

Oral History Interview: Mary Hunt

Interviewee: Mary Hunt

Interviewer: Heather White

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Heather W. This is Heather White. I'm interviewing Mary Hunt. And would you mind just beginning by saying when and where you were born?

Mary H. Yes. Mary Elizabeth Hunt, and I was born on June 1, 1951 in Syracuse, New York.

Heather W. And I understand you were raised Catholic.

Mary H. I was.

Heather W. Can you say a little bit about that?

Mary H. Yes. I came from—I come from a Catholic family. My mother grew up in a neighborhood in Syracuse called Tipperary Hill, which is the only place in the United States where there's a traffic signal where the red light is on the bottom and the green light is on the top. And that's by federal law because the young Irish lads, when they saw the red and the orange on top of the green, were not happy, and they threw rocks until the fixture lights were out, and then they had to replace them, and it got a little expensive. And so eventually a law was passed on Tip Hill in Syracuse, and it's a very Irish part of the city.

I was actually born in that area and I lived in a different part of the city the rest of my life in Syracuse. But that's pretty Irish. My father also was from an Irish family. My mother's had some Scotch Presbyterians. Her father was a Campbell. So we've had some mix with Scottish Presbyterians, but most of my family is Irish Catholic.

Heather W. When you were growing up, was queer stuff or gay stuff, homosexuality, sexuality stuff, was that anywhere in your world that you knew of? Where do you remember first hearing or seeing some connections to—

Mary H. You know, you didn't hear or see much. I remember several vivid images. One time we were—we always took a vacation in the summer, and we were in Florida or the Bahamas, I don't remember. It was one of those trips. And I remember that there were two men that I now look back on it and say were gay, and they had rather abbreviated swimsuits relative to my father and his crowd that wore the sort of boxer style of swimsuits. And I remember him making a disparaging remark about them. And I don't know, I might have been ten, eleven, it wasn't more than that. But that was really quite eye-opening to me. And it was, of course, negative. And I wasn't especially persuaded. But there really wasn't much in the '50s and even in the early '60s. There wasn't much to read, there wasn't much to see, there wasn't a lot of conversation.

My mother was a school teacher. My parents were married when they were 35, so she'd had a career. My mother was a school teacher. And

there were a number of, as it were, single women who were friends of hers who were school teachers, some of whom I certainly suspected, as I came into more consciousness, probably were lesbian. They weren't married. But in those days women who weren't married just weren't married. There was one, a friend of my mother's, she played golf, and she was sort of a stereotypical lesbian of the '60s. But no one would ever—she was a highly regarded teacher, and no one would ever have suggested that she was a lesbian. But she clearly was, or should have been., or, you know. But I don't think there was any vocabulary.

And certainly by the time I was in high school there were whispers and suggestions of girls who might have—I went to a girls' school. It was a co-institutional school with boys on one side and girls on the other, girls school. But that was very limited, I must say. Even in college, when I was in college, there was one person that we knew. I went to Marquette, and there was one person who was known to be gay, and his name was known. He was known to be gay and his name was known. But it was very rare, really, in those days.

And then, of course, people, as we came into the sexual revolution, all of that, it became clearer and clearer. But there really wasn't—I can't even explain how much there wasn't. It's very hard to explain to kids today who, you know, from TV and Netflix and so forth, it's everywhere. But in those days it just wasn't. Or at least it wasn't in my circles.

Heather W. Were there other kind of aspects of sexuality education, or kind of how were the expectations for you as an adult person kind of around especially sexuality and gender, how were those kinds of things communicated to you?

Mary H. Well, in my family there was a premium on education. It was expected that we'd go to school. And so the mantra was sort of get your education and men will come looking for you kind of thing. So there really wasn't pressure to date. I didn't feel pressured to date. I mean, apart from the senior prom kind of things. But there really wasn't that pressure to date. Because my parents had married later, too, there was not the expectation of early marriage. I mean, they were 35. That was old in those days. So they didn't start their family until they were in their late 30s. So that's, you know, especially for Catholics—of course it was the war years for them, too. Men were away in the war. But when they came back, even, it took them several years to meet and to eventually get together. But there wasn't a lot of pressure.

But there was certainly, I mean, I was brought up in a kind of upper middle class, you know, rising—in those years a lot of people who had come from more modest backgrounds, as my father, less so my mother, but my father came from a rather modest background. But the markets were expanding, people were investing, things were growing. It was a

growing economy. And so we grew up very—we didn't grow up wealthy. We grew up comfortable.

And my parents were Depression children, so they lived below their means, although they could have lived in a posher way. But they were modest in ways that I have come to appreciate. But my father paid for school for us. We each got two degrees. That was pretty... I didn't realize it at the time, but that was really very privileged to not have to worry about how you're going to go to school and that sort of thing. So it was very...with the expectations that came with that kind of a lifestyle.

My mother was a teacher who, after she married, became a volunteer, did a lot of volunteer work, and she was rather social, and she had her bridge club and her this and that. And there was a lot of certainly heterosexual conditioning and no assumption of anything else, but it wasn't pushed, because we were expected to go to school, and then those things would sort of fall into place at a later point. At least that's how I took it. I mean, it was to my advantage, but...

Heather W. So educational success was something that was important for your parents and then it was also something that you easily gravitated with.

Mary H. Well, it was easy, too. I mean, it wasn't, you know, that was never a heavy lift for me in the way that it is for some people it's a heavier lift. But the expectation was that we would go to school. And so I went to school from the time I was in kindergarten until I was 30. I just went to school. That's

all I ever did. But, I mean, I worked. I had a lot of, you know, the typical student jobs along the way. But I never stopped, from the time I went to kindergarten until I finished my Ph.D.

Heather W. And how did you make those choices? And I don't know what your undergraduate major—how did you navigate the undergraduate, graduate, Ph.D.?

Mary H. I went to a Catholic high school, and the girls were taught by Franciscan nuns, and the boys were taught by diocesan priests, and we had separate wings. And we were all taught the Catholic social justice teachings. And because it was a tuition-bearing high school, you tended to have kids who were more affluent than, say, the typical public school. And yet what the nuns pushed on us was social justice. So we worked in the inner-city, we worked on the Native American reservation, the Onondaga Reservation with kids. You know, we did this kind of volunteer work.

And we went to Appalachia, some of us, in the summer, and spent several weeks in Appalachia doing, again, kind of either working with children, or in my case we worked on a farm. You know, we did farming, we did building, you know, the kinds of things that—you know, stuffing envelopes—the kinds of things that nonprofits in Appalachia, the Christian Appalachia project needed. But the larger point was that we were expected to give back, and it was expected that those to whom much had been given, much was expected, and so we did.

And so when I went to Marquette, I ended up going to Marquette for undergraduate, the same thing happened, and I got involved in tutoring. And it was the antiwar, you know, it was '69, '70 when schools closed early because of the antiwar protests. And the people who made the most sense to me were the people in the theology department. And I had gone thinking I'd become a psychology major. My father wanted me to go to law school: "A good, smart girl like you should have a license to steal, just go to law school." So he was very—"a family needs, you know, a family business needs this." And I just said well, it wasn't in the cards.

So I ended up at Marquette, and my junior year I got a nomination for a Danforth Fellowship, and I had to apply to graduate schools. And I really was at sea, and there was nobody to really orient me in terms of where to apply. So I'd heard of Harvard and I'd heard of University of Chicago, so I thought, well, those were two names I knew, so I applied to both of them. I got into Harvard, which was my safety school, and I didn't get into Chicago. And discovered later that Sheila Davaney, the Iliff professor, Sheila Davaney, had not gotten into Chicago that year either. She was my classmate at Harvard. Because Chicago had a Catholic quota, and they had filled their Catholic quota before Sheila and I had applied. We discovered this later. Yeah, it was really interesting. So we ended up at Harvard.

And so I did undergraduate at Marquette in philosophy and theology. I did a double major. And I finished in three years. I finished that summer because I figured if I was going to go to graduate school I might as well

cut off a year. So I went to Harvard after my third and final year at Marquette, after the summer, graduated. And then went to Harvard Divinity School in '72. And at that point I went as a Catholic woman expecting to become a Catholic scholar. And Sheila did the same. And what I discovered there, which was really kind of amazing, was that—it was amazing that I didn't know it—and that was that all the other women who were there, or the majority of them, were going to become ministers, and they were going to get ordained, and they were going to have jobs. And this was rather a novel concept to me. And I don't mean to pretend that I was naïve, but I was. I mean, I really didn't know.

And we were the first cohort of women to go to Harvard Divinity School in large numbers. Now Letty Russell and her cohort had gone in the '50s. This was the early '70s. Letty had started in the mid '50s. But in those years, I would say between, say, '58 and '70, let's just say, those first 10, 15 years of women at the Divinity School, the numbers were very small. My year, which was '72, was the first year where there was a significant cohort. '71 was really kind of the linchpin year, I think. People like Emily Culpepper and Linda Barufaldi started in '71, maybe even in '70. But by the time I got there, and Sheila Davaney got there in '72, we were a large group. Rosemary Ruether was a visiting professor.

Heather W. Wow.

Mary H. Juan Luis Segundo was there from Uruguay as a visiting professor in liberation theology. So it was kind of a new day at Harvard, and we in it. And so we developed a lot of women's programs and things grew from there.

Heather W. And when you thought about being a Catholic theologian, who were some of the role models that you were looking at, or who kind of gave you an idea of what that would look like?

Mary H. Well, I had professors at Marquette who were theologians, but none of them were role models. It never occurred to me to sort of follow any of them. But I was very taken by the work of Bernard Lonergan, the Canadian Jesuit. I don't know if you know who Bernard Lonergan is, but he was a Canadian Jesuit of great renown, especially at Marquette, where he...it was sort of a cottage industry at Marquette around Bernard Lonergan.

He wrote a book called *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, which we used in my undergraduate epistemology class. And he wrote in a very dense way. He was a neo-Thomist. And he'd say in the first place, and then the 38th place, and 59th-ly, and sort of that approach, really dry. But I found it very interesting, and I thought his approach to experience, understanding, and judging was a very sound one, and was the beginning of a more useful epistemology than some of the earlier Thomistic stuff.

