

Oral History Interview: Mandy Carter

Interviewee: Mandy Carter

Interviewer: Monique Moultrie

Date: October 18, 2018

Mandy C. Oh, I know what it is. So when I gave my papers to Sally Bingham I said one thing I'd like know, if I give my papers to you, if there's segments of it or whatever, how do you allow or what's the process for me to also have those exact same things at Schomburg? Because Schomburg was doing, a gentleman, he's been doing it for years, they're doing their own black LGBT [through the chamber], and they said we have no problem with that because what we do, we have some kind of a formal whatever. Some other places said no, if you put your papers here that's it, you cannot. So are you—I'm just wondering if that's becoming more and more like people want them to be accessible versus like it's mine, you can't have it. Do you know what I mean? Am I asking that question right? Like how would you deal?

Monique M: No-no-no, it's a...yeah. And what I tried to do on my consent form is to address that because more and more places are moving in the direction of sharing.

Mandy C: That's the word, yes.

Monique M: Because it takes resources to archive, to catalogue, and to code all of the material, and if institution X has done it, then that's a feather in their cap.

Mandy C: Yes, exactly. That's a rationale.

Monique M: The original argument was well, we want to be the one place people can go, because that will drive traffic to our library and it will drive traffic to our archives. As more and more libraries are not finding public funding, the sense is we can't go with this model as our only model anymore, and the more we can share access, actually the better our brand is, the humanities brand becomes, the library system becomes.

Mandy C: That's it.

Monique M: And so I have noticed that shift over time. Even when I was looking at various consent forms I could see over time places that were training students to like this is solely the proprietary and it's all this legalese about the proprietary information housed at university X or in facility Y. And over time I've started to see that really shift, and to have more open access be the norm. I wonder if and when we get new leadership, presidential leadership, if that retreat will come, because I think this is a response to all of the claims of oh, the NEH is going to go away, oh, the American higher education—

Mandy C: Oh, yeah. Okay, yeah. Wow. Interesting.

Monique M: And so I think they're responding to that crisis, and in a new regime I don't know if they'll go back to the old way.

Mandy C: Yeah. I never really thought about it. You know, the one thing that—it's interesting. Well, the insanity of what's going on there is beyond my

comprehension. But systematically I haven't heard anyone messing with the Library of Congress and/or, like I'm thinking, you know, whatever that depository. I know they were messing with the national parks. It's almost like whatever he did, whatever it might be, just get rid of it. Just like this knee jerk kind of thing.

And I'm sitting thinking I have a lot of friends that I've known—I used to work up in D.C.—and I was struck by some people just said you have to wait, but you have to wait and just hope. You don't want to wait and hope that something goes right or wrong. So, in the meantime, like what you're doing, you hope whatever happens, it gets done no matter, you know what I mean?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: So that doesn't stop. Some people said they're going to just wait and wait. You don't want to stop what you're trying to get done depending on what may or may not happen with this current administration. Just keep doing what you need to do and then, you know, however you need to figure it out, because you can't tell people how they can vote. But I'm just struck, as an organizer, just how something as simple as an interview, when you take it up the line, has large implications, you know what I mean? If you're thinking about where it's going to be, who has the right, what schools, whatever. And I'm just saying just do what you need to do.

But I think what I'm hearing you say is a little bit more of a collaboration with archivists, interviewees, people where this stuff was, so if it's not in a

library, the museums, or the cultural centers as well, and it's more of like—because I know a lot of folk that don't know whole lot, but if I can go onto that Internet and pop up what I need I can have it without having to go through a whole rigmarole about this, that and the other, you know what I mean?

Monique M: Yeah.

Mandy C: Yeah.

Monique M: I think from a field perspective, the Oral History Association is actually housed at Georgia State.

Mandy C: Oh, wow. Good. Oh, I did not know that.

Monique M: Yeah. Well, I didn't either when I got a job, but... [*Laughs.*]

Mandy C: Yeah, nice.

Monique M: But it worked out really well.

Mandy C: That's great.

Monique M: And part of what they've been pushing from an association perspective is to really move to open access and democratization of information because they're finding that thematic oral histories, things like Florence survivors, people who survived the hurricane, that you may have to do those on the fly. You may need to get those immediately accessible because you need a class action lawsuit.

Mandy C: You got it.

Monique M: And this information provides the data for a response. And so, a lot of the roadblocks that were institutional roadblocks the association has been pushing back on, so we're in different times.

Mandy C: Yeah.

Monique M: And our technology has allowed for different times.

Mandy C: Yeah, the technology is something, yeah.

Monique M: So, it isn't I have this on audiotape and then someone has to go listen to it and stop with the foot pedals and type. I can get this interview transcribed tonight.

Mandy C: That's amazing. I have to say it is absolutely amazing.

Monique M: And so that has really, I think, transformed how the field sees its ability to be public facing.

Mandy C: Right. Glad you're doing what you're doing. Okay.

Monique M: Well, thank you for the time that you've offered. So, I have a list of questions, and I'm not always going to go in order chronologically, but more thematically. So, I start us on record.

My name is Monique Moultrie. Today is October 18, 2018 and I'm here with Mandy Carter. We're here to conduct an oral history for the LGBTran website and for my research project entitled "Hidden Histories: The Faith Activism of Black Lesbian Religious Leaders." We're going to begin early in life and hit milestones along the way, so as you are aware,

feel free to stop, skip questions, choose to elaborate on something and not something else.

Mandy C: Okay.

Monique M: At the end, once it is transcribed, the transcription will come to me first for like is the spelling right, is this okay, and then I'm going to send it to you.

Mandy C: Oh, okay.

Monique M: And you have right of refusal. So, if you decide, you know, I told that story about this lover and maybe I shouldn't.

Mandy C: Oh, I know. In other words, if I say something, it's like reviewing, and there's ooh, I don't want to have in there, so then it's like, what's the word?

Monique M: It's redacted from the file.

Mandy C: Okay, that's the word, okay.

Monique M: So, it gets taken out of the audio file and out of the transcript as well.

Mandy C: Okay.

Monique M: What we do ask, and a lot of times—

[Knock on door.]

[Part 2.]

Mandy C: ...said that kind of thing.

Monique M: Yeah.

Mandy C: Whatever we're, you know, clarifying.

Monique M: Okay, yeah. So, if at any point if there is something, hey, I shouldn't have said, perfectly okay to let me know. And the transcription service that I've been using, it's going to send me the transcripts, and in the actual line if there's like a name that's misspelled or if there is a whole segment, like oops, I said that, I don't want to, if you click in the word it takes you to the audio and you can note for me—

Mandy C: You're kidding.

Monique M: —at minute 19 cut 19 through 23.

Mandy C: That's amazing. Yeah. And it can do that.

Monique M: And it can do that.

Mandy C: Amazing.

Monique M: Yeah.

Mandy C: All right. What I've gotten back in the day, handwriting, and can I read and write? *[Laughs.]*

Monique M: I know. As a researcher, though, I was saying yesterday in an interview I did, I have nailed the access and resources that I don't have to do my own transcribing and I don't have to listen to the tapes. But it also makes it a...it's one step removed for me. When I was doing my own transcribing, I could hear themes better because you're like the person who's typing the words.

Mandy C: Yeah, actually typing the words, right.

Monique M: And so, when a word is said and it strikes you, you can put it in bold and decide, okay, that's something I want to come back to. And that doesn't happen when you're just reading the words.

Mandy C: The actual—yeah, exactly. Very interesting. Wow.

