being a citizen or not became really apparently to me because I saw all of that collide in violence, and it was very, a very confusing time. I think that's when I woke up actually now that I think about it. I started to realize that either if people don't get their way or they feel like they're not listened to, they're going to stand up and do something about it whether that means that it's going to affect other people and now that's kind of how I roll. I don't, not saying that I necessarily am a violent person, but I definitely am open to being myself and standing up for people that I believe in regardless of what is status quo.

RG: There's a couple questions I moved beyond, but they're about your parents, what lessons you learned from watching your parents' lives, what kind of work did they do, gender roles, any of those aspects.

PC: Okay. That's a lot of questions. So my mom and dad married after my brother was born. He was two years old at their wedding. And my dad was a Marine. He actually served in the Vietnam War. He was a Master Sergeant. So he was like fifteen years older than my mom. She loved that. She also loved the fact that he was assertive and he was willing to provide for her, and she's told me that when she married him she knew what she signed up for. She didn't want to go back to work. If she knew the person who created feminism, she would kill them because she wants to be in the kitchen, that type of mentality. My dad though was an alcohol so his assertiveness coupled with his

like machismo, he's just like Chicago black, not that he's Spanish. But still that same type of macho mentality made him really angry when he drank, and it was his ritual to drink every day as soon as he got off of work. He would drive home. The exit of our house, there is a corner store with a liquor store. He would stop there every single day, get a bottle, drink it in the maybe two miles before he got to our house, and he was already blasted. So that really came to a head, and that's why we came to New York.

So unfortunately I think one thing that I'm holding onto right now from my parents' relationship is how volatile marriage can be and how destructive it can be if people aren't on the same page because it can just get to a place where each side is so stubborn. Like my mom was just so willing to do whatever it was. Like she was almost stubbornly willing. I don't even know if that's right.

RG: Yeah.

PC: And my dad was just so ready to dominate. So we have all these understandings of him now like thinking about his mental health. He came back from Vietnam and America hated everyone who came back. They're like you're baby killers. And so he was dealing with all that stuff, not to say that it means that he could be abusive. But he struggled coming in and out of rehab, and I just saw it really tear my mom apart because she loved him and she still loves him to this day. But it just wouldn't work and he was not a good father. He was not able to provide for us because of his drinking. It would just be too many secrets and lies. I mean he told me he was going to come to my sweet sixteen and he didn't show up. It's like what? So that's definitely some stuff that I've held onto. And the ideas of gender that I got from my parents was overwhelmingly strict and confined. And so I was raised that way to think that that was

how it was supposed to be. But I also got to see how unhappy they were and how forced it was and unnecessarily complicated like maybe they could've called it quits and lead happier lives. I don't know.

RG: So who were the role models? Are you close with your mother or are there teachers that you had?

PC: I had one teacher that I called her Mommy Number Two. She was a teacher whose classroom I was in when Nine-Eleven happened. We were in Brooklyn Heights, and it happened in lower Manhattan. So we were—

RG: You could see the whole thing.

PC: Um hmm. We had a cross on the top of our school, and the first jet flew right over the top of our cross. We were all shaken because we could feel what was happening and didn't know and then chaos ensued and debris rained. Her name was Miss [Sousa?]. She's Portuguese and black like a Brazilian Portuguese woman. And that was my first exposure to that language, and I was really interested in it because I liked the way that she spoke and the way that she interacted with people. So I definitely think that she was a role model for about four years.

My mom and I are close. We have had some strains based on me coming out to her and letting her know that I'm happy and I love someone and want to be with them. And she's been confused about the severity of it and the ability of it even happening because she's just Baptist. So the Bible says no. And that's what is most important. So we've had a strained relationship but my mom has always been a role model for me because she perseveres. I mean she will do anything to make sure that she has a way to like shop and eat and drive a nice car and have a job and travel and laugh and go to

concerts. Like she'll, whatever it means if she has to put up with some crazy man, she would do that. So that was an interesting way to see that, but she's also so nurturing and still is. There's definitely something about like her kiss on the cheek or her like hug or her calling me baby or just helping you through a time when you are sick.

My other role model is probably my brother. He as strange as it is is like a father figure to me. He's only two years older, but he was born on my dad's birthday and he has my dad's name. So he is David Ross Cannon II. So he kind of like reincarnation weirdness happened in there. And he's always just been so honest. He works at a boys' summer camp, and then they also have camps throughout the year outdoors winter camps where he is a wilderness EMT, and he takes little kids on leadership explorations, hiking and canoeing and kayaking. And so whenever I go and visit him the people like tell me about my brother like I don't know. And so they're like no, no, no, like Ross he's really the best guy ever. He's so awesome because he's just real, like he'll always be real with you. I'm like yeah I know. That's pretty much why I love him so. He's definitely a role model to me.

RG: So what brought you south?

PC: Hmm. I needed to ground myself so I came to the South. I am a southern gal. I was born here. And I was taken elsewhere to learn about myself, but I think I needed to return to feel who I really am. So I went to, after New York I graduated high school. And I went to California. I went to get away from anything East Coast because I was sick of it, and I was like let me try out LA. Los Angeles I don't think is for me. I was immediately fed up with people's lack of reality. I felt like no political or social awareness, just living

for yourself kind of in a very airheaded way. So I broke down. Like I literally could not finish college there. I did two years and I was like this isn't working.