Anyway, so not coincidentally, Lonergan was a visiting professor at Harvard the year before I got there. And when I got there, they'd never heard of him. And of course I was going thinking oh, Bernard Lonergan. That was another thing that made me think of Harvard, was Bernard Lonergan was there. And I'd never met him, but his work was—you know, I mean, you've never met someone and their work is important to you, you're young, you think oh my gosh. And when I got there, they had never...people—Bernard who? Oh, yeah, he was here last...you know, that guy was kind of...

And I was crushed because I thought, you know, here is this whole world of Catholic thinking that I was a part of, and then in what we called euphemistically the white male and Yale approach of Harvard, he really didn't figure. And Rosemary Ruether was there, and brilliant, and...well, she was the Stillman lecturer, which was the...Chauncey Stillman was...the Stillman professorship was a professorship of Catholicism, and they had various people kind of come and do a year or so, and then if they really liked the person—Francis Fiorenza is the Stillman professor. But when Rosemary was there it was like a Stillman, rather than an endowed chair, we always said it was like a camp stool when Rosemary got there because they were so, I think, horrified by the kind of work.

And she was just beginning to do her women's stuff, and it was brilliant. I never took a class with her, but I knew her around. The same with Segundo. He was an Uruguayan Jesuit who had written *The Liberation of*

Theology. Not the theology of liberation, but “The Liberation of Theology.” It was on theological method, which I was really very interested, and I have always been interested in theological method. And both of them were treated very cavalierly by the white male and Yale-ness of Harvard Divinity School.

There were no women tenured professors. I don’t think there were any—there might have been a woman or two maybe teaching languages or something, but there weren’t women professors until a while later. And so I saw that. And then I began to realize that there was a correlation between how they were treated and the subjects they were teaching, and what I really understood to be important, because I really came to see their work as central, both of them, feminist and liberation.

And then I wrote my dissertation later at GTU on the comparison of feminist and liberation theologies from the point of view of their methods. And then I suggested that feminist liberation theology would be a good—and that sort of took off. I wasn’t the person who coined the phrase, but I developed the concept. And that has obviously endured as an idea. But it was really out of that very personal watching them and seeing how they were treated, and realizing their greatness, but that they couldn’t be measured against the same white male and Yale yardstick because they weren’t.

Heather W. Was the white male and Yale yardstick very Protestant?

Mary H. Almost entirely, yeah.

Heather W. And did you have a sense that...I mean, what was it like being Catholic there?

Mary H. Well, I think the only Catholic I ever studied—I have to go back and look—but I think the only Catholic I ever studied with there was George MacRae, who was actually at Weston, but he taught a Book of John course at the Divinity School. I don't know if there was anybody else who was Catholic other than Rosemary and Juan Luis Segundo. It was a totally new experience. I had grown up, you know, I came from Tip Hill and lived in Strathmore in Syracuse, which was a pretty Catholic neighborhood, and I had gone to Marquette, which was a Catholic ghetto, for the most part, and so when I got to Harvard it was like going to the moon. Just going to church, you know, going into that cold chapel and singing those endless verses of hymns. We just didn't do that.

And it was really very interesting. I found it very exciting. I found it very stimulating. It didn't make me want to be Protestant, but it made me enormously respectful of religious diversity, and also relativized my own very narrow view, that even though I came from a large tradition, Catholicism being a substantial percentage of American Christians and world Christians, that I really didn't know anything, and that I had enormous amounts to learn. And I really enjoyed that.

I actually ended up doing field education. I was in the MTS program, not the M.Div. program, because there was no point in doing an M.Div., I was Catholic. So I was in the MTS program. But I still did some of the M.Div. courses, like I did the field work, for example, just to begin to branch out. And then when it was time to do further graduate studies, I began to look to other places, and that's when I ended up going to Berkeley.

Heather W. And so Berkeley, and then your Ph.D., or is there more stuff in between there?

Mary H. Well, I'll just say one more thing about Harvard. I'm sorry?

Heather W. Go ahead.

Mary H. No, just to say one more thing about Harvard. There was a Catholic community of some sort. There was a counselor for Catholic students, Helen Wright, who was a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. And I came to know some of those sisters and other progressive Catholics at the Paulist Center and so forth. But the Divinity School really didn't have much of a Catholic presence except as it grew. And Sheila and I and a number of other Catholics came, and so now I think Catholics are probably a third of the Divinity School. It was very interesting. But the flavor, the sights and sounds and tastes and smells of Catholicism were nowhere to be found at Harvard. And yet the white male and Yale kind of Protestant ethos was all there was.

And there have been efforts, I think, to rehabilitate Harvard's interreligious history, but I'd have to say when I was there the Center for the Study of World Religions, which is across the street from the Divinity School, was a very separate entity. It was kind of exotic to go over there, and a lot of the students there were graduate students in different programs. But there really wasn't much truck with the Divinity School, and there wasn't much in the way of interfaith, interreligious studies at the Divinity School in those days. It was a garden variety Protestant, you know, sort of midcentury Protestant divinity school, mainly for the training of future ministers.

The interesting thing, in my experience, was that the women who were my classmates ended up being exceedingly successful. So Susan Andrews became the head presbyter, and I think she's the...in the New York area. Diane Miller, who was a Unitarian, became the highest ranking woman Unitarian until they recently elected a woman president. She ran unsuccessfully. But she did the settling of ministers and so forth. There was also Cynthia Campbell, who became the president of the Disciples' seminary in Chicago. Ruth Purtilo became a world class medical ethicist. Sheila Davaney became a very well known professor at Iliff and later worked for the Ford Foundation as a religion program officer, and a scholar in her own right. These women were really first rate.

And Diane Miller pointed out several years ago, when we were doing a show together for the Unitarians, that, you know, she was finishing her

career and retiring from a very successful pastorate, and she said and I have to say—and I said, agreed with her, that I couldn't be an altar girl in some American Catholic diocese to this day. So my success has been rather modest by comparison, and I certainly have not made those kinds of inroads. But that was the caliber of women with whom I studied, and they really were my inspiration and a lot of fun.

Heather W. So there's so much that I'm hearing you describe that's so interesting. One, I hadn't thought about how Protestant, how it would have been an experience of an outsider as a Catholic at Harvard.

Mary H. Oh, yeah.

Heather W. And then the other piece of it is how, being Catholic, I mean, there's women who, in many of their traditions, were among this first generation to rise to leadership, also did that in traditions that were, at the point, opening institutional doors.

Mary H. Just opening, yeah.

Heather W. And so being a Catholic in that context, I mean, at this point you probably...some of that is like forecasting in the future that you couldn't have known, but being a Catholic in that context also made your path different, that your path to leadership would have to be a different kind of path.

Mary H. Well, absolutely. And it wasn't the question just of ordination. It's that in the Catholic context ordination is equivalent with jurisdiction, so if you can't make decisions—because I think that's the real issue—if you can't be a decision-maker in a hierarchical church, then there really is no point to it. I mean, there's no place. And so not only are women kept out of ordination and that track, but because we're kept out of ordination, we're kept out of decision-making. So I think the difference in polity makes an enormous difference in terms of people's career possibilities.

So that's why both Sheila and I, who were the Catholics, as I've described the group, we were the ones who were in the MTS for the academic track, and the other women whose names I mentioned, other than—well Ruth Purtilo was as well, but went on to a doctorate, as did Sheila and I—but the rest of them were in the M.Div. program. So when they came out of Harvard with M.Div.'s they went on to church leadership, as men did from Harvard.

And they were very well trained. We all were very well trained. There's no question about that. But they were very ready to be, and in many cases head and shoulders above their male colleagues both at Harvard and elsewhere, so they were more than ready to take on the leadership that they took on. And I admire each one of them. It's truly great.

Heather W. And where in this did you begin to think about sexuality and think about your sexuality?

Mary H. Well, I was in college in the late '60s so, you know, everyone I think was thinking about their sexuality.

Heather W. [*Laughs.*]

Mary H. You know, if you were 100 years old in the late '60s, you know, in the years of the sexual revolution, I think that—

Heather W. There was no way not to think about it.

Mary H. There was no way not to think about it. But I really didn't have much of a sexual, social life even in college. That was still a little early. I had inklings of attraction, but I really wasn't involved socially. But at Harvard, with the women's movement, you know, we were the whole thing. I think of Emily Culpepper and Linda Barufaldi and that crowd that really started things. And the women's caucus was very powerful, and the women's movement was developing. And of course Mary Daly was across town at Boston College.

And we had a famous self-defense class at Harvard, and Mary Daly came with some of her friends from Boston College, and we all took this self-defense course together. And it was not a very good experience, I must say. One woman broke someone's ribs. [*Laughs.*] It wasn't well done, shall we say? It was the early days of everyone needed self-defense, but no one knew how to teach it. So we had a self-defense class on a...the floor was like a concrete floor in the dining room. We had like maybe a quarter

of an inch of carpeting on it. So it's a wonder we weren't all maimed trying to learn to defend ourselves.

So we came to know Mary Daley and her crowd from Linda, [Janice Raymond] and people like that who came over from Boston College. And "Beyond God the Father" came out, and so things were roiling. Things were in a high boil, I would say, in those days in terms of feminism in, I would say, '73 into '74. And there was a lot of experimentation with sexuality, and so I of course was involved with women. And people were coming out.

By the time I got to Berkeley in '74 we used to joke that there were federal aid programs for straight women. I mean, they just would help them. You know, it was just almost normatively the case that the feminists, not just, you know, but the feminists were also experimenting or finding, or whatever language people used to talk about what was the coming out experience for many of us, for me and for my friends. And, you know, this was part also of my own work on friendship, that I later wrote about women's friendships.

And I think our coming out experiences were really very lovely and very kind of fun and gentle. And I think for many people not in the least bit traumatic. We were experimenting with our friends, and we were finding our way, and following our feelings, and understanding what it meant to bring a sexual dimension, especially those of us who came from Catholic

backgrounds. This is not something we had learned about, been taught how to do, and so we had to find our way. And we were all kind of finding our way.

And there were people who were not so...I would have to say who were predatory and not very...not people that you would look back and say oh, that was great behavior. But for the most part I think there was a lot of innocent, in the best sense, and fun kinds of things, and very deep relationships that people found their way sexually to or decided that wasn't for them. But it was a much more...it felt to me—and of course part of it was my own orientation and identity of wanting that, so that it made much more sense than heterosexual dating—but I really found both at Harvard and then at GTU in Berkeley, where everyone was, you know, Berkeley in the '70s, that it really was, it was great.