Monique M: So that's the goal, is to spend next year sitting with these 60, 70-page documents. Each interview is 60 to 100 pages once it's typed up. So, the goal for the fall is to sit down with all of that and see what themes come up that then make it into the book.

Mandy C: How many people have you done already, or what's your goal for how many you'd like to?

Monique M: So, the short goal is 15.

Mandy C: Okay.

Monique M: And I, with your interview, am at 11.

Mandy C: Eleven now, already?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: Nice. Can I ask for names of people that were in?

Monique M: Sure. So, the ones that are already up on the site I've done Bishop Yvette Flunder.

Mandy C: Very good.

Monique M: I did Sylvia Rue.

Mandy C: Very good. That's one of my...mm-hmm.

Monique M: Yeah. From National Black Justice. Well, when I interviewed her that's where she was. I interviewed Darlene Garner.

Mandy C: Very good.

Monique M: And Candy Holmes.

Mandy C: Very good.

Monique M: Both at the time were with MCC and now aren't anymore. I interviewed Pamela Lightsey, who is an academic who has been doing activism work around Ferguson.

Mandy C: Oh.

Monique M: During web-streaming and live-streaming on the streets with marches. I interviewed Emilie Townes, who's dean at Vanderbilt.

Mandy C: Oh, very good.

Monique M: I interviewed yesterday Sandra Lawson, who is a rabbi at Elon. She's a black Jewish—

Mandy C: Oh, that's why you were at Elon. Oh, my gosh, wow.

Monique M: Yeah. She's brand new there as of August 1st.

Mandy C: Oh, my gosh.

Monique M: Black Jewish lesbian rabbi.

Mandy C: Heard all those words in one sentence.

Monique M: Yeah.

Mandy C: That's wonderful.

Monique M: So, I interviewed her. I also interviewed Tonyia Rawls in Charlotte.

Mandy C: Oh, very good.

Monique M: I did that. Cari Jackson. Cari was in New York, and now she is in, of all places, Phoenix, Arizona. She works in D.C., though, even though she lives in Phoenix, for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Mandy C: Oh, very good. There you go.

Monique M: So, I interviewed her. I interviewed Deborah Jackson is her last name.

Mandy C: Deborah Johnson.

Monique M: Johnson.

Mandy C: Yeah, yeah. Very good, very good. Another good friend.

Monique M: I interviewed her. And Imani Woody.

Mandy C: Oh, good. Another good—yeah, okay.

Monique M: In D.C.

Mandy C: Mm-hmm.

Monique M: And I don't feel like that's 11.

Mandy C: But you're going to do 15. Do you have any other four you already you want in advance?

Monique M: So, I have another Jewish rabbi I'm planning to do who I was waiting to sort of get a contact for, and so I literally just got that last week. So, I'm in the cold call stage. Tonyia Rawls gave me Bishop Abramson in D.C., so I'm trying to make it through her people, her people's people.

Mandy C: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Monique M: To get to her through Tonyia's contact. I have set up an imam, a black lesbian imam that is seldomly in the country, so that's part of our difficulty is like figuring out when we'll be in the same soil. And then the fourth is [Ifa Asanti] who is an Ifa practitioner of African indigenous religion out in California. So those are what's left on the list.

Mandy C: Okay. You know, I had two more, one I might do if it's okay. I mean, whether these are [relevant] or not.

Monique M: Yeah.

Mandy C: There's a sister who is—you know, there's a whole Unity Fellowship Church movement.

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: And there's a sister that's up in D.C., and they have their own Unity Fellowship. I'll double check on that, because I was up there. Yeah, it is their church. And I had gone up and went to the services. The other one is the sister who used to run the AIDS organization in New York, but she was part of the Unity Fellowship Church movement, too. You know what's happening? The older I get, my memory is like...if I don't have the

database in front of me—but these are two people, if I said her name, you may or may not know her. But anyway, she’s still in New York. Came from the, you know, black lesbian, faith-based, ended up running like the New York state, New York City AIDS crisis something or other. But she’s still there. I can’t think of the other woman’s—when I get home, when I can get on my computer, I will forward these to you.

Monique M: Oh, I would love that.

Mandy C: Yeah. And I’ll—

Monique M: Because I did interview some of those. Tonyia was, at one point, Unity. I also interviewed, I forgot, Renee McCoy.

Mandy C: Oh, good. And that was another one. You have already done her, too. Yeah, these are the two. One’s D.C., one’s New York, and I’ll figure that out. And you may not have heard the names, but, you know, I was just trying to think in my little network of people, and ones that I’ve known that have just been there.

Monique M: Yeah. Well, part of the project, the long ranging project, I said 15 because I want the book. So, my proposed plan for my own career goals, I want to take the next year off so that I can write the book.

Mandy C: Oh, wow.

Monique M: And so, I need to get to a point where I had stopped interviewing so that I can start writing.

Mandy C: Yeah, so then start writing. Exactly right. Exactly.

Monique M: And so that's why I said if I get to 15, which I should be able to do by the end of the year, then I will—

Mandy C: Good to go?

Monique M: Spend next semester just printing out all the transcripts and starting to get it coded, and then in the fall I can start looking at themes and write the following spring, so that there is something that will be in the real world.

Mandy C: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Monique M: But the transcripts themselves and the interviews themselves are going up immediately.

Mandy C: Nice.

Monique M: So as soon as—

Mandy C: So, it's almost like—

Monique M: As soon as the person who I interview gives me the okay with the transcript, then it gets automatically uploaded to the LGBTran site.

Mandy C: That's good. It's like I don't want to wait to get it all done, just get it up there.

Monique M: Yeah. I want the material as easily accessible and as quickly accessible. But I had written a grant to do 25, and I guess the benefit—I didn't get the grant, and part of their response was this would be wonderful, but why stop at 25? Like we see the need of doing so much more. And I'm like but you won't fund me these 25, so—

Mandy C: Yeah, so—

Monique M: —how am I going to go do these other ones?

Mandy C: Yeah.

Monique M: But this I see as sort of a starting piont, that if I can get these 15 done and then get the book from them finished, then I'll have sort of the cred for funders to go back and say—

Mandy C: Uh-huh, then you can—yeah, no, that's what you...no, that's smart. That's very smart.

Monique M: —okay, I am building an archive, and so will you fund these additional 20 or whatever.

Mandy C: Yeah, like it. Just got to... It's all good. Okay. You got your plans.

Monique M: I do. [*Laughs.*]

Mandy C: [*Laughs.*]

Monique M: We shall see what the funders do with those plans.

Mandy C: Yes, yes. All right. Okay.

Monique M: Okay, so I'm going to jump right in.

Mandy C: Okay.

Monique M: As I siad, because you have really good oral histories out there, my project is really going to ask you some questions about some of the lesser things that are not present, and it may be not present because they didn't really matter to you, and so this will be a way of putting that on record.

Mandy C: Okay, sounds good.

Monique M: So, I know you were raised in a foster home and an orphanage. Can you tell me some of the values you were taught early in life? What messages about morality did you get?

Mandy C: Well, first of all, a couple of things in terms of framing. Because at the age of one—I had a brother Ronnie and a sister Delores, Ronnie one year older than me, and only raised, and my sister was two. So, when our mother left, she literally left, and we don't know why. But our father tried to take care of us. He couldn't. He went to jail for nonpayment. And the system in New York at that time—I was born in 1948—all three of us were sent to like a place for unwanted babies in Albany. And then when you get old enough, then you literally are right up the street from the Albany Children's Home.