So I came to Atlanta and I had just slept in a closet. It was just like I don't want to do it. I'm not doing it. With my mom's help, her like nurturing vibes, I got a job at a mall, and I started to like rebuild myself. And then I went to Chapel Hill and socially it was okay. I made some really good friends who were also transfer students, and so we got along very well, became roommates and just like had each other's backs through all of it. But I do think there is a lot of merit in staying in the South because it's a battlegrounds for everything. Like nothing is given to you here as it is up North or in the West Coast. Like you get weed if you go to the West Coast. You get good transportation and twenty-four hour service in New York. In Atlanta you get neither one of those. Everything is closed at night like it's not legal here. So I think it's pretty cool to be here in the South.

RG: So did you sort of, in terms of feminism was that something that came into your like through college or--?

PC: Yes.

RG: Or individuals.

PC: The concreteness of feminism came into my life in college. I started taking Women's and Gender Studies classes. I did like Women's Studies 101. I had this professor Karen Booth who has this purple hair, and she was just so honest and real and didn't care and helped me see that the stuff that I was experiencing was worth studying. And it was not to be discarded. And so that was really exciting and appealing to me. So I

quickly got a minor. It was like I know I'm studying something else here, but let me just grab this up real quick while I'm here for the next two years. So I did.

But I think that feminism has always been trickling in in all the little ways that I interact with people. Like I've always knew that the way that men catcall women is ridiculous beyond the fact that just like this is my body and I don't want to talk to you. But there's other interworkings there, and the reasons why like I lived in a neighborhood where my little high school friends didn't want to come too because they were Meryl Streep's daughter or whoever they were, rich and living in Manhattan. They didn't want to come to Bed Stuy. So I've now realized that they were used to different socio-economic like norms. They just didn't get it. So it wasn't like they hated me. But they just couldn't vibe with it because they didn't know. So it's always been there, but it, feminism became major to me in college, and I don't ever want to live without it.

RG: And also activism, was that something that doing organizing?

PC: Yeah, I think I started organizing right when Obama got elected in high school, 2008. I was a dancer at that point. I still am a dancer. But the main thing that people knew me as in like my high school superlative was best dancer. So I was putting on a dance concert. Like I made this dance concert to raise money for Alzheimer's for my grandma. But either way I gathered all these talented people that I knew. So like this one guy who could play the guitar and sing very well. My other friend Gracie who can sing and can dance. And at that point she like wasn't that good at dancing, but she was passionate about it so it didn't matter. And then some of my dance team friends and then like one of my poetry friends to create this piece on Yes We Can because that was Obama's like mantra during his 2008 election. So we created that, and that was probably

the beginning of my starting to realize that if you pull a bunch of people together and ask them what they think about what's happening in the world, they'll tell you in different ways. And then you can find all these different avenues to connect to other people. So like the guy who played guitar, he was good with all the kids who were in like music theory. And then the girl who like was okay with dancing but was also just passionate about it. She lived in Park Slope. So she had access to really politically open minded and progressive people that she could tell like oh come and watch me. Then like the girls in the dance team, they were just eye candy of like the jocks at our school. So they could kind of get in in that way. And since then I've just been moving forward with trying to get to know people and open up ASAP so that they can do the same.

RG: How did that, how did it come into the nonprofit work?

PC: So activism into nonprofit work for me probably was because I had a really bad experience with racism. When I was in California, someone decided to write nigger on my door like five times and like bang my door down and try and intimidated me a little bit. And at that point I took it to the head. I was like I'm out here by myself. I don't know who these people are. I don't have any family support here. So let me just go to the police. Let me just go to the headmaster. Let me just go to the Dean of Students, whatever. And I started to reach out to all those people and saw that corporate entities suck because they don't help. So the police were like oh you want to file a harassment complaint. And I was like yes, and dot, dot, dot. And the Dean of Students was like I have an adopted black son. So I get what you're saying but maybe we should just be quiet about this. And then other—

RG: What college was this?

PC: This was Chapman University in Orange County, California, Old Towne Orange in fact. So it's like old white money. So yeah, I just realized at that point that going into corporations and trying to explain my lived experiences was not going to work. I needed to get to some more grounded people and then have them help me become uplifted. So I started working at like a domestic violence shelter in Orange County, in Orange County in North Carolina, which is Chapel Hill. So it was interesting going from one Orange County to the other. And then I found the Feminist Women's Health Center and felt like I was at home. Like how much more open minded do you get than late term abortion access in the South, not caring about political beliefs, letting you come in with whatever ideas that you have, whatever sexual orientation, gender fluidity, and be yourself and thrive. So that was when I started to realize how cool nonprofits are and how I would love to be an Executive Director of one one day.

RG: Were there other issues in college you were working on before I move into more the present?

PC: No, it was always abortion, abortion access.

RG: At UNC.