Heather W. And what I'm hearing you describe also sounds like...what's the adage? Feminism is the theory and lesbianism is a practice.

Mary H. Well, yeah, that's a little exaggerated. I think there were a couple of exceptions to the rule. But for the most part I think that what came—

Heather W. There's a continuum between those things.

Mary H. There was an assumption, after a while, that people...you didn't have to explain your—now this was Berkeley. It was Cambridge and Berkeley. I mean, I was not in, you know, Dubuque and Iowa City or something. I mean, this was Cambridge and Berkeley, so this was enormously

privileged, highly intelligent people, some of whom were intellectually, emotionally, and psychologically as scarred as the next one. But the consequences of being out was simply not the same. It was very accepted. And in time it became increasingly normative in certain circles—small circles, but in certain circles.

And we used to laugh in Berkeley that we were the power, the women at GTU. And we got a Ford Foundation grant and brought in people like Bev Harrison, and Charlotte Bunch, and Carol Christ. We did all that. And Harvard the same. We set up a program at Harvard that has become now the Women Scholars Program at Harvard. But in those days it was called the Research Resource Associates. We started that. I mean, my crowd started that and got money from Ford or wherever we got it. We brought them in. They didn't bring—we brought them. The same thing in Berkeley. So when I got to Berkeley I said wait a minute, we need to do this, so we did the same thing, and got that going.

And the Center for Women and Religion, which in those days in Berkeley was called the Center for Women's Affairs—and we said we must change the name here to protect the guilty. We must change the name to the Center for Women and Religion. But it was the Center for Women's Affairs. And I went there my first day, I think, in Berkeley and I said I need two things. I need a pool. Where can I go swimming? Because I swim a lot. And where are women? What's going on here? And Sally

Dries, who in those days was the head of the Office of Women's Affairs, said you can swim at the Hearst pool, and the women are here.

Heather W. I've seen it. It's beautiful.

Mary H. It's beautiful, yeah. The pool here, by the way, at the hotel has a little outside. Do you swim?

Heather W. I do. Not as much, but yeah.

Mary H. Well, there's a pool here which has an indoor and an outdoor, and you can—

Heather W. Oh, I didn't know there was an indoor version. That's good.

Mary H. Yeah, you can duck under and go outside.

Heather W. Oh, excellent.

Mary H. Yeah, I was out there this morning. It was nice.

Heather W. Nice. Okay.

Mary H. And it's heated. It's nice and heated. But anyway, so those were my queries, a place to swim and where were women doing things and stuff. And so what became the Center for Women and Religion was really a center of the GTU in those days. So yeah, we had a great time. I can't...I enjoyed every minute.

Heather W. Well, and it was the seedbed of so much stuff intellectually.

Mary H. Yeah.

Heather W. So it's just amazing that here—

Mary H. Well, both Cambridge and Berkeley.

Heather W. Yes.

Mary H. Cambridge in those days—in fact Carol Adams, you know, the vegan theorist Carol Adams—do you know Carol?

Heather W. No.

Mary H. Oh, my.

Heather W. I know.

Mary H. *The Sexual Politics of Meat?*

Heather W. Yes, I do know that.

Mary H. Okay. Carol Adams. Carol Adams was at Yale with Marie Fortune and others at the time. You know, Marie Fortune from the Center for Study of—well, it's called FaithTrust Institute now. Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. But Carol and Marie were at Yale, and I was at Harvard, and Carol went and spent, I think, her third year in Cambridge because so much was happening in Cambridge that wasn't happening at Yale.

And then when I went to Berkeley another kind of stuff was happening, and then I brought some influence, I think, to that as well. And yeah. No, those were heady days, wonderful days. I think each generation gets the great gift of being able to do what befits them, and that's what was our thing. And it's certainly, for me, been a lifetime commitment.

Heather W. And so who were...I know that we've talked some about Sally Gearhart, but who would have been some of the other contact points and intellectual conversation partners, activist conversation?

Mary H. Yeah, that's an interesting question. There were a number of people. Again, the Center for Women and Religion had visiting people coming in. Bev Harrison was there from Union Seminary doing ethics. Carol Christ taught one year or semester. Charlotte Bunch we brought in, the great feminist theorist Charlotte Bunch. There were just all kinds of people like that. There weren't a lot of women on the faculties. People like Clare Fischer and Antoinette Wire, later Sandra Schneiders were on the faculty of the Graduate Theological Union schools, but because there were so few women on the faculty, we had to bring in these other people for what we needed, because we were pushing.

The other thing was that the women's movement in San Francisco, the women's building and all the stuff that was going on in San Francisco was happening, and was for us. Sally Gearhart, the famous Sally Miller Gearhart, was teaching at San Francisco State University, and she was a

friend of Peggy Cleveland. And Peggy Cleveland was the director of the Center for Women and Religion, with a woman named Barbara Waugh. And Peggy and Sally lived on the land in Willits. You know that series that was on last summer about the gay movement in San Francisco?

Heather W. Yeah.

Mary H. I've forgotten the name of it, but it was a drama—

Heather W. There was a women's—

Mary H. Yes. And there was...it was at that...there were three or four episodes of it. It was last summer about the gay movement in San Francisco.

Heather W. I know the...

Mary H. You know what I'm talking about?

Heather W. Yes.

Mary H. And there was a section in there about the women who were going up to the land in Willits. Well, that was Sally Gearhart and Peggy Cleveland owned the land with two other women. And we used to go up there, a little group of us from the GTU used to go up there and hang out for weekends, and we would work. We would do physical labor for them and then we would have the...you know, we would work a few hours and then we'd hang out and study and, you know, have fun and do things. But yeah, that was where we went.

And so there was this whole sense of being tutored, in a way, by these women who were—Sally, for example who—Sally, in those days, was sort of pooh-poohing religion, but then it turned out that she had all this interest, and she always called us the theology girls. And she loved to have the theology girls come up and hang out because she had this background in religion, and had taught in a Christian college and so forth. She was a dear influence, but not... But again, you didn't have a lot of people teaching who really were doing the intellectual heavy lifting.

People like Anne McGrew Bennett, for example, who was retired there with her husband John C. Bennett, who had been the president of Union in New York. She was an early peace and feminist activist. I did a book called *From Woman Pain to Woman Vision*, which is her papers. And John was a collaborator with Reinhold Niebuhr and others on setting up *Christianity and Crisis*, for example. And John was the president of Union. And they were arrested during the antiwar movement in New York because they went into a draft records office. And they were very involved with the Gray Panthers. They retired to Berkeley, and John Bennett was teaching at PSR. Before they went to Claremont, to Pilgrim Place, they retired to Berkeley.

John Bennett always said that when he got to Berkeley he became the husband of Anne McGrew Bennett because she was a central figure for us, even though not on the faculty, but part of the Center for Women and Religion, and became a very close friend of mine. And she was very close

to Nelle Morton. And so when they moved to—or became close to Nelle Morton when they moved to Pilgrim Place. And Nelle Morton, from Drew, and she and John and Anne were very close when they all lived at Pilgrim Place in Claremont. And so there was a lot of impact of those people, that generation, on my generation.

And through the Grailville experience, those of us who spent the summer at the seminary quarter for women at Grailville—and Anne and Nelle both came as professors there, as did Rosemary Ruether and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and others over the years. So that was a wonderful program. It was a six week summer program for women from seminaries around the country. So that's another way that we fertilized the field, as it were, that we were in Loveland, Ohio. Now imagine 15 or 20 young women from theological education in Loveland for the summer and you can imagine that a lot of good times were had there as well. And we got to know each other, the people from Yale, and Harvard, and GTU, and Duke. And so some of us now, like Marie Fortune and Jeanette Stokes, who runs the Center for Women in Ministry in the South and myself, all three of us say that we started our centers because of that experience of seeing women doing autonomous work, the Grail women, the Grail being a Dutch founded anti-Nazi youth movement in the...

Heather W. Wow.

Mary H. Yeah.

Heather W. And how did that get started, the seminary program?

Mary H. The seminary quarter program, I don't know the exact origins in terms of the women's groups, but the Grail people, Janet Kalven was the key person, and she was... There's some connection to Church Women United, I think. I don't honestly know, because I was there the second summer. I could look it up. And I don't remember the exact origins of it. But the second summer. I was there the summer of '76. So summer of '75. I was there the summer of '76, I think. I get the years a little mixed up. But I think the first year was the year of '74, and then I think I was there the summer of '75 and the summer of '76. That's correct. The summer of '75 I was in the program. The summer of '76 I worked there as a volunteer and then just hung out around the program and listened to the lectures and so forth.

And people came. They had Beatriz Couch from Argentina. That's how I went to Argentina, was I met Beatriz Couch there. And Rosemary Ruether was there. That was, again, a fertile—that's another whole interview—but that was a fertile place for the kind of feminist work in religion in terms of cross pollenating, as it were, the work both East and West Coast, Protestant-Catholic, international and U.S. That's a really important—there's a book there that somebody needs to do.

Heather W. Well, as I'm hearing you describe it, it also sounds like that organizing work was happening kind of at the edges of a number of things. There was

feminist intellectual kind of work, religion was...I mean, you can tell me how right this is—

Mary H. The transformation of religion from—

Heather W. —where religion is sort of happening there—

Mary H. The feminist-ization of religion, I'd have to say, yeah.

Heather W. Okay. And then it also sounds like some of this was women's denominational work that was flourishing into kind of feminist theological circles that were—

Mary H. Yeah. Maybe the other way around, that some of the denominational women's work was really giving inspiration, but also getting content from feminist theology. So there were, for example, women in the bureaucracies of the Protestant churches, especially the Methodists, UCC, Disciples, Lutherans eventually. And they were a particular cohort of exceedingly competent women, some of whom had advanced theological training, others didn't. Some of whom were ordained, others weren't. But they became funders for some of these programs like seminary quarter, so that the denominational groups gave money. Or even later the Reimagining Conference. That was because women had access to denominational money, and they were able to channel it into those programs. And as a result, a lot of us who were in theological education were also providing ideas and seeding certain projects and so forth for the denominational groups. So it was a very integrated kind of process.

Where it broke down was that it was mostly white. And the important piece was bringing in women of color. And that was a heavier lift because of racism and just systemic structural reasons that they weren't in those structures to begin with. So that was really where the challenges began to come and where we needed to put a new emphasis and new energy.

Heather W. Interesting. Let me pause here and sort of get a... How are we doing on time?