I mention that because in the home situation, unless you were Jewish or some kind of clearly defined Catholic, you were just labeled pretty much Protestant. And because of that then you would be—and you had to go to church every Sunday. Then we went to a local Protestant church in Albany. So that was from age one to age eight. The Albany Children's Home got sold. Right now, you know what it is? Its Russell Sage College is the exact same place I lived all my life. So, when the home got sold, this is where the foster parent thing came in.

Now, the Albany Children's Home, and whatever little...it was predominantly white. I mean, children of color were almost always in the

minority numerically just sort of in the sense of the reality, when I look back upon it. So, we went to a...when we were in the Albany Children's Home we went to a Protestant church, white. But, the foster family that took us in for that four-year gap before I went to the Schenectady Children's Home at the age of 12 was a black farm foster family in Chatham Center, New York.

And I must say, when I look back upon the time frame of my being 8 to 12 years old, the only church they had in Chatham Center, NY was a small white Protestant church. Looking back on it now, it was a rarity to have black farmers in a black foster home in a predominantly white, small rural community. And the farm family—this is what I thought was interesting—they were older. They couldn't have any children, so they always had black foster kids, which is interesting.

So, I never heard them ever talk about their own religion as a black woman or a black man. And because we were in Chatham Center, the church we went to was not a black church, it was just part of what it was. I never grasped that part of it. But when I look back upon it, I was intrigued, like well, how did they end up in Chatham Center? He had goats. He was probably one of the few black farmers that had goat milk way ahead of the time to sell goat milk to whatever neighbors or customers they had, and they had chickens, and they had like one cow, and a wonderful garden. But I would almost go back and just... Anyway, so that was just interesting to me.

So even though they were a black elderly couple, they only had black foster kids. In my reality, though, I always thought they had foster kids for free labor. I'm not kidding. It was like they never, ever had girls. They always only had foster boys. But because they didn't want to split up my brother and sister and me, they said well, we'll take all of you. She didn't last long. She got sent away and ended up back with our father. I didn't last long, until I turned 12. Why? Because I got my period and she said I'm not going to deal with anything about a girl having her period and might be getting pregnant. I mean, I saw this later in the notes that you have. So that meant Ronnie stayed behind until 18. And he was doing all the farm chores. I mean, what...? You know, anyway, that's just my bias. But we didn't really talk about religion.

Now at the age of 12, then I got sent to the Schenectady Children's Home. And there again very few children of color. But we went to yet another white Protestant church. So that's really my... That would be the totality of what I would understand. And with all due respect, half the time we didn't even go to church. It was more we'd hang out in the cemetery until it was time to go back home. There was nothing there for me.

So that said, the one moment that probably dramatically shifted my feeling about religion, our high school teacher, Jack [Higgie], brought someone in from the American Friends Service Committee. Changed my life, because they were talking about Quakers and what Quakers did. And the young man that came in talked about the legacy and the history of Quakers, you

know, equality and justice and whatever. And then I loved this idea of like the notion of the power of one, we all have a moral compass and we get to decide it. But he said we have a high school work camp, who would like to go? And I went.

And the first time I heard more about the Quakers, but the first time I heard about Bayard Rustin, and really more of like...because they were like, this was like the early '60s, Monique, so as a predominantly white organization, the Quakers, they were trying to figure out how can we be allies of the civil rights movement down South. And during the camp they brought in this couple from Highlander Center. Are you familiar with it at all?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: Yeah. Guy and Candie Carawan. And they called themselves culture workers. They said they were down South recording freedom songs of the movement, and the meetings that would happen in the black churches. That would be the closest I would hear about it during that high school work camp. So, I would mark that as a moment. But it wouldn't be... Then you age out at 18. You know, you age out of the system. So, for the practical person, I always went to white Protestant churches, heard about the Quakers, but it wouldn't be until I got a job with the War Resisters leaving San Francisco, and then I started going to the Friends meetings in San Francisco. So that's my journey.

And I would say other than Unitarians and Quakers, that would be it until I started going to some of the Unity Fellowship Church meetings with all black folk, and I thought if I had this when I was growing up, if I knew what this was, I'd be very happy. Anyway, that's a little bit of a journey there. But yeah, that's the—

Monique M: Yeah, and that's helpful in laying landmarks. I'm going to take us back, though, to those early messages of right and wrong, what were they and where did they come from. Were they coming from school? Were they coming from the people who were in charge?

Mandy C: I think, you know, it's interesting. I don't think they call them...they called them Children Home Societies. In both Albany Children's Home and Schenectady's Children's Home, there really wasn't a lot of focus on religion, per se, other than you've got to go to church on Sunday.

Monique M: No-no-no, not even just religion. Just like how you know—

Mandy C: Oh, other stuff? Right and wrong?

Monique M: —it's wrong to steal from John, who's your neighbor.

Mandy C: Well, I'll give a good example. I think the first time I knew right and wrong was when I'm in the Schenectady Children's Home and one of the neat things people like to do is just run away because if you ran away that was sort of a status, like a status kind of thing. And I organized our entire senior dorm, which is only what, 50 women, to run away, and I didn't. And the head of the thing brought me in and said Mandy, you just got a lot

of people to run away and you didn't go; you might want to think about how you want to use your time and energy. And that was the first time I had someone question me why you have something that you do and why would it be put toward having people run away from the home. In other words, if you have the ability to do something, why did you use it negatively.

And when he asked me that question, that was the first prick of kind of like yeah, so why did I do that? What was the point of it? And I'll never forget that, because then I thought maybe I really should think about how I want to utilize my energy. That's why I'm an organizer now, because if I can organize people to run away and I don't go, then... But yeah, that would probably be the first instance, so what was I, like I don't know, 13, 14. That would be the first one in that kind of practical way, Monique.

Monique M: Okay.

Mandy C: The other would be because of the Quaker high school work camp, hearing about Joan Baez and the institute—this is during the Vietnam War era. The next time that I had to think about... Because when you ask that question, are you asking it just in terms of day-to-day stuff or to values or...?

Monique M: Yeah, day-to-day, values, messages.

Mandy C: Okay.

Monique M: Education, good.

Mandy C: Yeah.

Monique M: Basic formations.

Mandy C: Okay. I would say just, you know, because—oh, I think the other thing that really made a difference was being in public schools. The fact that they would mainstream us into the public school system of Albany and/or Schenectady, we were just known as kids from the home, so there wasn't anything bad about it. I would say to you that I used to say woe is me, I'm sitting in a children's home. Until I talked to my friends and they said Mandy, you have no idea how good you had it. I had to go home to an abusive father, or sexually abused, where I can't do anything until I turn 18.

I had nothing to compare it to, Monique, so in a way, unless you had—so when I started hearing that, I said well wait a minute, maybe I need to rethink. And that was from my friends who were just friends of mine, and mainly in Schenectady between the years of tenth grade and twelfth grade. So, I would say that was like an interesting... I hadn't really thought about that until they started sharing that.

But getting back to after you age out at 18, and I ended up going to California and going to the Institute for the Study of Nonviolence, Baez, and they were organizing the very first CD (civil disobedience) actions against the war in Vietnam. And I remember sitting in in December of 1967, and I had to ask myself if I sit in what does that mean. I walked around that place 20 times before I actually said I'm going to go ahead and

just commit to civil disobedience, because it would mean I'm arrested, and it might be on my record. But then I thought I have no parents, I have really nothing to lose because there's really no sense of family or all the usual. So, I sat in, got arrested, spent ten days.