PC: Um hmm, yeah definitely. UNC had Students United for Reproductive Justice like a student undergraduate organization. And so I just showed up at some meetings and went to a conference and started talking a lot more, getting on social media. My Twitter was big. I had a blog at that point too, which was called *Make it Nasty*, and we just went ham on there about any social issues we felt were nasty and how we felt like we could change those as young people. I deleted *Make it Nasty* now because there's a lot of underage drinking and cursing. But at that point that was where I started to just talk

more about the importance of women having choice and women being able to access abortion and how like eighty percent of the counties in North Carolina have these fake clinics, these crisis pregnancy centers and like no percentage have abortion clinics. But that was my main thing. Like I told someone one day I was like it sounds weird. Like you know how they say like ranking oppressions, like I don't want to rank oppressions. But like abortion is over domestic violence for me. It's just is any day.

RG: So you kind of did some other work and then came back to the Feminist Women's Health Center.

PC: Um hmm.

RG: How did that circle happen?

PC: Yeah, it was really sexist. In between going to school, interning at the feminist women's health center, kind of being in California where I was oppressed for all these reasons. I was like let me get a job. Let me just stack some money and then I will be able to rule the world. So I got a job at Lenox Mall, which is about a mile from here. It is Atlanta's--actually no, it's not Georgia's biggest mall--but it's Atlanta's main mall, and so it's in the rap songs. It's where people go and stunt. Like they go and spend four hundred dollars on like shoes and hang out like these are grown people, like thirty-five year old men who will just stand around and prey on women because they think that is how they will get laid, get famous, get successful and rich. And so I worked at a company called Luxottica, but they own maybe I think it's eighty percent of the eye wear industry in the world. So they own like Sears Optical, Sunglass Hut, Lenscrafters, all these other business, and so we were hired to sell sunglasses. So sunglasses are an accessory. They can help people who have eye disease or cataracts, but they also help people feel like

they're better than you. So people will come in and be like I want the new Versace's and they're like \$280, and they don't fit your face. Like you have a square face and you're getting these round glasses. You shouldn't do that, but you think that because you're spending this money that's good. So working at that place was very much from management supposed to be about appearing sexy, appearing available, appearing ready to serve like give whatever they needed. Like we had the glasses that were on display in the case. But people could touch those and try them on. We also had the glasses that were in the back, and so sometimes the people who were like in the know would come in and be like I don't want those glasses. I want new ones from the back. And then if you didn't have new ones, they were upset because they felt like I need the better quality. It's so much better. And it's like no actually when my shift ends, I stay here and I clean every single glass, and I readjust them so they're the exact same. But you feel entitled. So people felt entitled a lot at Sunglass Hut, and at first this is like my first main job. So I'm like okay cool. I'm getting attention; this is fun; I'm getting paid. I don't have to worry about spending my money on anyone else and just spending on getting myself up. So it was good.

But then it started to get just more annoying. I didn't even want to go to work because I didn't feel like people hitting on me or like hitting on my coworkers or expecting us to do stupid things especially when at the same time I'm interning at this clinic where women are trying to get abortion services and can't pay for it or don't have a ride. And so when they get there they're upset because they actually have these real things going on in their lives. And then I'm at Sunglass Hut and these people are pissed because I don't have a new pair of Versace's. It's like they don't even fit you. So that was

Sunglass Hut. That was my transition in between realizing that corporate, that type of retail work is not good for me.

RG: So what's your work now? What's your position? What's your day like?

PC: Um hmm. So my weekdays and my weekends are different from each other. My weekdays consist of working in our advocacy and empowerment network. So that's our downstairs area where we have a variety of different staff members work on like policy or political engagement activities. So for example I work for the Black Women's Wellness Program, and so that's creating a program where women who receive abortion services or need health insurance or just want to talk about sexual health can come and say listen I'm having these problems. I really need someone to talk to. I need a community. And so we set them up with like five or six other women have them come together, talk about it. Now they have a network. We do a lot of tabling and festivals. We got to the black communities, which in Atlanta are the Old Fourth Ward and the West End. They're both historically black and look black. I mean just looking at like statistics like the West End has about 18,000 residents. Sixty-nine, no eighty-nine percent of those are black, eleven Caucasian. It's like literally black-white. So it's a really interesting neighborhood. So the Old Fourth Ward, which is where I live is being gentrified so black people are getting pushed out.

But that's a program that I work for. We have other stuff that happens downstairs like we have a Lifting Latina Voices Initiative, which is a completely Latina-Latino program. So the women do sexual health outreach. They do like house parties where the *promotoros* who are the health promoters go and just talk about these different disparities

that face Hispanic women. Like they don't talk about sex because your *abuela* does not talk about sex and you're not going to have it. But you're having it.

RG: Oops.