Mary H. I have no idea.

Heather W. Hold on.

Mary H. Shall we go to 2:30 and then call it?

Heather W. Let's go to 2:30, yeah. So back to being a Catholic in this context. Was there still a way that many of those conversations were very Protestant? What did it mean especially to be a lay Catholic in this context and not be someone working out of religious life in some of those structures? Back to being a Catholic in these spaces.

Mary H. Yeah. Well, first of all, let's just clarify that in Catholicism the distinction is between clergy people and lay people. And then the other distinction is between religious people and secular people. So in fact all Catholic women are lay people. There's no such thing as non-lay Catholic women, until the first one is officially ordained. So that wasn't an issue. So Catholic women, whether you're a religious Catholic woman, that is, in a

community, or a secular Catholic woman like me, not in a community, those are certain cultural distinctions. But the lay-clerical, which is the up and down, doesn't exist. We're all—

Heather W. For women, right.

Mary H. We're all lay. And so that's helpful. I found many of the Catholic women religious very open and involved. Of course GTU had three Catholic schools which were Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan, mostly men. I had one woman classmate. I also did an M.Div. at the Jesuit School of Theology while I was in Berkeley. I did an M.Div. during my Ph.D. And the other side of that was that the assumption for Catholic women was that we were going to become theologians. And there weren't a lot of women hanging around because they wanted to become ministers. They would have gone to social work school, or law school, as many did. They would have gone to nursing or teaching. But they weren't going to become ministers because that wasn't a job for women until a little bit later. So when I did the M.Div., there was one woman classmate who was a nun. The rest were Jesuits and other boys, but mostly Jesuits.

Yeah, I think in the general picture of GTU, because it had three out of the nine schools being Catholic, there was more Catholic ethos on the hill, on holy hill, than there had been at Harvard. But PSR really, the Pacific School of Religion, was really kind of the heavy hitter, along with the Jesuit school. Those would have been, I think, the two, quality-wise the

two better schools among the nine. And yeah, the rest were, you know, the Unitarians, the Lutherans, the Baptists, the Episcopalians. The Episcopalians had some women. They all had some women at that point. It was right at the time, when I went to Berkeley, when the Episcopal women were ordained, and the irregular ordination in '74.

And so I went to—when I got to Berkeley I had to live someplace, and I thought, well, I'll live at the Episcopal school. That'll be really a hotbed. There will be lots of people there because of this ordination. And when I got there and lived there, the women went shh, shh. I said what do you mean shh, shh? "Oh, we don't talk about it." I said what do you mean you don't talk about it? It just happened this summer. It's the biggest news in religion. "Oh, no, we want to keep our heads down and get ordained." And it was deeply dissatisfying to me. Needless to say, my closest friends were not at the Episcopal school. But it was deeply dissatisfying to me that women were very calculated in their decision not to support in a public way—because the ordinations hadn't been regularized yet. They were still irregular. So that was one piece.

But the Catholic piece has always been, for me, central in the sense that I've always found the Catholic intellectual tradition extremely valuable. I haven't found its equal in other Christian denominations. I've never been tempted in the least to change denominations. I don't think there are any better or any worse. I think they're all pretty much of a feather when you get down to it. So a lot of it is really cultural.

And the other thing is I've always felt responsible. I speak Catholic. I know how to do... I know where the bodies are buried. I know what the problems are. And I feel very responsible, and have taken a lot of agency to try to transform that. So I don't have... It didn't phase me that it wasn't a majority culture. We simply made it a—you know, feminism became sort of, and liberation issues and queer stuff became the normative cultures for me and for many people that I knew.

So it didn't really matter if you were a Baptist or a Lutheran. It didn't really cut that way for very long. And especially at GTU, where you had a lot more interreligious influence earlier than in a lot of other places. So you had eventually Buddhist studies, eventually Islam. Certainly a center for Jewish studies in those days. Much earlier than a lot of these mainline Protestant denominational seminaries.

Heather W. And where was some of the ritual practice or the spiritual practice within feminist theology taking place alongside of this?

Mary H. Yeah, well, you know, places like the Center for Women and Religion did have their own...there were ritual groups and things that people were engaged in. I also was involved with the Catholic community at the Jesuit school because I was doing an M.Div. Critically, I must say. I was critically involved. Critically because it was so obviously wrong what was going on.

But there was everything in Berkeley. There was literally everything. You could go to the ashram, you could go to the monastery, you could go to the synagogue. And it was encouraged. And again, that's different than a lot of people who were in mainline Protestant divinity schools.

Heather W. Were you interested at that point in getting ordained?

Mary H. I was interested in showing that women could. And so I did an M.Div. I did CPE at a women's prison in Southern California. I took courses in preaching and sacraments and did everything, hearing confessions, everything that the Jesuits did, I did. To make it crystal clear that there was no reason why a person could not be ordained who was like me except for the penis. And it was that bald. You know, we made it very bald for them.

And it was very funny. Two remarks that were made to me that were very telling. One was a guy said oh, Mary, it's really so sad that you're not a man because you would have been such a great Jesuit. And another one said to me, gee, it's really too bad you're not a Jesuit because you'd bring up our class average, you know, you've already helped our class average so much. You know, because it wasn't a very heavy lift to do an M.Div. with a bunch of young Jesuits. That was not a heavy lift intellectually or spiritually or any other way. And women tended, like myself, to do better. And I don't mean that in a boastful way, but just as a matter of record.

Diann Neu, my partner, who also did an M.Div. at the Jesuit school, was far and away the best in her liturgy class, the best presider when they had to practice. She was the best, and everyone knew it. But she was a woman, so she couldn't be ordained. And the experience of that kind of contradiction was fueling, shall we say, of our own passion.

So I never wanted to be ordained to be a priest. I wanted to be clear that my ministry, which I called feminist ministry, was what they should be doing. And if ordination was a part of that, well, we could talk about that. But I really was not interested in anybody being ordained because I think that what happens in the Catholic—and this is a very Catholic thing—that there's a kind of bright line between those who are ordained and those who are not. Those who are ordained have jurisdiction and they can make decisions; those who are [not] ordained cannot. And I didn't want to be yet one more—I mean, I don't want to be. I don't think anybody should be in an elite class that gets to make decisions and other people not. So to me the issue has always been the structure of the church, not simply the gender issue. But they go together.

And being in that setting, and also—and this is not a trivial issue—paying for it, because to this day Catholic women who study pay and Catholic men who study get paid.

Heather W. Wow.

Mary H. So women pay tuition. I remember my father, who was a businessman, and as I say, had been very generous with us and given us each two degrees when we were undergraduate and so forth, but when I went on to my third and fourth degrees, those were my treat. And I explained to him one time that while I was a doctoral student I held three jobs. I lived at the women's center, which paid my room; I worked in the library, which was a regular job; and I was the representative from my department, which was also a paid employment. And so I was working three jobs and doing a Ph.D. and then I was doing this M.Div. kind of on the side because I already had, you know, a lot of my courses were credited. But my Jesuit classmates had their tuition paid, their room and board paid, their books paid, their meals cooked, their socks washed and their beer money.

And I only had to explain that once to my father, and that was really his watershed. He came to understand then that there was something very, very wrong. And he wasn't a feminist, trust me. But he saw that from a business point of view, that something was radically wrong when his daughter had to take out—because I started taking out student loans. Oh, horrified. But, you know, that was how it had to be. And that's wrong. And that persists to this day. To this day, 2017.

There's a new scholarship fund of \$2,000 a year, I think, for three women, which a woman feminist and her sisters have funded to just start. We just read the first applications this year to award the first three scholarships. And those applications to the scholarship read like my life story. I cried. I

was in Cuba. I was teaching in Cuba and I sat at my desk and cried reading these stories. My god. And they were going to the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, several of them. And they were describing the same kinds of things that I had experienced 40 years ago. Even to the point, which was the most, to me the most tragic, was that their friends, their male friends, as they got closer and closer to ordination, took more and more distance from them, because the contradiction is simply too strong.

And I found that, too, that I didn't have Jesuit classmates who have been friends over the years or have been supportive. They couldn't do it.

Diann's ordination, my partner's ordination, she and her classmates, the women invited the men to wear daisies on their cassocks at ordination to show their solidarity with women and queer people who couldn't be ordained, and not one of them. And I can assure you 110% of them were gay. Not one of them would do it.

So that's a level—and that's still...these women described, two of them described, independent of one another, in the applications, these experiences with their male classmates, that they had been distanced from them. And I thought, oh my god, that's even worse than anything else. On a purely human level, I find that terribly tragic. So this is the collateral of bad polity. This is the collateral. But it has not changed in 40 years.

And I'm sorry about it. It's not for lack of trying. We've been working hard on these things. But just to say that, you know, 40 years later I cannot

report great progress. I would lie to you to say oh, we've made... And yes, we've made ideological strides. Now people are in favor and all this. But we have not achieved the kind of structural change that would make things different. That has not happened yet.

Heather W. A few minutes ago you described the calling or the work that you did as feminist ministry.

Mary H. Yeah.

Heather W. When did you...was that something that you had a sense of during those years in the '70s while you were doing graduate work? Is that the name you would have used, or what...?

Mary H. No, I don't think I would have used it then, but I certainly knew that the ordination—for example, my master's paper for the M.Div.—we had a certain some kind of capstone or something—was a lecture that I gave at the 1978 Baltimore Women's Ordination Conference. I was an invited speaker with thousands of people, and I was a young person. And I gave a talk called something on ordination, "Patriarchal Past, Feminist Future". And so I described what we didn't want, that we didn't want to repeat the patriarchal past of a clerical celibate ordained ministry, but we wanted a feminist future of ministry. So that was really, in '78, the beginning of my intuition that simply replicating the model wasn't going to do it.

And I've never been one to replicate the model. And some people are.

Some people want that in the church, and some people have done it

through Roman Catholic women priests, and some people have done it by getting ordained as Catholic women in other denominations. But I've always felt that the replication of the model was the problem, not just the gender exclusion. So that was an early intuition. I don't know that I called it feminist ministry quite then, but when I said feminist future, that's what I was pointing to.

Heather W. And so some of the things, and one of those things was—you mentioned this earlier, too—was not to have that bright line between ordained and the non-ordained.