And it was when I was in jail that those 99% black women in jail and having this conversation. And like you mean you purposely got arrested to be in here and we're here because we did something wrong? Like bad checks or whatever. It was almost having, and I'm black, the only black person arrested in that CD action. That was interesting. All white women, no shade, and myself. So, my conversation with the other women in prison at Santa Rita prison, the county, was different than if I was a white woman who was an antiwar protestor.

They were essentially saying, oh, you sat in against the war in Vietnam. Well, I can tell you now my brother, my husband, my cousin, they're in jail like me, but when they went before the judge, the judge says you have two choices, Nam or jail. And I thought this is what they're saying to the black men, you know what I mean? So, it was almost like... And then I thought this is more than just sitting in jail for whatever, a bad check. This is about literally an institution that was basically saying we're going to just put you over there because we can.

So, for me that was a moral decision to sit in, the only black person, having conversations with the black women in jail, and almost defining morality based on just day-to-day, but also more like institutional. And

why was it that black men were treated differently than others. And realizing a lot of white guys were doing draft deferments because they could. They knew how to get out of it. Because we had the draft. They knew how to get deferments. And I looked at this and something's wrong with this picture. But the black women said but you're in jail, so I honor that.

And who do you think came to visit Joan Baez? Because she was there, too. King. Dr. King came to Santa Rita prison, because he was opposed to the war in Vietnam. I didn't see him, but I thought that was a moment, to be coming to jail to visit someone else in jail because he believed in opposition to the war, and realizing—and when the black women heard about King's here at Santa Rita, to be here for—initially for Baez, but it was the bigger moral authority of what that was. So that was major, yeah.

Monique M: Cool. Kind of what I was hearing was you determining your own individual morality in connection with communal morality.

Mandy C: Yep.

Monique M: So, can you speak about your sense of community? What were the values around community? How did you form community? What did you value in a community member?

Mandy C: Well, looking back upon it, the one thing I must say, the foster home experience was just, for me personally, not good at all. And, if I can just back up a minute, the fact that this couple was Claude [Menasy] and his

wife, they knew everything about me. Because when you're going to be a foster parent, they tell you everything. And we know nothing about them. And when I was living there, they had like a...the father had some friends and they'd always come up from, or down from Brooklyn, whatever it is. And I remember one of the sons had like a, what do you call it, a watch sits on a chain. What do you call that?

Monique M: A stopwatch.

Mandy C: Yeah. And I took it because I didn't have anything. And I remember taking it and I hid it, and she found out. And then she said to me, you're going to turn out to be just like your father, a no-good thief. And I thought, O-M-G. For her to have all that information, and for her to have that and hold that and say that to me, I'll never forget that as long as I live.

One, they never gave us anything. You're there. Yeah, they put food on the table. And I didn't know they get paid. So, I'm sitting here with this notion about these two people did a good...were so wonderful they came and took Delores and me and Ronnie out of the goodness of their heart, only to find out no, they...that it was just this is me. It was almost like here's three more kids, and we don't care about the girls. We really want boys because of the labor for the farm. Ultimately, my sister Delores and I ended up leaving. And Ronnie stayed behind.

But to have that said to me, what was I, nine or what was I, ten? Whatever it was. I was devastated by that. But, I had no way to articulate it. And yes, I did take the watch, and he got it back. But the fact that they never gave

us anything, never... It was almost as if, it was about I needed something, I don't know, whatever that need was. But I knew it was wrong that I did it, but I thought it was just so horrible what she said to me. And never apologized. Because she knew information that I didn't have. And then when she said to me, when I got my period, never saying why she didn't want me there anymore, suddenly—she never said why. It was almost as if how do you have a moral code if the person that you're dealing with is not giving you the full story.

And the other thing, because there's nothing around you—usually you have a parent, or someone gives you some moral guidelines. You're pretty much on your own. And other than you get up at this time, you go to bed at this time, and you get your meal at this time, and provide, you know, shelter and food, which is good, I really appreciated that, there was nothing else that ever indicated anything else. I don't know how to... You don't know—all you know is all you know. There were no other guidelines until these moments would come up.

Because you had one single houseparent for 16 kids, and they're called a houseparent, you don't call them Mom or Dad, and then based on who they are and what they do. I only share that because until I ended up in that foster home, I was doing great, and I was glad to get out of there and get back to the Schenectady Children's Home because it was order. So that was disruptive for me being there. Anyway.

And the other thing, he really believed in corporal punishment. He would hit us, not with his hand, with a goat strap. They had goats. And I said if anyone ever lays a hand on me again... And that was the first time. Like in the children's homes no one could touch you. But to go to a foster home where you're verbally abused and then to have a foster parent that smacks you on your butt with a goat strap, and he does it every time you do something wrong—and I remember thinking no one will ever lay a hand on me again. And why was it? This must have been his upbringing. Then I thought wait a minute, this was his upbringing that he thought that was okay.

And then he finally slapped me in the face, and I think that's when they realized you have gone too far, like you hit me. I don't know if they ever hit my brother Ronnie, and Delores was already gone, you know what I mean? So, the parameters of this, this was emotional for me. And then I thought I'm glad I'm not here. I'm glad I'm out of here and don't have to deal with that day to day to day to day.

And so, when I got to the Schenectady Children's Home I was fine to be back into what I'm familiar with. And yeah, I better stop there. That's the best way to describe it. It was pretty traumatic in terms of... To me, I thought they were morally wrong, right? You don't smack kids and say those horrible things about you don't know.

Monique M: So, let's move a bit to before you moved to New York. Can you tell me what you remember as your earliest—

Mandy C: New York City?

Monique M: Yeah. So, before you're moving to New York, can you talk to me about your earliest recollection of same sex desire? Did that happen after New York, did it happen as a child?

Mandy C: Mm-hmm, that's good. You know, it's so funny. I mean, this is like 19...I was born in 1948, so I'm [part] whatever. And grew up in Schenectady, New York. I have to say I really, it's so funny when you ask that question because it's like there was no framing or anything. Schenectady is home to GE. That's the number one employer. And I'm in public school. And no one talked about it. I mean, there was no notion of anything. In fact, the NAACP was run by a white student. I thought that was kind of odd. In Mount Pleasant High School. Anyway.

So, I think how it came up is I remember—I was a cheerleader, one of the first black cheerleaders in Mount Pleasant High School. And so, we were in the bathroom or something and one of the women bumped up against me and I thought ooh, what was that? You know, it's like there was a feeling. And all I can say, there was no language for it, there was nothing around it. And at least the word I think we heard was homosexual, not gay or anything. And I don't know.

Anyway, so I went down to our card library, and I thought, well homosexual, what's that, Mandy? And I wasn't ashamed, it was just like what was that, Mandy? So, I go down to the library and start going into

the card catalogue under “H” and I find homosexual, and the first card I pulled out was “The Well of Loneliness.” There was another one.

Monique M: [*Laughs.*] Oh, my.

Mandy C: Yeah. And it was so funny, though, Monique, because the card—oh, first of all I was hoping no one was thinking—of course this card file like how many, A through Z, and I’m thinking everyone knows the only reason I’m going to the H files is to pull out the card on homosexual, and I waited for everyone to go away. Anyway, so I pulled the card file out, but someone else was looking at that because there was like a little...you know when someone pulls the same thing out, it’s like it can’t be me.