PC: Right. So things like that, we have a lot of volunteer outreach. That's my weekdays. The weekends I'm up in the clinic and so that's in the same building just on a different floor. And that's where we provide our gynecological care services. So our main one on weekends is abortion. We do up to 23.6 weeks, and so that means we take the women through all the stages. They come in our door pregnant; they leave not pregnant. So whatever that takes. If that means that they need to speak with a health educator and talk through their decision and work with their family to have them understand why they're making this decision, we help them do that. If they have a fetal anomaly so the fetus is not viable or will not live outside of the womb, we help them find a way to kind of cope with that and undergo surgery to not to have to deal with that anymore. Also if women are coming to us because they've been raped, helping them feel like they have a place that is safe to access these services where their perpetrator won't come and find them or know what they did or ask any questions. Yeah, it's just like a safe haven. And it's really cool. I love working there. We are such a close-knit family that when someone leaves to like go back to school or for a new job, it's really sad because we experience so much together that we can't really explain to other people. So they're like oh how do you know her. I'm like she's my coworker but like she's my family. Like we hold people's lives and make sure that they're breathing and they're happy and not crying or realizing that this is their choice. They don't have to be stigmatized about it. If this is something they need or want to do, we can do it safely. So let's do it, like. So that's my weekends,

which generally are very chaotic and unknown hours. So it's just like I'll go at six a.m. and whatever time I get off, whatever time the last patient's out the door and we've cleaned up, that's when we go. Otherwise I'm just there.

Our doctors are awesome. They're Emory doctors. And they really care about women's lives and are willing to do whatever it means like at the state capitol to make sure that women can access abortion, which I think is really important for the actual medical professionals to be advocates for this service because sometimes, actually a lot of times more so than not the medical professionals just have to do what they do, walk out the door and pretend like it never happened because they don't want to be scrutinized or impose danger on their families, which I understand. But for the future of abortion access it's so critical right now. We're like forty years away from it being legal. Like it's been that way since the seventies, but we're like I don't want to put a number on it but less years of it possibly not being legal because states are just moving back and back and back and making sure that women are denied access even this most recent Planned Parenthood stuff that's been going on, the implications or accusations that they sell fetal parts, which is ridiculous and impossible because you can't mail that shit. Like someone has to pick it up and put it in a refrigerator. But those implications have had a lot of I guess effect on our clinic.

Like the other day the state health inspectors came to our clinic, just unannounced, just like we're here to just check on the fetal tissue remains and just make sure you don't have any. Like what? We don't even do that. Like we actually don't. That's not a part of the services we provide. Like you can't go to Wendy's and ask them about their fish bones. They don't have fish with bones. They just have one little fish

sandwich. Like it just, it doesn't, it's not right. It doesn't make sense. So that's been very hard for us to deal with because we want to provide access for women, but these barriers keep coming up, and it makes it even more alienating for us to always be the ones who are defensive. So we go to the capitol and we try and be as offensive or offensive [like on the offense] as possible, but it always just sounds like we're trying to do something wrong unfortunately.

RG: The language of the right makes it sound like to be defensive.

PC: Yeah.

RG: The next question is what keeps you up at night, but I think this is sort of—

PC: Money, working at a nonprofit does not mean financial security, can't get no raises. Yeah.

RG: The next set of questions are sort of different issues that have happened and how they've sort of impacted you, the organization you've worked for. So I'm just going to more rebound than I was. And some of them you've already brought up a little bit, but how would you say the economic crash of 2008 affected you or your organization?

PC: For me it meant that my mom lost a job. It meant that my dad was further emotionally depressed and sick. For feminists, the Feminist Women's Health Center I don't know. I didn't exist with them yet. But I'm sure that it hit them in the same way that we get hit now when that time every year when you need to renew your budget and you're waiting for the Ford Foundation money to come in. I'm sure it was a really hard time for feminists indeed.

RG: Yeah. So do funding issues are they a central concern in your organization?

PC: Oh yeah. Yeah, for us and for our women. So sliding scale fees, we're a nonprofit so we can provide services from I'd say from anywhere \$400 to 2,000, no 400 to \$4,000. Abortion gets expensive for the women. So most women can't pay \$4,000 all of a sudden. Like you kind of just help them see that they're rational. Like it's okay; we're listening and we're here. You are making the right choice for yourself if you think you are. If you don't think you are, leave now. Like so money is a big deal for the women. We give a lot of discounts. So depending on if they're a student or if they're in the military or if they have some type of health insurance or if they have Medicaid, we can help out with that a little bit.

As far as the organization goes with funding, we have our main funders that have been supporters of us for at least the past fifteen years. We've been around for about forty years total now. But some of them drop off at different times, not because they don't want to support our organization but because they realize there's so much need. So whereas maybe five years ago we could have gotten more money to talk about abortion stigma, now there's a lot of organizations trying to do it and so desperately needing the money it's just like who sounds more desperate in their letter.

RG: It sounds like you create support networks and creating relationships that are ongoing.

PC: Yeah, in the South. The South is already like a world of its own. So I feel like we bring--. But the point is that funding definitely is an issue for most abortion clinics because we don't get any state funding. We just get scrutinized and harassed. So the little monies that we do have we try to reallocate to the women to make their lives better and to enrich their experience. So it's hard to also pay people. Like to keep people

happy you've got to pay for health insurance for people because that's also kind of a feminist mentality. Like how are you going to have an organization without health insurance?

RG: For staff.

PC: Yeah.

RG: Staff health insurance.

PC: Um hmm.

RG: Yeah.

PC: Yeah so—

RG: But as an intern for example—

PC: You don't get shit. That's that unpaid labor. Like our clinic vibes off that unpaid labor unfortunately.