Mary H. Yeah. Well, the thing is if you have a hierarchical structure, you have a pyramid and you have a hierarchical structure, and only the people at the very tippy-top get to make the decisions, and then the condition for their being able to make the decisions is that they're allegedly celibate, that they're male, and that they're ordained, you really limit the pool of available gray matter and hearts and spiritualities to be part of the community. So to me that's the fundamental problem. And then the rest of it sort of flows from that.

Until those are circles that are intersecting and the communities have their own ways of operating, which is what we do in the women church movement. We don't have any bishops or priests or anything. We simply meet in house churches and it works just fine. And it's small. I mean, the groups are small and the number of groups are small, but the model works.

The women church movement is one way of doing that. And people say, well, isn't that rather Protestant? And we say, well, isn't that a nice idea? You know, here on Reformation Day in 2017, 500 years later, yes, it's very Protestant, and we're delighted, because we think that democracy, as part of a religious system, is a very good idea. So yes, so rather than that being the sort of hex on the whole thing, it's really the...yes, we're delighted.

Heather W. But what then makes it Catholic?

Mary H. Well, that's the question. What makes it Catholic is that it comes from and is rooted in the tradition of sacrament and solidarity, that it has its roots in the Jesus movement, and the same thing that makes any other Christian church what it is. But the interesting thing was—this is maybe an apocryphal story, but I like to think it's true—Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza tells the story that—I know it's true from her—but that Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, before he was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, was a professor in Germany, and she took a seminar. And she had written about ministry and so forth.

And she said to him, you know, given all this, what justification is there for not ordaining women? And Ratzinger himself, later Pope Benedict XVI, said, well, you know, it wouldn't be Catholic, what distinguishes us. So in fact only oppression or discrimination. But he had no other theological reason for not ordaining women, according to the research she

had done and presented. He admitted that that will make us Catholic. So if what makes you Catholic is that you discriminate, that's not a very happy thing. Whereas if what makes you Catholic is that you're rooted in a tradition of sacrament and solidarity, and you see roots of the Jesus movement, and you're interested in issues of love and justice, then I think we're right smack in the middle of things. So I've never had the least question about what was Catholic.

Heather W. Was something like the Catholic Worker Movement ever part of your consciousness?

Mary H. Yeah, for sure. I'm a devotee of Dorothy Day. I saw her one time. I actually saw her in person. She got an award at the Paulist Center in Boston. Which actually I got later, which was kind of fun. The Hecker Award. Hecker was the founder of the Paulist community.

But when I was at Harvard Divinity School, Dorothy Day—and I had read every word of Dorothy Day. I memorized some of the, you know, *The Long Loneliness*, and *Loaves and Fishes*. “We were just sitting there talking...” And there's a great line where she talks about everything that happened in the Catholic Worker. “We were just sitting there talking, and then Peter said...” and, you know, the next thing you know. “And we were just sitting there talking and then...” you know, the next house gets set up. So I have great devotion to Dorothy Day. And much of my own early Catholicism of college, of the antiwar years, you know, the kind of

Berrigan, Dorothy Day, all of that, until I began to critique some of it from a feminist perspective and from a queer perspective. I certainly have my critique of both the worker movement and of some of the peace movement that way.

But yeah, I think that that's sort of the heart of the thing, and very much have been influenced, especially coming from Syracuse. The Berrigans were from Syracuse. John McNeill was from Syracuse. He taught at Le Moyne College in Syracuse. Theodore Hesburgh. You know, there's a lot of great—the great men of Syracuse. Well, there's some great women, too, that drank the same Upstate New York water. We came from solid Catholic stock and solid Catholic values. And they weren't the values of the Vatican. They were social justice values. And so you don't get away from that. That's hard to lose.

Heather W. So we're sort of...I'm tracking where we are. We're also sort of still thinking about—

Mary H. 2:30

Heather W. Oh, yeah. We've got about 15 minutes.

Mary H. Sure.

Heather W. What was the next step for you after your graduate work?

Mary H. Well, I finished at Harvard in '74. I finished in Berkeley, the M.Div., in '79 and the doctorate in '80. And then I went to Argentina. I spent two

years. I had met Beatriz Melano Couch, who was a liberation theologian, the first woman liberation theologian—the first woman theologian in Latin America, really. Did her doctorate with Paul Ricoeur in Strasbourg and was into hermeneutics. But she was at Grailville in one of those summers, and she said to me what are you doing when you finish. And I said, well, I'm going to pay off my student loans. And she said, well, why don't you come to Argentina and teach with me?

So I had met a friend, who's still a very close friend, from Sweden, Ann-Cathrin Jarl, who's a Swedish Lutheran priest and theologian, focusing on economics, and she was a Frontier Intern, which was a kind of post school program for so-called creative young Christians who would go to places in the world where the Protestant churches didn't have missionaries and do something different. And it was called 'the kindergarten to the World Council of Churches', because—or we called the World Council of Churches 'the rest home for old Frontier Interns' because it was a kind of program that was to prepare future ecumenical leadership.

It was started by a Presbyterian named Margaret Flory in New York. She worked for the Program Agency in New York. And she started a number of interesting programs for Presbyterians, one of which was a junior year abroad program. Then she had the Frontier internship program. She later developed the Bi-National Service Program, and eventually she developed—anyway, Margaret Flory was a phenomenon.

But the Frontier intern program was precisely to send so-called, as I say, creative young Christians to places. And many of us, like Mark Juergensmeyer and Ann-Cathrin and myself—and I was not so young and not so Christian—and we were very creative.

Heather W. [Laughs.]

Mary H. Alice Hageman was another one. And the idea was that these people would get an experience and then go back and work in the bureaucracies of the churches or do something. Mark got into India and became a scholar of Hinduism and Asian religions. I don't know that he ever worked for the church. I guess he was Presbyterian.

But the point of Frontier Interns was to prepare this cadre. So we became sort of this international crowd. And I said why would you have me go? Because Beatriz said well let's send you as a Frontier Intern, because Ann-Cathrin had come from Sweden as a Frontier Intern, and her frontier was the American women's movement in Berkeley in religion.

Heather W. [Laughs.] Why not?

Mary H. So why not? So from '74 to '76 she was there. We became great friends and did a lot of this kind of organizing together. So she said yeah, become a Frontier Intern. Go to Argentina and be a Frontier Intern. And Beatriz Couch knew Margaret Flory very well, and so... And I said, but I'm Catholic. What, are you going to prepare me for the Papal diplomatic

corps? That would be the equivalent. And they said oh yeah, sure.

Margaret said yes, we want a Catholic. You'll be our Catholic.

And that program lasted about 45 years, and it produced, for example, Sam Kobia, who was—I don't remember which country in Africa he's from, but he was the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. That's why it was sort of a feeder to the international ecumenical movement through the bureaucracies of the churches.

Anyway, I went to Argentina. I spent two years teaching at ISEDET, which is the recently closed, but for—was the Union Seminary of Argentina. It was a Protestant interdenominational divinity school, and I taught there for two years. I worked on human rights stuff through Servicio Paz y Justicia, which was the year that Adolfo Perez Esquivel won the Nobel Peace Prize. That was quite an interesting experience to help out a little bit with translation, publicity and so forth with him.

Did a lot of work with women. It was during the dictatorship and there were a number of women, especially very, I would say, very accomplished women, anthropologists, photographers, artists, professors who were feminists, most of whom were lesbians, who were very interested in religion, and had never met an animal like me, who was a feminist lesbian, you know. And I was out, selectively, in Argentina, because you could get arrested very easily there. But I had nothing but a marvelous time with those women as well as with churchwomen. I also worked with

Methodists and Disciples churchwomen and helped them to think about feminist theology. I taught in the seminary. And so I had a marvelous two years.

And then went to Europe and spent a few months doing what we called interpretive work, helping some of the seminaries in Sweden and in Norway to think about what this meant, what does this mean to do feminist liberation theology there and here and so forth. So by the time I came back here to the States it was '82, and I didn't have a job, and I was a pretty well known quantity as an out lesbian who was pro choice, so the Catholic options were limited.

And then eventually some of the nuns who were part of NETWORK, you know, the—now they talk about nuns on the bus, but the Catholic Social Justice Lobby NETWORK one night at a party said why don't you just start something for women in religion like NETWORK, which was a kind of collaborative project of nuns from a variety of communities. And so I thought, well yeah, I can get some women together from different denominations. Because I was now poised, through this training, as someone who had both interreligious and especially interdenominational experience.

And so I wrote up a little proposal of two or three pages for a Women's Alliance for Theology, and pedaled it to some of my women friends in the church bureaucracies. And they knew kind of more than I did what it

would mean to set up something new. And eventually Diann and I and a group of women put it together, and that's WATER.

Heather W. Amazing. You and Diann were doing this in the early '80s?

Mary H. Diann and I met in Berkeley. She was a student also at the Jesuit School of Theology. Then I went to Argentina for two years and we sort of dated long distance for two years. She lived in Washington and worked for the Center of Concern, the Jesuits {{this might refer to CoC but not to Diann as there are no women Jesuits!}}—she was a nun in those days—for a Jesuit funded think tank. And when I came to Washington I moved in with her and the other four nuns that she lived with, and we had a very happy time. They were very hospitable to me and to us.

And then we eventually moved out and got our own place, and several of them did as well. But they were grand women, really wonderful. Including Carol Coston, who was the founding director of NETWORK, and Nancy Sylvester, who was the second director of NETWORK. They were from different communities. But Diann lived with nuns from different communities. And these people couldn't have been more gracious and generous and supportive and loving toward us if you had wanted them to be. I mean, they're just still very close friends. So that was a great experience.

But then we started WATER. And when we started it, because we were Catholic women, we always say, all dressed up with no place to go. We

were well known, we were out, and we were not marketable in terms of Catholic institutions. But I knew what needed to happen, that we needed to have space for women to do our work. And so we started WATER just literally like that, with no money. She was a nun and I had come back from this two year mission thing with student loans. And eventually we got a grant from the Sisters of Loretto. That was the first grant that started, a thousand, two thousand, maybe three thousand would be a lot. And one of them shared an office with us and we started WATER. And that's another story.

Heather W. That's another story. Yeah. All right. So there you go. Done? I'm going to stop it at this.

[End of recording. Interview resumes via phone call on December 1, 2017]

Heather W. So we stopped the last session just as you were kind of about to talk about, or about to come to the time where you and Diann were working on putting WATER together.

Mary H. Mm-hmm.

Heather W. I was thinking about that on my way here also because WATER is how many years old now?