I’m thinking “The Well of Loneliness.” What else was in there? So, I just had a little bit of framing. I don’t know if I read the book of—but I remember thinking it was always like tragic, like lesbians, and someone gets killed, or someone kills. And then there was a movie called “The Fox” where in the end the woman gets killed. I thought is this what being a lesbian is about? Let alone being a black lesbian. This is when it really made the difference.

When I turned 18, I took a bus down and I went to my very first lesbian bar in New York City, and at the age of 18 could you drink. I think it was named after some Johnny Mathis song like “The Twelfth of Never.” I have no idea. But I do remember it was dark, down these stairs, back around an alley, you walk in and you couldn’t see a thing. And when your eyes finally adjusted, it was very femme or butch. It was just very femme

or butch. And I'm standing there, and I don't know nothing from nothing, but I remember that image, and I thought oh, okay, whatever.

And the summer when I turned 18, the summer of '67, I got a volunteer job with Tim Leary's League for Spiritual Discovery. There was a building. I mean, I'm not kidding.

Oh, by the way, back up a little bit real quick. So, you age out at 18. This is what's amazing. The home said to me Mandy, your grades are so good—I wanted to be a doctor. I was going to do premed. If you decide you want to go to college, we will pay for your entire college education. It was one of the best offers I had ever had in my life. It's one of the rarest ones to come out of the Schenectady Children's Home. I'll never forget it. Charles [Chartan] called me in and said, you know, you have to decide what you want to do. I loved being there. I was a cheerleader. Loved my high school, got good grades. And we'll pay for it.

But the fact that I went to that AFSC high school work camp somehow it was in my mind about Vietnam, nonviolence, social change. I'm not sure what that was, but it was in my mind. And when he offered the possibility of going to school and they'll pay for it, I ended up staying at the YWCA in Troy, New York. Troy, New York. And I ended up, and I was given—then I realized this is no different than being at the home. There was something about...I mean, they paid for the room. It's a Y. But you had to get up at the same time, go to school at the same time. I was going to a

junior college, Hudson Valley Community College. And there was something just about that routine.

But in the back of my mind I kept on thinking about the Quakers, and Vietnam, and nonviolence, and King. And you know what else was happening, Monique? The images were coming from down South. We started seeing the hoses, and the dogs, and the people, the guys on horses, the beatings, and then you start hearing about the lynchings. And those images—and this was no Internet, that was just coming to you on the news. So, there was that images. And then we started seeing images of the body count, every single night of the body count coming from that Vietnam war. [*Phone rings.*] I'm sorry. I should have turned this off.

Monique M: It's okay.

Mandy C: Remind me. Thank you. I'll turn this off. I didn't realize. But it wasn't just me. This is our generation. So, it had that image. So, I'm sitting at the YWCA in Troy going to school, seeing the images of the stuff in the South, seeing stuff about Vietnam, and at one point I said I just don't want to do this anymore, I just can't. And he said, you know, if you leave we can no longer support you. And I said I'll take my chances. And I had \$80 in my pocket.

I took a bus to New York City in the summer of '67, stayed at a local YWCA there, and ran out of money. But this is like the summer of '67, like, you know, the hippie thing. So, I started sleeping in Central Park and started sleeping down in Washington Square. I felt safe or whatever. But I

just happened to be walking on West Hudson Street on the West Side and this building said free lunch, and I was hungry, and I went in. To make a long story short, me walking into that building, the League for Spiritual Discovery, LSD, they said well, I'll tell you what, Mandy, if you would like to answer this phone between the hours of 8:00 at night and 8:00 in the morning you can stay here and you have a place to stay for the summer. You won't have any money, but you'll have a place to stay and you'll have food.

I did that for the summer. It was the best summer of my life. First of all, the comfort of the place to stay or whatever. But this is like Janis Joplin, Big Brother and the Holding Company. It was summer of love, but also the summer of love was around that whole Vietnam War and also the civil rights kind of thing. So, to be in New York City at that time. I wasn't doing any religion thing. There was nothing going on around that. I wasn't involved with any Quaker thing. It was just being in this facility, and I lived there for like several months, and the experience of being in New York City in that moment in time. And at the end of the summer—this is where we get into moving to San Francisco. And the other thing was it was interesting because—

Monique M: Before we go there, I want to stop us and go back to how do you go from I got bumped up against to I'm going to New York to go to a club. How do you make that decision even between I got bumped up against, I felt something, and that something must mean homosexuality?

Mandy C: Only because at 18 you could drink and there were lesbian bars in New York. That's the only place—there might have been something in Schenectady. So, in other words, it went from being bumped against, whatever that sensation was, going to the library and looking at these index cards of these books—and again, it was just homosexual in terms of like, you know, what that meant. So, but that was different than knowing. Because whatever it was I thought, well, maybe I'm a lesbian, if I could use that term. I said maybe I'm lesbian. In other words, the word was homosexual. Maybe I am.

But the only way I might be able to figure that out is by actually, when I turn 18, being able to go to New York City where you can go to a bar. That's how you made the transition. You graduate. And it's one thing to think about, but you can't do anything about it until you can be 18 and go to a bar. And that's when I went to the bar, and I went to that bar. And it was dark and it was nothing, no big whoop. I thought I guess this is it, and I was not impressed.

And it's funny because all the time I was living and working at the League for Spiritual Discovery, I never went to any other really—there were maybe one or two other bars, but it didn't do anything for me. It was almost like yeah, that's—I guess I was really under impressed, maybe that's the best way. And also, by the way, being a black lesbian, this bar was 99% white, so if you put that into the mix. Like where were the black lesbians? I don't know where they were. But the bars were the place you

would go. But because the bars are where you would go, who was going to be the clientele? Ninety-nine percent white. But that didn't seem to bother me. It wasn't about the black-white thing, it was like this is it? I mean, like that. But I didn't really spend a lot of time in the bars when I was living in that summer.

Monique M: But you were still pretty convinced that that attraction wasn't going away?

Mandy C: Oh, yeah. In fact I will tell you, I would say to you at this point—because there's no parents. There was nothing to worry about why I couldn't just be who I was. And there really wasn't any such a thing called “coming out,” you know what I mean? It was almost like I guess that's what I am, and I'm accepting it. It was more that. Because the notion of coming out wasn't even really in the...I guess you couldn't even say it was like real. It was more like am I accepting who I am. And because I could, I had no parents to be worried about, my employment didn't bother, didn't have anything to do with who I was.

But you know, I have to say it wasn't as if it was like some kind of a—not like how I feel now—it wasn't like sort of an identifier for me. It was more like oh, I guess this is it, I'm good, no big whoop. Like that. This is New York City, okay? That would all change when I moved to San Francisco, but just for that little journey that's what it was. Yeah.

Monique M: Okay.

Mandy C: All right?

Monique M: And then I also wanted to follow back up with so you had this incredible summer, and you said part of what led you to this incredible summer is you were seeing what was going on in Vietnam, you were remembering the Quakers coming to your high school. What was distinctive? What drew you to those two moments? What drew you to a pacifist stance? What drew you to something from the Quakers sticking with you?