RG: It's the, it's a nonprofit-wide custom.

PC: Yeah. It is. Yeah.

RG: And the idea is that there would be a position like that you found and get paid at some point at a place you want to be at.

PC: Yeah, it's definitely a stepping stone to work at a clinic. And so there are other things that you get. Like you're on a course. You're at school when you're at the clinic. You're learning all these things. The same things that people are learning in their human anatomy classes, you're getting in real time. So you get a lot of stuff out of interning at women's health clinics, but it's just not money.

RG: Um hmm. This might seem like, well, the recent past—I don't need to read it, but this question about the racialized violence that's been going on forever but in the

last couple of years in media and how or, horrific events have brought racialized violence to the forefront of people's minds. Have you engaged with these conversations through your work? How have they shaped your organization's approach?

PC: Totally. I'm black. I live in the South. I'm passionate about black people thriving. Atlanta is generally thought of as this place where it's like the black mecca. Like it's all these black people, and they seem to be doing good. But it's also a place where white people really want to resist it. So they do small things. The most recent thing that has really bothered me took place in Conyers, which is about forty-five minutes from here. KKK members were just putting flyers on people's driveways and cars, like recruiting for more members. And it wasn't necessarily in neighborhoods that were black, but it was just like yo we need to up our people because these black people are coming out and talking about all the injustices. It made the news for a hot second but was not something that was deemed important or of alert by our governor or our mayor. Our governor is white; our mayor is black. So even within that kind of construct I feel like our mayor has to put up with a lot of hushing. Like he can't really side with black people at the end of the day. Like he'll lose his job.

So that's been really frustrating for me. I have marched a couple of times in the past three months for different causes that have to do with either black women being beaten or black men experiencing unnecessary violence or being killed. I took my mom with me recently and we marched. And it was awesome. We wore all white. It's definitely at the forefront of my every day. I mean today was a really hard one for me because there are new I'm going to call them truths about Sandra Bland being dead in her mugshot.

RG: Really?

PC: Which I believe is true. The way that the angle of the picture is you can see up her nose, which you really only see if someone's laying down. They also have it side by side with photos of her just like taking selfies in the past three weeks because she was alive three weeks ago where you just see her straight on. You can't see up her nose. Her eyes are alive even if she's stressed. I mean she was a social activist. She always talked about police brutality and so looking at other things with that. The background of her is this deep gray and looking at another picture of an inmate, another mugshot of an inmate at the same time who was booked they have like a popcorn wall on him with like a crevice in the wall—I don't know how to explain it--like a concrete wall painted over light gray, and then there's a picture of the cell that she was in and you can see that the wall is light gray concrete. You can see that the floor is dark gray. So her being there, seeing up her nose with a dark gray background looking like there's nothing in her eyeballs was really hard for me to like go through today.

So luckily working at a place like Feminist [Feminist Women's Health Center] we're talking about those things. We're on them, and it's not like everyone close your Facebook, don't check that until after work. It's like no, post something right now. Make sure you retweet this, sign this petition and tell other people to. So it's actually been helpful for me working at the type of organization because I don't have to hold onto it all day. But at the same time it's really hard for our organization to stand up for so many things at once. Abortion access in the South is already such a taboo topic to then also bring in like police brutality is just too much, also bring in economic access and the need

for funding is extra. It's a lot of strains on top of our organization. But I'm committed to it so whatever.

RG: Shows that I've been away from social media—

PC: For seven hours.

RG: Yeah, because I saw the edited video of the police car video, and there's like the same—

PC: White car or truck or whatever.

RG: Yeah. Yeah.

PC: Yeah. And it's interesting. That's why social media is that shit. Like you can't, you almost can't get away from it because you're like these are kind of important things, and these are exciting discoveries that people are realizing because they look and see. Like before it was just you just didn't know. Oh it's in that building. I'm outside of that building. I don't know what's happening. But with social media, it's like no. I have a picture of the bathroom. I have a picture of me in the elevator. I have a picture of me over here. Like let's compile these things and see what's actually happening. So social media is interesting.

RG: Yeah. How would you say that it shapes your work?

PC: Social media is important when we're trying to reach out to organizations. So building credibility, showing that we support these types of issues, telling people about things. We are the source of information for a lot of people because they work in corporate environments or wherever and then they go home and they scroll and they're like thanks, feminists. Like now I know what's happening. Yeah.

RG: And I mean you have, so you've had Twitter since college or--.

PC: Yeah.

RG: You're kind of have positioned at the place where there's other people and nonprofits trying to catch up, figure things out but you're—

PC: Yeah.

RG: Coming of age with it.

PC: I did come of age with a lot of social media outlets, and it's cool. I enjoy it. But I also have a deep hatred for everyone knowing everything about everyone at all times. I have a lot of social media pet peeves, like people who check in every single place they go. I'm like, they literally have it configured to know where you are.

But social media is powerful too because it gets you across the world. I have been able to be a part of the women of color sexual health network which is women all over the United States who do any type of work like this. And it's really good to look up and that'll give you a lot of people to talk with.

RG: Is that what its' called?