Mary H. Thirty-five.

Heather W. Yeah. Amazing to... So did you have any idea how long this organization would be around?

Mary H. No. We started WATER—I guess I should give a little bit of the... I mean, we started to talk, I think, a little bit in the earlier session about...we got right sort of to the founding of WATER, and I think just to refresh that I had been...Diann and I had met in Berkeley and then I went to Argentina for two years as a Frontier Intern, which I think we talked about in the last—

Heather W. We did, yeah.

Mary H. Yeah. And I taught in the ecumenical seminary in Buenos Aires at ISEDET, and I worked on human rights stuff and on women's stuff. And it was a very eye-opening two years. The idea of the program was to create or to help to develop future ecumenical leaders. And as I said to you before, I think the Vatican diplomatic corps was really not in my reach and not on my radar.

But the people who were in the program were people like Sam Kobia, who became the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, and Mark Juergensmeyer, who's a leading scholar of violence and so forth at this point. And there are lots of people who got their start as Frontier Interns and either went on to future work in churches as bureaucrats or part of the mission outreach, or part of the international work of various Christian churches or went on to academic careers or whatever. Alice Hageman is one. She went on to become a lawyer as well as doing some early feminist

work in religion. But I was pretty clear that that wasn't going to happen for me, and the program said, well, they wanted me anyway, so off I went.

And when I finished that program I spent a couple months in Europe talking about what I had written my doctoral dissertation on, which was feminist and liberation theologies. By this time I knew something more about liberation theologies, having spent a couple years in Argentina, and so I was able to spend some time in Scandinavia, especially, talking with people about what feminist theology had to do with liberation theology and vice versa, and what people in so-called developed countries could do about that, and what our role was. So that was a couple months of what we call a reentry project for Frontier Intern, and then I came back here, and I was ready to get involved.

It was sort of middle of the year and I really didn't have anything cooking in terms of a job. And as I said before, I was an out lesbian who was pro choice and Catholic, and so the typical jobs that I would have been qualified for in terms of especially Catholic institutions were not open to me. My partner—Diann and I were partners by that time, and she was a Sister of Providence. She was a nun and worked in Washington at the Center of Concern, which is a Jesuit funded think tank. And she eventually, in this period, left her community, obviously because of our relationship.

And we lived with a group of women, several of whom worked for NETWORK, which people now think of as the nuns on the bus, the Catholic social justice lobby started by nuns from a variety of communities. And we lived with a couple of those people. And at one of their parties—and I think, again, I mentioned this before—one of them said, well, why don't you start something that would be like NETWORK, but for women in religion. And so I drew up a two or three page proposal for a Women's Alliance for Theology and then gave that to a few people to read, and then eventually had a meeting with about a dozen women.

And we talked about the founding of an organization that might be a Women's Alliance for Theology. And we really didn't think about it in very practical terms. And they said, well, why don't you and Diann both do it. And we said, well, you know, we just didn't have resources. I had come back from Latin America, had been on a subsistence salary there. Diann had been a nun, so we didn't have a lot of money. And I had student loans from my doctorate. So it was a serious matter to us to have to get jobs.

So eventually we started. We had brown bag lunches down at the Methodist Building, which is the building across from the Supreme Court, 110 Maryland Avenue, where, in those days, a lot of the Protestant churches had their Washington offices that did lobbying. And there was also an office, the Washington Office on Latin America, the Washington Office on Africa. There were many different—the National Council of

Churches was there, Church Women United—lots and lots of church nonprofits were in that building, and they had a lot of programming.

And so we said, well, we'll just offer some programs at lunchtime. And women came, and one thing led to another. And some of the women who came to those programs understood, I think, better than we did, at least better than I did, what it would be like to create an organization where you could have the kind of academic quality work unfettered by the demands of tenure in a university and unfettered by the demands of orthodoxy and doctrinal, dogmatic issues in a denomination. So the women at NETWORK, one of them said to me at a party one night, Maureen Kelleher said, well, why don't you start something like that? And so that was the beginning.

And for that proposal, which morphed into what is now WATER, was a very modest start, with no sense that it would go beyond the season, literally, from January until July or whatever the season was at that point. In fact the day after our meeting, Diann and I got up one morning and I said, well, what if we added Ethics and Ritual to this Women's Alliance for Theology and we called it WATER, ha-ha? Well, it was just, you know, it just fit and it worked. I wanted to do some ethics, and she certainly did ritual. But it was a joke. It was one of those things that we didn't really plan.

It was not...there was not a ten year plan, there was not a business plan, there was a very...even a vision. You know, people say oh, it's so visionary. Well, I'm not sure. I think there was more necessity. Charlotte Bunch always says necessity and not ideology will create things, and it's true that it was necessity. I needed a job. I needed a platform to do what I wanted to do. Diann needed work. And so we created this thing which seemed to be responding to the needs that many people had.

In those days—and this is now 1983—in those days a lot of the denominations were beginning to work on women's issues, but they could only go so far. And a lot of people were teaching in institutions where they were getting hassled, so they could only go so far. And so there were a lot of limits. And so we realized that starting something or creating a platform would be, the “room of one's own” model would be without the limits. We'd have to buy it, basically, but it would be ours, and so the mistakes we would make would be ours and the limits we would set would be ours. So that's what happened.

And we started it in our house. We rented a house in Silver Spring and we started, one at the dining room table and one at the study. And then we realized that we couldn't do that, you know, couldn't sustain a personal life as well as work in the same space, so we started looking around for our own office. And we didn't want to have people in our house. It's nice to have people visit, but certainly didn't want to have events or anything.

So we ended up getting...we looked at several places as possibilities. And we've always laughed about how we're so glad we didn't go there, I'm so glad we didn't go there, things that at the time we wanted, but we couldn't have. Churches would not have us and so forth. So we ended up in a very modest place. It was a building that has since been torn down, but it was a two story building with a cafeteria and a beauty parlor on the main floor and then the upstairs second floor was offices, and we had the three across the front, and then there were three across the back. So that's where WATER was for 20 years.

And it became a place where people could come. And we had breakfast meetings, we had lunch meetings, we had tea meetings, we had evening events. And it has always—in those days, again, the '80s and '90s, when there was more programming of that sort, we always had good groups of people, and classes, and all kinds of things. In more recent years, when people have been more dependent on social media and using virtual communication, we've really made that switch, I think, and we don't have as many in person kinds of things as we used to. Nobody does. But no, we had no vision of this going on for 35 years, much less 35 months. I mean, honestly.

Heather W. Wow.

Mary H. When you think about people now who say oh gosh, we've got to set up a business plan and we've got to—oh, hello. We didn't have two nickels to

rub together, and we didn't have anything. I mean, literally. We had student loans. The first grant came from the Sisters of Loretto. One of their sisters needed an office space, so she shared office space with us. And I believe that grant was in the neighborhood—Diann and I can't remember if it was \$1,000 or \$3,000, but it wasn't much, even in 1983 dollars, but it was an enormous fortune when you have nothing. So they were our first donors.

And then we started simply having programs and inviting people to donate both at programs and more specifically for the work that we do. And over the 35 years we have grown. You know, people ask have you grown or have you deepened. I would say we've really deepened. We've had over 80 interns in that time who come either for a full year, or in some cases two years, some for the summer, some for their seminary field placement.

We've had a number of, I would say probably 25 visiting scholars over the years, people who come and maybe they're writing a dissertation. One woman came and wrote a dissertation on religion and violence. She spent almost a year with us. Another woman came from Brazil. And they're professors now. Another woman came from Australia. Another woman came from Germany. People have come from different places. A number of American women have come and spent anywhere from a couple days to a couple months. And it's pretty amazing what happens in a small space.

And we have since moved into an office building. We're on the third floor of an office building in Silver Spring because our building was torn down. But even the landlord of our building, he was a very committed Jewish man who didn't really know much about our work initially, but he not only became a donor, but also was a very generous landlord in terms of not raising our rent a lot. So he was a collaborator. He came with tears in his eyes to tell us—he was in his 90s—to tell us that he was selling the building and we had to move.

Heather W. Oh, wow.

Mary H. But he was a generous donor all of his life to WATER, and just a wonderful man, and really liked what we did. And we of course have worked with Jewish women over time, and he knew that. So we've been very fortunate. Most of our income—I mean, because people always want to know how do you pay for these things—most of our income is from people like you, from donors, people who say oh, that's really something I want to see happen. They like the work that we do. We do the work unfettered, as I said before, unfettered by the demands of any institution or any funder or whatever. We simply do what we think needs to be done and assume that people who want it done will also figure out a way to help us pay for it.

And so it has not been a get rich quick scheme. It's not feathering one's nest to do this work. But it's been a great. I have to say from a career point

of view I have had every opportunity to be on boards, and committees, and all the things that you do as a tenured professor without the faculty meetings. But also without the salary and the benefits and the sabbaticals, so there's a down side, too. But on balance it has been a wonderful both life and living, and I don't know that a lot of people who spend most of their time in academia say that when they're in their mid 60s, as I am. I'm not looking back with complaint.

I mean, I wish that there were a stronger financial infrastructure not only for me, but for other people, because I think the question is what happens when Diann and I no longer are able or want to do this, will it continue. That's sort of the succession problem or the succession question. And I'm of two minds on that. I think in one way we should plan so that people can take over. In another way I think organizations have a certain organic nature to them, and what needs to happen will happen. So I'm not spending an enormous amount of time planning that, but I'm trying to do the best I can in the time that I have to do this work to make it useful, and I think it is.

Heather W. Well, another question related to that is also, I mean, one of the things that's happened with your career is that you are a public intellectual around all kinds of issues connected to the Catholic church.

Mary H. Mm-hmm.

Heather W. And probably especially kind of feminist and sexuality issues.

Mary H. Right.

Heather W. So one of my questions is was there a point at which you made a decision about that? Was there a point at which you kind of decided to be...? Is there a moment that you can look back and see sort of how that happened, or in hindsight important moments to how that happened?

Mary H. Well, I think really two things. One is that—and we talked about this in the earlier part of the interview—I think my own development as a feminist paralleled my own development as a Catholic, and so one would have to be lobotomized, in my view, to miss the deep contradictions between feminist values and the articulation of Roman Catholic theopatriarchy. I mean, those things are really incompatible. And I'm careful not to say that Catholicism and feminism are incompatible, because I don't think that's the case. I think that patriarchal, the hetero patriarchal nature of Catholicism in its sickness—and I believe it is a deep sickness, not just an ideology, but a deep sickness—is something that I understood early on. And that gave me a certain insight into what needed to happen. And so I never, ever, from the time I started studying theology, I never backed off of my Catholic identity.