Monique M: You know what it was? It was the reference point of that high school work camp. And even though it was for a week, it was interesting. It's almost as if when I went—it's almost like when I look back upon it now, I didn't realize it at the time, that experience of that one week at that high school work camp and the class when that young white staffer came in literally changed my life. When I look back upon it now. And thank you Jackie. I did not know he was a Quaker. He didn't say anything about it. He would say we have a guest speaker coming in. Only to find out later that he was. But anyway, when the guest speaker came in, it was almost—I don't know how to describe it—it was what he said, the three things, Quakers, what they do. I think the second thing really kind of caught me more later, it didn't at the time. He talked about the power of one. Talking about the power of one, that each and every one of us has a moral compass, and each and every one of us has the potential to impact change if you choose to act on it. It went over my head. But it wasn't until later, when I started seeing living examples of how the power of one could really make a difference. And also to have him say that in context of where everyone's

telling you your power comes from who you know, how much money you have. I could tell you how that got pointed out to me as a cheerleader. At Mount Pleasant High School, other than being the valedictorian—and what's the two things you can be, like whatever the two—

Monique M: Salutatorian.

Mandy C: That was the most respected and high-power position you could have in that school, cheerleader. And the fact that I was the only black cheerleader out of my cheerleading squad, which I loved, and have no regrets, you saw it firsthand. They had their own table. You only associated with certain people. And that culture was passed on from the ones before us, the ones before us, the ones before us.

And I remember coming into... I remember one time I was going to go sit with some other people. And we had very few black kids in our high school. And they said Mandy, where are you going? Said, well, I want to... No. We only sit at this table. And you could see that. And when people see you in the hallway, it was just that...yeah. And that would be the closest I can understand about the notion of power and/or that idea that what that feels like, being a cheerleader in that high school.

And with that as a reference point to then hear someone talk about the moral compass, and my attraction to having gone to that week, and Quakers, and reading about nonviolence, and reading about Gandhi and how they used it in the civil rights movement, and how they used it in Europe when he was living out there, and how they were going to utilize it

in our current civil rights movement. I think that I just thought it... And I was reading a lot. They had books and I was reading a lot, and I absorbed it, and then I realized I think this is part of what's going to be my journey because of those two, the class and then the week, and then the summer in New York. It all kind of culminated, yeah.

Monique M: Okay. So, I'm going to keep us on a Quaker theme for a second and ask—I read in one of the oral histories that was done that you had a stint of working for the Quakers in the greater [Philly] area. How did that happen?

Mandy C: Oh, it wasn't until—oh, all right. Another story. Life is interesting. So after—it was one of the best—all I can say, it was one of the best summers. Ice cold watermelon in the East Village, or whatever. So, then the end of summer's coming and we said, several of us said, well, what are we going to do? Someone said, well why don't we hitchhike down to San Francisco? Everyone was going to San Francisco, Haight-Ashbury. So, me, my friend Toshi, who's Japanese—these are friends I made in the summer—an Italian, a white woman, we'll hitchhike out and we're going to go to Haight-Ashbury. Just, you know, one was, because people, you know.

You've been in New York, right? You're down in the Village and then you have to take the Holland Tunnel. You take the Holland Tunnel, and you get out there on New Jersey freeway. True story. We get to the Holland Tunnel, get through it, and we're stopping at a truck stop because we wanted to get some sandwiches, whatever. It was really warm so you

could do that, whatever. We go in there and there was a white gentleman behind the counter. He looks at me, looks at Toshi, looks at Natalia, and says I'll serve her. We don't serve no colored people in here. And we said you're kidding, right? No. You see any colored people in here? There was a black guy behind that counter. I am not kidding. When he said that, I said, what? It's the summer of '67, one of the most diverse... We were all stunned. I could not believe it. No, we're not going to buy anything here.

All right, hold that thought. That's, you know. Then we get to Chicago. Remember, this is [going]—we get to Chicago. Well, let's go get some barbecue. And the black section of Chicago. Again, it's me, Toshi and Natalia. Go into this barbecue joint. There's a black gentleman behind the counter. Looks at me, looks at Toshi and says we don't serve no white people in here.

Monique M: [*Laughs.*]

Mandy C: That is the most seminal moment of my life because I finally said, ah. The same thing was just said, but one was white, one was black. What was the common theme? So that was the summer. That moment, and I'll never forget that as long as I live. We didn't eat there, either. So, every time I hear about—you know, anyway. But no one could have told me that. You know how you go to school and you hear about racism and all that? But to live that experience.

And anyway, so finally we get to San Francisco. And this gets into where the Quaker thing comes in. I don't know if you knew it, but when you get

to the Haight-Ashbury switchboard, they had the thing called—I'm sorry—when you get to Haight-Ashbury, they had a thing called the Haight-Ashbury switchboard. They had a card file and when you came, if you didn't mind sleeping in Golden Gate Park or something, there would be people who would give their names and say they could have temporary housing in their homes.

But here's the other thing we realized when we were hitchhiking out from New York to San Francisco. Every time we got to a jukebox we played this song "San Francisco" by Scott McKenzie. I don't know if you know that. He was commissioned to do that song. Have you ever heard that song?

Monique M: I have not.

Mandy C: Well, the next time you just go to "San Francisco" by Scott McKenzie. It was written because the lyrics go "if you're coming to"—and it's a beautiful. I love that song. "If you're going to San Francisco, don't forget to wear flowers in your hair." It was a way to kind of have people come in thousands upon thousands, but to create this very low key, wonderful, mellow tone when you arrived, so it wasn't like...because hippies were hippies and whatever. But every jukebox had it because there was, the industry had decided, whoever, that was going to be a wonderful cultural way of having anyone coming there, from wherever they came from, before you arrived, you'd have this wonderful flowers in your hair, it's going to be great, you know what I mean? But that was intentional. We

didn't know that until later. He just recently died. But play that song. I love that song.

So that was us. We're thinking we're going to go up to Haight-Ashbury. We got to Haight-Ashbury. There was waffling of the incense, and you had people walking in their bare feet, you had guys with the long hair, all the typical things you would see. And we got to the Haight-Ashbury switchboard, and I am not kidding, the one card they pulled for us to stay was Vincent O'Connor, Catholic Peace Fellowship, draft resister, 591 Waller Street. Had we walked in there five minutes earlier or five minutes later, who knows? And we got to stay with Vincent O'Connor at 591 Waller Street.

Vincent O'Connor, with the Catholic Peace Fellowship, also then was helping to organize the CD action that I got arrested in at Oakland Induction Center. The other organization involved was the Quakers, who had a huge AFSC office right there in San Francisco. And because Catholic Peace Fellowship, the War Resisters League and AFSC all knew each other, that's how I started ending up, when I got my job at WRL, going to their office all the time and started going to the Friends meetings.

But I still didn't declare myself an official Quaker, but then I got more involved, because not just going to the Friends meetings, because as Quakers they were actively engaged, going back to the thing about full equality and justice for all, you know what I mean? So that's when I really delved into it because I did that as part of my job and having a relationship

with them from 1969 until I moved to Durham in 1982. So, Quakers. And then I was down in L.A., WRL for three years. Got involved with the Quakers down in L.A. And when I moved here to Durham, got involved with who? The Quakers in Durham. So, it's always been this constant thing.

Monique M: And when you were making those moves, were you, at the time, seeing yourself working for others like you in the sense of where are the black lesbians in the city?

Mandy C: Not really. I'm really glad you're asking that because you're making me really think back, because I think part of it was—oh, here's the other reason why. I know exactly why, now that you ask it. I brought something for you, a couple of things. You may even have some of this before, but... ["Sword"] magazine did a profile. SONG, because I'm one of the cofounders, they have a...this is the 25th year, they had like a book they did on the cofounders, and this is something they had the thing in. And then here's the report. Because SONG is now in this office, but they're actually, their office is in Atlanta, Georgia. So, I brought this to you just because SONG is one of the six cofounders. I just wanted you to have this because this, you know, it's yours if you're [asking for something], yeah.