PC: Yeah, Women of Color Sexual Health Network, so it's W-O-C-S-H-N. There's a website, and it has all of our bios and what we do and where we are. So it's helped me see that people are experiencing the same types of bullshit in different places and how if we actually talk to each other we might be able to do something about it; whereas if we just felt like if we were isolated here, then we might not be able to make as much of a stink because we can compare ourselves to other places. So I think that social media is powerful in positive ways too.

RG: It seems like part of the strategy is to disconnect clinics, isolate clinics. So they're connected into kind of a network there's less isolation.

PC: Oh yeah.

RG: Do you worry, are there—there's a question are there special challenges that social media raises but it makes me wonder about, you don't list your phone numbers on your website. There's a certain level of security you guys have decided to use. So how does that work with social media?

PC: Yeah. Social media is also a place of harassment for us. So we have to be really careful about how we respond to trolls and how we are vigilant with who gets access to our files. Like hackers are real. So they try and do what they can to shut us down at all times. So being careful with our password chains and if we log into something making sure we log out. Whereas in other places you just might not have to worry as much like literally none of us are allowed to have our cell phones die, and it's not, you would kind of think it would be the opposite in most workplaces. Like they don't want you on your phone, but like we always need to have our phone in case something happens. Like of course we could intercom through the building, but for whatever reason it's like extra safety to make sure that everyone can get in touch with everyone at whatever time is necessary especially in the time where right now we're having a lot of extra scrutiny and protestors.

RG: Outside.

PC: Um hmm. Yeah, oh yeah. You'll get to see tomorrow.

RG: Yeah.

PC: Sometimes the church will bring certain people. So if they're not there when you get there, they're on their way. Like it's kind of weird. But I think they're lame. I had a lot of protestors in New York when I lived there and saw them at the Planned

Parenthoods there. They had really graphic signs and were screaming curse words and trying to not let you walk in physically, and here they're just like oh please, can we help you. So I think they're pretty lame.

RG: They're not good. Yeah. Those pictures are so, they had that in UNC like the last couple years. The people show up with the big board pictures.

PC: Yeah, that was like my, that was my like claim to fame in Chapel Hill. Like I shut them hoes down. Like let me stop. I shut the Genocidal Awareness Project down. I was like—

RG: Yeah, that's what it's called. Ugh.

PC: There's no way you will be on our campus. I literally protested for or counter protested for two days straight because it was ridiculous.

RG: Standing in front of them?

PC: Standing in front of them with a bull horn and signs, throwing condoms at all students, giving, like we created a safe space over by Dey Hall. There's like some, where like the laboratories, the Caudill Laboratories, like over in that space we created a little space with like balloons and blankets and coloring books and like finger paints and nail polish and yummy foods. So that if people were feeling triggered by seeing that they could just go be isolated from it. Yeah, those people, the Genocide Awareness Project are really relentless with their decision to display graphic stuff. I taught sex ed at that point to sixth graders, and they happened to come on a field trip to UNC's campus that day. So they saw the stuff, and it had an effect on them that was really negative, which further pissed me off and made me stay longer. So yeah.

RG: Maybe you can come back every year and do that.

PC: I know that would be cool. That would be a field trip. I would be totally down.

RG: Camp.

PC: Yeah. That's a good idea.

RG: Recently the how does the LGBT rights movement affect your organization or intersect with that work and then conversations of sexuality, sexual identity, trans issues, shape it.

PC: So the Feminist Women's Health Center provides comprehensive gynecological care to all who need it without judgment. We support who I call my rainbow family. Like whatever it is you feel in your body we support it. So we have a Trans Health Initiative. And that's run by this awesome guy who does a lot of workshops. He does like a trans 101 workshop where he talks about like, don't say trannie. Like don't spell transwoman like this, spell it like that. Don't say, what is a trans. So he does that kind of fundamental things and then he also works a lot at the Capitol.

So we have been as an organization really excited about this new federal ruling that people can marry whoever they want, and it's important for my relationship because we've experienced a lot of hatred from or confusion and hatred from our families because they're very conservative. And so kind of having this federal truth is exciting for us. I just via networking was able to speak with Mary Bonauto's like partner or wife who argued the case. Like she's one of the three people who did.

RG: Wow.

PC: So that was really cool and that helped me see that at whatever level it is you need, it's important to have marriage equality and people care about it. And people are

interested, and it's so obviously okay. Atlanta is also known as like a black gay mecca. Like black gay pride here is literally seven days long, and it's kind of like a fuck you to just regular pride. So it's extra-long. But it's also fun. Like it's also good. We're going to have to go this year. It's going to be good.

RG: What is it?

PC: It's September 2<sup>nd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup>, through 9<sup>th</sup>, yeah. And it's gonna be fun. You should come. So yeah, marriage equality federally is really exciting. Like the day that it happened we were both at work, and so we were like on that grind, but we were like okay once we get off work this is going to be cool. So we met up at this burger spot with like one of our super accepting friends who's like overly emotional but also might have some like social disorders and is like hyperactive. So she was ready to go. Like she was already like fit for it. So we went to this burger spot, and I get there before Tiffany gets there. And I have my flowers and my cupcake. Cupcakes right, rainbow cupcakes of course. And then she shows up, and she has the same flowers like from the same store, and they were called like freedom flowers. And she had a balloon, that little balloon right there that says, thank you. And so then we were like super vibing off of that, and we were happy and we were like eating burgers and drinking four dollar margaritas, and someone walks up to us and they're like, "What are you celebrating?" And we were like, "Equality." And the whole restaurant just like cheers. It's like yeah. We're like this is awesome. This is fun. This is really cool.