And people say why are you still Catholic? And I always say spite.

[Laughs.] The joke is spite. But the real reason is because, I always tell people, this is the Gloria Steinem approach. You know, this is what Catholic looks like. Remember when Gloria Steinem turned 60 and people

said you don't look 60, and she said, well, this is what 60 looks like. And she turned 70, and this is what 70 looks like. So Gloria Steinem, this is what Catholic looks like: an out lesbian pro choice Catholic. I mean, there's not really a lot of cachet in being an out lesbian pro choice Unitarian. This doesn't get you very far, and it doesn't advance arguments. Whereas an out lesbian pro choice Catholic is a lightning rod. I understand that.

And we were just talking here in the office about the kind of privilege that comes with being white and being well educated, and we were talking about the Rolling the Stone Away Conference and comparing how some people experienced their own coming out. And I was saying that I was just not only at the conference with a bunch of my friends from Berkeley, you know, Janie Spahr, Selisse Berry, Loey Powell, Diann Neu. I mean, coming out in the company of those women certainly was a joyful experience, not—you know, we were not going around with bags over our heads. The same at Harvard. I mean, Emily Culpepper, Linda Barufaldi, these are marvelous women. We were all hanging out together. But it was the stuff of privilege.

The night that the girls from the divinity school went to the bar and watched and the next day people were talking about it, well, goodness, you know, it's about time we got there. It's like, you know, what's the matter with them? But people were delighted that women from the

divinity school had bestirred themselves to get to a gay bar. Well, we had so much privilege.

So I say what does this mean for women who are waitresses at truck stops and cleaning toilets? It's for them that we have to do the kind of work—and I don't mean that in a Lady Bountiful way, but I mean, come on, if you're as white, and as privileged, and as educated as I am, the responsibility to be out was early. So that was one piece of the contradiction with Catholicism.

The other, I think, was really when I came out very publicly in the early 1980s I was listed in "Ms." magazine as one of the 80 women to watch in the '80s, so my friends in Berkeley made such a joke about it. They put little sets of eyes all over my apartment as a joke.

Heather W. [*Laughs.*]

Mary H. Yeah, they stole into my apartment one night, and I came back and all these eyes. There were thousands of pairs of eyes around. It was a joke. But the fact checker called and said can we list you this way, you know, Catholic lesbian, whatever. And I said sure. And then I thought oh my gosh, what did I just do? And that was that. And then I never looked back. And so the issue is that privilege, I think, does come with responsibility. And as a Catholic who speaks Catholic, I mean, I know Catholic terminology and Catholic culture. I've been to Jesuit schools a lot. I know that culture a lot. And I know where the bones are buried. And I think that

it's incumbent upon me to raise those issues. So that's why—you know, these aren't my favorite issues. I think there are more important issues than the Pope.

But on the other hand, the kind of influence that the Roman Catholic Church, as a social institution, still has—happily less than it had before—but it's significant, and it can't be left unchecked. I mean, I think it would be rather rude to leave it just as it is. I mean, it needs to be responded to, it needs to be pushed back against, and it needs to be lifted up when—for example, the Pope, I finally agreed with the Pope on two things, and so I want to lift those up. One of which is to give to the homeless when they ask you for money. He's right about that. So what if they go buy a drink? You buy a drink. That's a very smart insight. I'm with him on that.

But I'm also with him on the new thing on the possession of nuclear weapons is wrong. Not the use. The use is clearly—but the possession. That's a very important ethical position to take in this world, that the possession, not just the use of—that's, you know, don't waste your time talking about the use, but the possession itself. That's very helpful. So, you know, I want to lift those things up. But when he and other people of his administration are so recalcitrant on women's issues and on queer issues, I have to scream bloody murder because they do have power. I want them to use that power the other way.

Heather W. Well, and the kind of power you have is that reporters call you and quote you.

Mary H. Yeah, that's true.

Heather W. So there's a part of your power that is also being able to say what you can say, and then there's also a part of that power that is where those words, who else gets to read those words because of how they're circulating.

Mary H. That's right. And the other piece of that, which is underlying what we've already said, is that if I weren't at WATER, it would be more difficult because I can talk here for myself, and also on behalf of the organization insofar as it's not a huge conglomerate that I have to get permission from a board or something. What I say is what—you know, I don't... I was talking to somebody recently who wanted to sign a letter, and she said, oh, I've got to go ask my institution. And I thought, oh boy, better you than me. And that's the reason why—and that's why I say if WATER doesn't exist past me, that's all right. But boy, it's good that it has because I really wouldn't have the patience to go and ask somebody if I could sign a letter.

Heather W. Right.

Mary H. I mean, that just isn't—I'm not going to live that long to be worrying about if I can sign a letter or not. I sort of admire people who do that, but I always, I just kind of wonder why would you want to be in a position where you had to go ask somebody. And I understand all the institutional

realities. But that's one of the reasons that WATER, we at WATER have been able to say things earlier than other people.

Heather W. Right.

Mary H. That's the issue. And now many of the things that we were talking about 35 years ago are gum chewing for people, like women's ordination and queer rights and so forth. All these things are sort of gum chewing now. But in those days they were different. And that's why we've moved on. We talk about trans stuff, we talk about antiracism. We do the things that are contemporary. But hopefully with the same edge that we are unfettered.

We're not going to worry what someone says. For example, on Palestine. We don't have a well developed position on Palestine, but I would not be having to go to my board and say could I say this in terms of the treatment of people in Palestine. Those are issues of our day that are, in my view, as important as gender and sexuality.

Heather W. I used one of the pieces that you wrote. One of the things I've been struck with with your role, too, is it also, at this point, 30 to 35 years after WATER was founded, is you have a place to be able to re-tell and to hold some of those memories of how things started. And especially around...I remember the obituary about Father John McNeill and your comment in there was to the—I don't have it in front of me—but to the effect of Father John McNeill wasn't the only gay person, wasn't the first, wasn't the...but

one of the things—so you had a way of sort of capturing his importance that also called attention to the way that he was part of something much larger than a lot of people just didn't know about.

Mary H. Yeah, yeah. Was that the *New York Times* obituary?

Heather W. It was, it was.

Mary H. Yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah.

Heather W. Yeah, so many—I mean, one that they were...you were writing about it and they were carrying kind of your points about how to remember his life, but then too that that memory, also there's a way that kind of retrospectives can easily go back into portraying people as the first or the only or some kind of like vanguard of—I mean, not that he... He was very important and very brave, but your comments pointed to contexts in which that happened.

Mary H. Yeah, I'm just looking at that. I think what you're referring to was he was a gay man who was a Jesuit priest. Being a gay man who is a Jesuit priest, by the way, is not an unusual thing.

Heather W. Yes.

Mary H. The difference is that John McNeill was honest, and he was honest early. And being honest early meant he paid a large price.

Heather W. Yes.

Mary H. That's what you're talking about.

Heather W. Yes, that was—

Mary H. Yeah, it was the *New York Times* obituary of John McNeill on September 25, 2015.

Heather W. Thank you.

Mary H. Yeah. Margalit Fox is the obituary {writer}—I remember talking to her. We spent, Margalit and I spent like half that day back and forth on the phone trying to figure out what John McNeill's middle name was. [Laughs.] And in fact the *New York Times*, because they couldn't fact check it, they left it out and called him John McNeill. It's really funny, yeah. She's lovely.

Anyway, yeah, no, there's a lot of—there is something terribly important about longevity not for its own sake, but for what you're describing, which is context, and also social memory, and being able to understand things in their place. And I think that's where, rather than sort of being long in the tooth and not able to function, I think people in our field, in religion, in some ways become more valuable as we get older, until we are not.

[Laughs.] You start losing your marbles or something. But, I mean, it's really... I do think there's something...

Unlike in other fields. Theology doesn't require the same kind of, for example, dexterity or age related kinds of things that other fields do, and

that's why people teach so late and long. Because there's something really rich about being able to put—but I do think you can get stale, and I think that's one of the issues, that WATER has never permitted me to become stale. And that's because we always have young people here who are not stale. We're starting our podcasts and doing the kinds of things that they want to do. And they're right. I just learn. So that's really fun.

Heather W. Perfect. Yeah, I think those are my questions. I think we're good at this point.

Mary H. Okay, great.

Heather W. Yeah. That's a nice place to end.

Mary H. Fine, fine. And if you need stuff as you—you know, I don't know what... Are these just going to be published as audios? I'm not sure...

Heather W. They'll be both transcribed and available as audios, and they'll be on the LGBT-RAN website. And I know Mark Bowman takes over from here, so he will follow up with transcriptions.

Mary H. Yeah, and if there's anything else you need, just let me know. I mean, you know how to find me. I'm easy to find. Good. Great. Well, I really appreciate it, and I hope that it gets whatever you wanted to get out of it, you get that, so yeah, good.

Heather W. Great.

Mary H. So what's next for you? Is your position coming into clearer focus in terms of is it going to be...you know, will you be there a while, or how...

[Tape turned off; resumed.]

Mary H. ...that really is not a trivial question. I mean, I think that 35 years ago—you might want to put your tape on.

Heather W. I just did, yes.

Mary H. The question of small nonprofits is one thing, and the complementary question is the question of creating spaces where people can do the kind of work that we think is important. And I think that 35 years ago when we started WATER, I did not anticipate the market in terms of how the academic job market has virtually dried up. I didn't anticipate the extent to which adjuncts would become normative and the injustice of that. I did not anticipate the need for, more than ever, for public intellectuals and people with the kind of training that we have to be helpful in society. I did not anticipate that in a conscious way.

But in an unconscious way, I think, and certainly because I've spent my life sort of reading and thinking about these things, I think I saw fairly early on some of the handwriting on the wall. And I certainly experienced that in terms of the difficulties that I would have getting hired in a Catholic institution, for example. I spent four or five years, I don't even remember, as an adjunct at Georgetown, teaching women's studies, teaching in the Women's Studies Department, but I was teaching things

like feminist theory, and I might have even taught a feminist theology class, I can't even remember. And in those days I could see how Georgetown was using adjuncts. They could have their pick of the litter here in Washington. I mean, there are a gazillion people like me who are around who are presumably not incompetent, but at least in my case at Georgetown, not, as it were, to mix metaphors, kosher.