Monique M: Oh. I was going to scan it.

Mandy C: Yeah, no, it's all yours.

Monique M: Well, thank you.

Mandy C: Here's the last thing I attended, to give you an idea of the journey. War Resisters League, when I was in jail, like I said, '67, a young white woman who worked at WRL West came over to me and said have you ever heard of an organization called the War Resisters League? And I said you're the ones I just sat in for and got ten days. She said my name is Jane Schulman. She was a white woman. We'd like to invite you to a potluck and come over to our office. Her introducing herself to me is why I'm having this conversation with you today. I'm almost in tears about it. Because when she invited me to that potluck, that potluck at WRL in San Francisco also knew Vincent O'Connor at the Cath—see this connection?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: And the guy she had married, who was a draft resister, went off to jail for being a draft resister, and they had a slot open in the office for a staff person. I got hired. And I was there—I got my job in 1969 and I served on staff there. And because the War Resisters League had a lot of gay men working in that office, including Bayard Rustin, then I thought, wait a minute, I can be an activist working with an organization that is fully inclusive and welcoming to gay men and lesbians, as were the American Friends Service Committee during the Vietnam War.

That's when all of a sudden it was like ooh, lesbian, war resister. And because they framed it not like a sexual thing. It was more like...they didn't have B and G, but gay and lesbian. But what was the commonality of being a gay and lesbian person, let alone of color, against a backdrop of

the civil rights movement, the war resistance movement, but really more societal. And fortunately, this year is the 95th anniversary year of WRL, and I was gifted to be given the Grace Paley Lifetime Achievement Award. And I am humbled and honored, and this is for you. This is a book.

Monique M: Wow!

Mandy C: And so, I got that award, and along with peace awards to a woman named Corinna Gould, who's doing—and she's not lesbian or anything, but she's doing organizing around sacred lands, and The Peace Poets. And so WRL has never always just been about gay anything, it's always been around full equality and justice for all, but making all those wonderful connections.

Monique M: Yeah!

Mandy C: And so to have that to be a part of my life, and to be all these years later, to have that. And all of us are still very much engaged, but that was a gift, and I got to say a few words, and I just shared with them a little bit what I just shared with you. All because Jane Schulman came over, all because of that Rolodex card having the name of Vincent O'Connor, all because some white guy said that we don't serve colored people and some black—you know what I mean?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: And so I'm all up in that now, and here I am in Durham. But I still don't consider myself religious. I mean, I don't go to church or nothing. I do, occasionally do Unitarian. I don't think going any...to have to go anything doesn't change my [*unintelligible*] 00:51:50.

Now, black lesbians, we can talk about Durham and how I would say the journey here, because we're sitting in a state with 11 historically black colleges and universities. We're sitting in a state where you have Rev. Barber and the NAACP and the Moral Monday movement. We're sitting in a state where the black church is so profoundly here, for worse or better. And so to be in North Carolina and to be in, really that's a [milestone] on my blackness as well, you know. Because in the home, all you know is all you know. All I know, I didn't know anything about color, or class, or race or anything until you started seeing other realities.

So to really...and these institutions are pretty much white valued, and white principles, and white sense of where you want to go. And it wasn't until moving a little bit to San Francisco, so you had the East Bay and you had the diversity of there, but really moving to North Carolina really kind of solidified for me about the blackness, the gayness, all the other aspects, and owning it, and being wonderful about it, and being surrounded by some of the great people you just said you've already interviewed or will be interviewing in that sense.

Monique M: So can you talk a bit about how those various identities—you said they sort of crystallized here in North Carolina—how do you think they

influenced how you took activist orientations, and ultimately, do you feel like you had a priority? Like for this period of life I need to be a black organizer—

Mandy C: Oh, I see, uh-huh.

Monique M: —for this period of life I needed to organize based on oppression of gays and lesbians?

Mandy C: I'll have to think about that for a minute. Well, you know, one thing I—I had to think about Bayard for a minute. One thing I was really struck about, and one of the good things about going to that work camp, they gave you these wonderful books you could read. What I really was struck by, and maybe Bayard was my best example to start with, because his life is pretty much the same as mine. He didn't know who his father was, and who he thought was his sister was his mother, and he had that fierce grandmother who was a Quaker, and a black Quaker up in...my god, my mind's going. Where he was living and living out his early life.

And I never met the gentleman, but his path was interesting because he became a fierce Quaker as well. And of course his journey of being a pacifist during World War II, and ultimately working with A.J. Muste, Fellowship of Reconciliation, with the Journey of Reconciliation. It seemed to be this thing of how faith-based, faith organizing seemed to be kind of part and parcel of how you did civil rights organizing. I was intrigued by that. So, it was the church around the Journey of Reconciliation. It was the Quaker value of we do not kill, man doesn't kill

man, so that would be the reason why being a resister. It was when they were [applying] around...

Oh, let's see, what was I going to say? Oh, I know what it was. And also, because his journey, like he was basically an orphan as well, but had a family. But he ended up working almost all the time with predominantly white organizations. I was intrigued by that. Remember?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: AFSC, Fellowship of Reconciliation, A.J. Muste, War Resisters League. And I thought as a black person I didn't mind being kind of like what I would perceive to be like kind of the bridge builder. I can certainly step in and be a big part of being in the black community. I love that, and I love that.

But then I also noticed that it was sometimes important, because a lot of the organizations around women, peace, others where you had to coordinate and collaborate with predominantly white organizations, I didn't mind being that bridge builder. And that's what Bayard did. And so, for me it was a role model. And I didn't really get pushback on it. I mean, this is before Black Power. What was it, the Black Panthers started showing up in...?

Monique M: Late '60s.

Mandy C: Yeah. I guess I have to just go back. I'm not sure what else I can compare it to, because everyplace I worked has always been predominantly white, but never being shunned and/or put down for being black.

Monique M: Okay.

Mandy C: You know, if anything I had some black folks say, well why are you hanging out with these folk? Why aren't you sitting here working with us? I don't know if this ever happened to you, but I think the war in Vietnam, because of the dealing with the black women in prison and realizing the reality of how that would really skew toward more black men being this, you know, not really treated well, but when the Black Panthers started up, if you're black you need to make a decision, you want to be with us or you're not.

Or, if you're going to, what happened here, in this state, let's say you're going to UNC Chapel Hill, there's a black student union and there's a gay student union. You know what that conversation is? You cannot have both. You have to pick and choose. Says who? But that's what they would say to you. And then you have all these HBUs, especially North Carolina Central University. I remember moving here in '82. They could not get a faculty advisor to have anyone over there, have a student group, because so many that say I can respect this and I can understand that, but I don't want anyone to think I'm gay. And what message that's sending to students at North Carolina Central University.

I mean, it wasn't until a non, an ally stepped up and said I'm more than glad to be faculty advisor. And I thought about that. Tia Marie Doxey, please have that conversation with her. She's sitting over there at Central. And I thought, you know, like what is this? And now, all these years later, it's 2018, they just had their fifth lavender graduation. They have a full-time office and staff. From when I moved here and you see that journey that happened, you know what I mean? It's just extraordinary. And now you've got something at Fayetteville State. Bennett has something. So how did that happen?

Yeah, so being accessible and being available as an out black lesbian who has no shame, not embarrassed, whatever, I get called on a lot, and I proactively go and be a part in those spaces, you know what I mean? So, I'm thinking of the young people. I'm almost thinking who was Mandy Carter then, who's here now, and whoever that role could be in [this feeling], I can be a part of that. So now I own being black and lesbian totally, fully, and I'm just great about it. But I still do a lot of work intersectionally with other races of color.