It's also helped my mom come around a lot. She had some elevated levels of homophobia, and now they are decreased. I can, I mean you slept at my house recently, take care of my dog. Like we go places. I tell her where I'm at. So it's had a lot of

implications that will continue to evolve I think because people are just realizing like oh I can't be racist anymore. Okay I won't be racist. Oh I can't be homophobic. I won't be homophobic. So I'm excited about it. And our organization is too. Like the day that it happened people at work were just like cool, congrats. Yeah.

RG: So just a few questions left and then sort of the political climate we've talked about. What is it mean to have Obama in the White House shaping this time if at all? It says comma if at all.

PC: I'm glad it says if at all. Barack Obama, two terms as President of the United States has been good for immigrant families. They've been able to get driver's licenses, health insurance, and just live a little bit more securely they think. It's also been really negative for immigrant families. Like there have been so many people deported and so many people held in like detention centers and enable to get just basic things that they need.

Obama's two terms for women has also meant that he put a really strong black woman [Michelle Obama] in the forefront of everyone. Like she was doing public speaking events. She was coming, she had her own little like get healthy campaign. He put two little, excuse me, black girls [his daughters] also as admirable now younger black girls have role models and that's huge.

But at the same time he's never time once spoken about the importance of like matriarchs or not beating on women or defending abortion access. He just doesn't. But I kind of understand it. He really can't rock the boat right now. There's just been too much conservative whiteness for all these years that he feels like he can't do it. He just needs to slowly make these changes. But how the federal government works, there are other

people who have a lot of power and they are very, very conservative, known as Congress, the Supreme Court. So he kind of is really limited in the things that he can really do. I mean, he tries. So I think that he wants to get out of his two terms as unscathed. I think he wants to be alive, which I really, really understand. Having a black brother, having being a black woman I understand how much of a target you are with anything that you do especially if you stand out in any other way. So I get that security is a big concern to him.

RG: No, but I really think you said a lot of the like this is true and this is true about his presidency. So next question is about Third-wave feminism. Do you identify with the Third-wave terminology, why or why not? What does it mean to you or how do you think about yourself in relationship to this history of feminism?

PC: I say get with the waves. I don't love it but just do it. Like just stop trying to hinder our movement. Let us gain some shit. Like let us have some credibility. So I'm fine with people deeming me as in the Third-wave. I was at some meeting recently at Spelman College with my colleague Kwajelyn [Jackson] who you'll talk with. You're going to love her. She's awesome. And the students were leading the meeting. So the icebreaker question was tell your name and what kind of feminist you are. And so some people started off with hi I'm Sarah. I think I'm just like a regular feminist. And it was like hi I'm Susie. I think I'm a womanist. And it was like yeah, yeah [snapping] womanist. Okay, yeah. And then the other one was like I'm Athena. I'm like I'm really Chicana feminismo [Hispanic accent] and like whatever. Then I was just like I'm just Park and I'm a feminist. Like chill, like whatever. We are, we're all in this. We're all in the same time period though. So let's just move on with it. Like it's good to identify with certain struggles, but then you get back to the oppression Olympics and that's annoying

and saying that like white feminism really doesn't get to the root of intersectionality. No, it doesn't, but it's white feminism. Let it chill. Like intersectionality goes ham, yes it does. Like, it's it talks about all these intersections of race and class and all of that which is great. I'm fine with the Third-wave mentality. I think that other people are not though, and it's kind of interesting to me how there's always the big stink specifically in women of color organizations to be okay with the wave mentality. But I'm fine with it. It's interesting to try and quantify it and then also shut it down at the same time. But I think that speaks to also just the ideology around not letting go of the movement until you feel like people got it and will really catch it. So a lot of times it's been like, no this is Second wave feminism because we believe this. And this is how we roll and y'all don't get it yet so you don't get the torch yet. But I think it's evolving naturally, and we should just be happy that people are interested.

RG: Yeah, like at that Spelman workshop or whatever what were the, the next question is what are the biggest challenges facing feminists today, facing activists? So—

PC: Not being killed. Yeah, for real though. Death is real. We already like spoke about Sandra Bland but like men too. People who just are relentless and are honest, like really open their eyes and see what's happening in their community and don't like it are a threat. It's interesting though because people who are more extreme are considered less of a threat. So people who openly kill people, like the dude in fucking South Carolina who just went into a church and just shot up all these random old black people—that's not a good way to explain it. I'm sorry. But—

RG: It's okay.

PC: But the point that I'm making is that this person was an extremist, and he's not considered as much of a threat as someone who is every day posting on social media about police brutality like Sandra. And so for activists it's really just feeling like you're safe and being honest. A lot of the different hashtags that keep coming up are just so honest. It's just like if I was in police custody or the one where I can't remember what the hashtag was, but it was basically like showing which picture would they show of me if I was killed. They're just so real, and so they come naturally and they keep occurring, but officials really don't like it. So it's hard for us to be loud and then be safe at the same time.