Monique M: Okay. I realize we've been talking about activism without getting a sense from you of what you mean by an activist. For you, what did it mean to call yourself an activist, to organize? What were the catalysts behind that, and short answer, how did you make it a full-time gig?

Mandy C: The good thing is you get paid, which is nice. I mean, here's a reality check. In fact, I was thinking about how you're getting your funding. You

know, an interesting thing happened. I don't know if you know, but when you work for the American Friends Service Committee, when you put six in, you get a full year of paid sabbatical. And I didn't realize that, but that's how they were able to maintain a lot of the staff, because you burn out.

And by the way, no one ever gave us any guidelines like you might want to do self-care, because by the time—well, of course when I was living in New York and doing that answer the phone between the hours of 8:00 at night and 8:00 in the morning I could go 24/7. You know what New York is like. It was fun. And then when I moved to San Francisco, because it was so pressing around that war in Vietnam, and my home was a couch in the office, so it was 24/7, but I didn't mind that. And it wouldn't be till people said you might want to put some parameters in terms of your time and energy, otherwise you'll start to burn out. And a lot of people burned out for all different kind of reasons. But also, the Quakers had this interesting thing about self-care.

But feminism, a lot of...then we started talking about feminism, and feminism and war, and then other issues, and what you would be—you see the big totality of not only what were the particular issues, the civil rights movement, Vietnam, all of a sudden it was around something happening in Central America, but the bigger framing was how are you living your life, what's your quality of life. And so, things like...I'm trying to describe it. It's interesting. That was my life.

I think what started to happen, the War Resisters League, actually they paid you to do the work. You didn't get a lot. And they gave you benefits. That was the first time I went from basically volunteering my time to have a place to live and whatever, to when WRL actually said we will pay you, you will have health benefits. But then there's parameters of when you would work, when you don't, so actually it was just working within that framework that told you you could actually do it and get paid.

But then you saw something else starting to happen. A lot of different nonprofits started up. The Ford Foundation came into it. They created a thing called the Agape Foundation, which was individual people giving their money so the money could then turn around and be given out to either organizations or activists. And so, with the Agape Foundation that was based down, I think, in Palo Alto, California, it was almost like people created a way to...people created what didn't exist. They created it to—it's almost like it didn't exist, let's just create it and see if it will make a difference. See what I mean? So, for Agape to have the funds for WRL to get paid.

So, by the time I left San Francisco to move here, they were looking to be hiring a full-time organizer for the office here in Durham and I got hired. So, when I got hired, I got paid. They had health insurance, and because I got paid, I had a place to live, you know what I mean? And then I realized the difference—and it's no shade on volunteerism, but if you don't provide a way to be gainfully employing people that can just do this work

full-time, that's the quality of life. And then that just opened up a lot of other possibilities.

So, I still get paid, but now the way I get paid, I set up my own Mandy Carter Consulting, because that's what people are now doing. I was the executive director for SONG for three and a half years, got paid. And I didn't want to stay in an office anymore, so I started just doing my own consulting, you know, public speaking. I did consult for nonprofits like the, I don't know, several nonprofits based in San Francisco. In other words, it was almost like an exchange of funders...it was an exchange of progressive funders that created a network, and they in turn would fund either organizations, projects, like one of yours, or individuals. So, you could literally be gainfully employed within the movement and do it full-time and have that be your living. And that's what I've done.

And now I've decided to set up my own. So, I'm on Social Security. I get my once a month and then I'm on Medicare. And of course the living here in Durham, you saw those big buildings coming in, but it's affordable.

And thank God I have good landlords. So now when I do consulting it's like I'll do a consulting job. And one of the things I did, I did one for—I'm trying to think of this—you know the Levi Strauss people? Are you familiar with the Haas Jr.?

Monique M: Mm-hmm.

Mandy C: So they've contracted me to call 40 different organizers, just like kind of what you're doing, 40 different organizers, what is the future of our

movement, not just LGBT, progressive movement, including the LGBT movement, what works, what doesn't work, and what do you see as the future. And when they said to me Mandy, what would you charge for us to do that per hour, I thought can you spare 25? Twenty-five? We'll pay you \$150 an hour. That was the first time I ever realized oh my god, I've always been living in this world of like...that's all I ever knew. What's the word, like scarcity. I thought I was asking... He said no, you're nuts.

And that's why a lot of them are doing consulting now. They won't do it on their own. They'd rather hire someone to come in, contract with them. So, I got \$150 an hour to talk to everyone I knew. I did that for like, I don't know, six months. But it was great because I got to talk with people I know and talk about what works, what's not working, what you do for the future, and that was a chunk of change. And then I thought, well, I can be doing this in other ways.

But a lot of my money is the gift of gab, thank God. I just came from Eastern Carolina and got 2,000 for doing like two classes and a keynote because of the legacy and the history. It wasn't just, you know. It's not a lot, but for me that's great, and I love doing it, you know what I mean? So, activism, starting out volunteer, now I get paid for it, and I'll do it until I drop, I think.

Monique M: So, what sustains you? Well, let me ask two parts. What sustains it and what grounds it? So, at the end of the day, when you have the respite element, what brings you back?

Mandy C: I'm going to go back to that class and back to that work camp. Now I understand what he meant about the power of one and the moral compass. What sustains me is the notion that one person can make a difference. I think the idea that—here's two that I realize now and I tell everyone. "Don't mourn, organize. And if there's a need fill it." And what role you could play. And what sustains me, I think, is just realizing...maybe changing how people perceive, that we've won.

The Vietnam war went on for, what, I don't know how long. But it's over. But we realized that a lot... I mean, I'm getting a little emotional now, but I remember that war went on so long, and all of us who resisted that war. It took me 20 years to go see the Vietnam Wall on the Mall in Washington, DC. Friends of mine that I lived with in the Schenectady Children/s Home, their names are on that wall. And, friends of mine that I went to Mt. Pleasant High School with. Their names are on that wall.

And what I realized is that—and this is just me being honest—that when civil organizations were being set up on the national level, like the Human Rights Campaign and some others, the face of the organizations, because they didn't have any people of color on staff, didn't reflect who's on that wall, and didn't reflect who really was sometimes dramatically impacted, because the leadership and how they would hire staff, with all due respect, had a lot more to do with who they knew and other people that looked like them.

So, when I joined the Human Rights Campaign Fund and worked there for three and a half years, I did get some flak from some of my Washington, DC based black friends. They were asking why are you going to go work with a predominantly white organization that doesn't even care about us. This gets back to what I shared earlier. I have been a bridge-builder all of my life who doesn't mind intentionally working with/in multi-racial places.

I'm just trying to get to the point of where...what grounds me is more of like being able to be honest, but being polite, being willing to challenge, but then, quite honestly, creating organizations where things could happen. That's why we started the National Black Justice Coalition. That's why we started Southerners on the—like don't want to organize. But we did it intentionally with SONG. We had potentially three black southern progressive lesbians, intentionally, and three white progressive lesbians, intentionally, because we wanted to start it out having that right from the get, and then going for the vision. And the first statements we made might help with the ground, what I perceive to be my grounding.

In our first meetings together we brainstormed about what was our mission and what are our values? We then stated that our mission was to build transformative models of organizing in the South—and these are the values that ground me—that connects race, class, culture, gender, and sexual orientation. We then added gender identity, and that was back in 1993. **END OF APPROVED TRANSCRIPT**