RG: Do you think the housing issue going on in either here sort of I just put to the side gentrification because I was moving to the South from New York and felt like there was a housing crisis going on. It's intense. Do you think that's plays in to the work that you do?

PC: Yeah. A lot of people call us a lot of times, and they're like hey, do you have transitional housing. Hey, do you know how I can get like to a homeless shelter? Hey, questions about housing all the time. The neighborhood I live in, the Old Fourth Ward has the largest concentration of Section 8 housing in the Southeast. That's big. And at the same time food deserts and no jobs, and so housing plays into a big part of the work that we do indirectly. We work with a Section 8 housing leasing office called Bedford Pines. It's on Boulevard. And Boulevard is like the center of the black community in the Old Fourth Ward. It's like I'm off Boulevard. I'm close to Boulevard. I'll see you on Boulevard. Like it's literally just called Boulevard Northeast or Boulevard Southeast.

So women definitely experience a lot of violence in those Section 8 houses too. I've talked with a good deal of women who feel really unsafe where they live, but it's their only option and wish that they could do something else. So that's why they come to us and hope that we have some like silver lining. Unfortunately we don't because we don't work with like the Nicholas House or whatever other transitional organizations. But we try as much as we can to just empower them to get the other parts of their lives as positive as possible and then find housing.

Being, feeling unsafe where you live rocks your world. I lived in Bed-Stuy a long time in my life and you just, you can't go home. You get off the train and you're like okay, now I have to worry about something. Or you want to leave at a certain time. You worry about something. You want to wear something. And you have to think about what type of harassment you're going to get. So it's of major concern and I definitely think that it's something that should be incorporated into like policies to make sure that people have safe housing.

RG: What are your hopes, dreams for the future of feminism?

PC: Aw, hopes, dreams. I hope that abortion access is considered vital to the feminist movement's future. I also hope that we have someone in office who says feminism out loud once a day on a microphone. I also hope that more men begin identifying as feminists and start realizing that it's not a term just for women. I also hope that feminism is nurturing and is kind. My brother even said to me when I told him I was taking like a women's studies class, he was like, "Ah you're going to be one of those mad angry feminists. I hate that." And in some regards I hear what he's saying. I think that we have a right to be angry and I always defend myself as an angry black woman, but at the

same time I want it to be gentle with its people. Like I want it to open up self-care networks. I want it to show women that like hey, use a menstrual cup. Don't use a pad. Like use a rag. Just chill. Like take a bath. You're not bleeding that much. Like you're really not. So I want it to be kind to the people who subscribe to it. And what else do I want. I want it to be fun. Like let's go out drinking and dancing. Let's go out like celebrating. Let's dress up nicely if we want to; let's not. Let's protest. Let's look beautiful. Let's look sad and angry. Yeah, I want feminism to be fun. Also want to throw out Who Needs Feminism again because that was how I got my start with open mics. Also want to talk a little bit about speaking publicly about your abortion experience. There's something called *The Abortion Diaries* founded by Melissa Madera who is relentless in collecting abortion stories and has a podcast on Sound Cloud, and it's not political at all. She doesn't ask you any questions. She just turns on her recorder, tells you she loves you and says talk about your abortion experience. Start wherever you want; end wherever you want. Of course want to talk a little bit about Sistersong, Women of Color Reproductive Justice, which is where I've found that women of color are strong and collectively can do a lot of mobilizing, which is headed up by Monica Simpson. She is absolutely a role model to me. She's beautiful inside and out. Also want to throw up Stacy Ann Chen because she's cool as fuck and I got to drive her around in my car. And she has a new play with Cynthia Nixon who was on *Sex and the City*. She was Miranda who is actually a lesbian. Oh my god. And also want to throw up *Sex and the City* because that's my favorite show even though it's ridiculous.

RG: Did you, are you on the board for Sistersong?

PC: I am right now.

RG: What's that like?

PC: Three years. It's a lot of telecommunicating. So people are everywhere and that's the point of Sister song. So people are in DC, Arizona, California, New Mexico, New York, Georgia, Texas. That's just me thinking off the top of my head. And so it's a place where we like connecting with each other and we're like hey, this is happening here. This is really messed up. We need some means. We need some money. We need some T-shirts. And then kind of send it all that way or send it this way because women of color is such an all-encompassing term that it's like I'm black. I can't talk about what Native American women experience in New Mexico. I have no fucking clue. I'll pretend like I do if you'll pay me, but I don't know. So it's important to get those experiences. And I love Sistersong. It'll always be a part of my feminism and should be a part of other people's too.

RG: Great. Tiffany, I'm going to put you on the spot a little or just both of you a little informally. I mean that's all I have. But I just was curious if there's anything that came to your mind or that you guys--. I wished it was a joint dialogue between you both but this is great. I'm really glad we went through all of this.

PC: Good.

RG: So anything else?

PC: That's it. Thank you.

RG: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by LM Altizer, September 8, 2015