I applied twice for positions in theology, both times turned down, about 15 years apart—ten years apart, I guess. And the first time I was turned down they hired somebody who was ABD rather than hire somebody with my theo-politics. And the second time it was reported to me that a person said, well, didn't we turn her down before, and wasn't that because—and of course what the because is, as a Catholic, they would have needed to get permission for me to teach in theology at Georgetown from the bishop. There's this whole license question. And there's no bishop that would have ever given them or me a license to teach theology. So it was sort of a losing battle.

But there was no point in continuing to teach in women's studies. That wasn't going to lead anywhere. And I think that that kind of adjunct teaching, although people do it now for years and years and years, is really diminishing returns. You know, the institution gets your rapidly improving skills for teaching and you get the same or less money than you would have gotten before, and it goes on forever. And it's just a terrible recipe for injustice, and frankly for, I think, questionable educational quality.

You have people who teach a course and go home, there's really not a lot of commitment and not a lot of incentive to commit to doing things on campus, so there's really a diminishment around the educational experience, too, in my view.

That said, more than ever do we need feminist work in religion. More than ever do we need queer work in religion. More than ever do we need articulate people who study these things and who debate them and give papers at the AAR and so forth about them, not so that they can feather their nests with an inflated C.V., but because they really want to learn and be current in the debates.

And so I think that one of the things that needs to happen—and I said this to people, for example, in the program that you were involved with at Vanderbilt—that to develop centers, whether in seminaries or in theological schools like the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Berkeley, that's fine. But I also know, in seeing how centers work once they're—because they're on soft money—once the interest wanes or funders decide they've got another interest, the institutions don't pick them up, they're gone. Whereas places like WATER, that are independent, I mean, we've outlasted a lot of places because we're on our own.

And again, it's not, you know, we don't have a huge budget, we don't have a huge staff, but we have a deeply committed funding base and we're able to be nimble enough to move with the times. Now I think that needs

to happen a lot of places around a lot of issues. I mean, I don't understand why we don't have—I mean, I understand why—but I would love to see, for example, African American colleagues develop some independent places where they could do their work not connected to institutions that compromise them. The same with Hispanic colleagues. I mean, I just think that, you know, the more we can create the rooms of our own and link those with each other so that there are networks of these.

For example, I have a lot of connection with the FaithTrust Institute in Seattle, working on issues of religion and violence. One of our colleague groups is the Center for Women and Ministry in the South that Jeanette Stokes runs in Raleigh-Durham. These are small centers, but we link with each other, we talk with each other, we discuss, debate and share resources. And so there are ways of making these things more effective.

But I just think it makes so much more sense as the market shrinks. And as the market shrinks, people are going to have fewer and fewer choices in tenure track jobs of what they teach. I mean, look at a place like Tufts, for example, which is a great university, but they've gone very much in the STEM direction, so their humanities—I just happen to know their humanities programs are excellent, but if you don't have students, they don't last. So that's kind of the economics of education.

The other thing which is crucial is that—I heard a wonderful discussion recently by the president of Trinity Washington University here in

Washington, which used to be Trinity College. It was a Catholic women's college for upper middle class white girls, and it's now a mostly Pell grant funded university for mostly first generation college students in their own families, majority, 90 plus percent African American, just doing a magnificent job of educating young women in the same tradition as that Catholic college, but with a very different population.

And the president, Patricia McGuire, was in conversation with the president of our local community college here in Montgomery County in Maryland, and they said the days of the four-year degree program are numbered, except for the most privileged kids. Some people are on the ten year program. A third of the students who go into Trinity, Patricia McGuire said, have children. They're women with children. Now I don't know where you went to undergraduate, but nobody I knew undergraduate was even thinking about children. I mean, that just wasn't... And now that's normative.

So we have to really begin to think about the ways in which we use our skills, I think. And what happens in academia is that people go and do a doctorate in theology, let's say, or in church history or whatever it's going to be, and they think they're going to be a professor of that thing. I think we have to imagine it more like going to medical school or going to law school, that you're not going to be a medical professor or a law professor. A couple people will be. But you're going to be a doctor, or you're going to be lawyer and you're going to really do something.

And that's why I think that we have to think about doing theology, being theologians in public practice, being historians in public practice, and figure out the economic platforms that will make that work happen. I just think that's the future, and that the notion that you're going to go—and that's why if you look at the guidebook that Monique Moultrie and Kecia Ali and I did, the most recent guide for women in religion, that's the model that we took as normative, that academic jobs were going to be few and far between, and there were going to be jobs in publishing, in politics, in private sector, public service, nonprofit, right down the list, IT, libraries. We went down the list and said look, these are the kinds of jobs people are going to get.

Because what happens is when you go to something like the AAR and you see these people applying for jobs, or even in your own situation applying for jobs, and you get them or you don't get them, it's like such a numbers game. Whereas with your skills or my skills, anyplace else in the public sector we're like hot commodities. If you wanted to work for the government, for example, and you put in a resume—not the Trump government, but in former times—if you wanted to work for the government and you put in a resume with a doctorate and a master's and your writing ability, you'd get a... Who do you think is pushing the paper for these people? I mean, they're not people with the kind of skills that most of our colleagues have. And the same thing in the nonprofit sector.

There are lots of incredibly interesting things for which the skills that many people who have our training are prepared.

So I just think it's a very myopic kind of view that people get when they go to the AAR and they look at the jobs, you know, they say oh, gosh, there's 80 jobs and 800 applicants kind of thing. Well, do the math.

You're not going to get a job, probably. But there are so many other things you can do that aren't represented there whatsoever. But it's that creativity.

And that's why WATER has been—one of the things that people who come to WATER discover is that there are other ways of using the skills that they have. Now some of them will go into ministry. We have a young woman now who's from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She's doing her internship with us. She'll likely go into ministry. We have another young woman who's doing—I think I mentioned before—who's doing her internship year with us through the Mennonites. She's going to go on to a doctorate in chemistry. She has an interest in religion. We have another young woman who's a second year intern with us through the Loretto program. I don't know what she's going to do, but the sky's the limit. She's enormously talented, could do all kinds of things.

So it's just, you know, I just think it's that imagination, too, that needs to get sparked, especially in the current both political order and economic order, to reallocate resources so that we build places like this so people... I

mean, that's—if I have any regrets it's that I haven't built WATER bigger so that there are more positions for more people to do what I do, because it's enormously interesting and I think useful. But if people can't pay for it, they can't make a living. And that's the hard part of it. And we've managed that, by the grace of God, for 35 years we've managed that.

But we also are two white women who came from families who weren't going to let us starve. We had good medical care, we had good dental care as kids. You know, all the kinds of advantages that accrue to people who are white and privileged. And so we started out without, like Diann didn't have student loans, and mine were minimal. We were able to forge our way because we forged it on top of—again, we didn't come from wealthy families, but we came from families where we had gotten good care. You know, we had a good foundation. And that takes you a very long way. If you have good dental care, for example, when you're a kid, by the time you're 60, your teeth aren't going to fall out. These are things that are very important to long-term privilege—I mean, that accrue through long-term privilege.

And for somebody who didn't have that or who didn't have the confidence that comes from going home to a stable family every vacation, every night, whatever it was, you don't have the kind of internal confidence either to live with the uncertainty that creativity demands. So these are the subtle ways, I think, that privilege functions, and that again set us up for

more responsibility, to take more risks, to do more, to push harder, to be out there.

And we adopted a child. We have a child. I mean, you know, that's...really, we've been—that's what I mean—very, very, very lucky and very privileged. So, you know, I'm not naïve about the fact that any two people could have done what we've done. I'm not boasting, but I'm just saying honestly speaking, it's not...there are concrete historical reasons why particular people do what they do. It's not just suddenly plucked out of obscurity kind of thing. But I don't know if I'm making that clear enough. But I think that that's a real...something to really think about how privilege spends over and over again and builds on itself.

The fact that we have always worked in a situation where we haven't had external pressures of somebody saying you can't do that, or you're going to lose your job, those kinds of pressures that people have that cause them to need thousands of dollars of therapy, that cause them medical issues. We've just never had that. Sexual harassment in the workplace. We've just never had that. It's not like that here. And I don't mean to paint a rosy picture, but, I mean, it's just not like that. And the ability to create that kind of environment is the stuff of privilege. It's not just magic. We could make other choices.

For example, if I were teaching at Georgetown, or as I watch Catholic colleagues of mine teaching in Catholic institutions, especially Catholic

lesbians teaching in Catholic institutions, they're afraid of their lives. They practically wear bags over their heads. You ask them to sign a letter on something that is going to be dicey or out there, they can't do it. They don't do it. It's going to jeopardize my... I've never had to worry. Do I believe this? I do it. Do I see that? I do it. And that's privilege. You still get up in the morning and brush your teeth and have a roof over your head. I mean, you know, I own a house and have a car. It's like, you know, how much do you need? But my kid goes to Catholic school. I pay Catholic school tuition. It's those kinds of things that are, you know, that's privilege.

And so that needs to be reckoned with, it seems to me, in the 21st century, so that we start to use—not start, but that we use that. That's a driving force for me, is to use that whiteness, and use that education, and use what up until now, you know, knock on wood, has been really good health and so forth, to use that in ways to make more of it for more people. Because, you know, I mean, walk out the door. Really see people that are... I mean, we're in a big city. We walk out the door, we see people who are homeless, who are hungry. I mean, there's all kinds of...just the normal kinds of things that people live with that I don't live with. And still I get to do what I want. That's privilege. I mean, that's amazing. So that requires a certain giving back.

I always tell my daughter, you know, what are we—I'll say, you know, the answer to every question, she knows the answer—share. What do we

here? Share. [*Laughs.*] The other day we were driving by and some person was panhandling or something, and my daughter said, well, can you give that person something? And I said, well—I was embarrassed—I said, well, I only have a 50 dollar bill. And she goes, well, I have change. [*Laughs.*] I thought she was going to say give him the \$50, and I thought oh, don't do that.

But, you know, you just realize that you're...yes, we have to. We have to be that kind of, you know, what our kids demand of us. And they learn, too. What are you going—share. But she says, well, I have some money in my purse. And she did. And she opened her purse and she gave, you know, she's a teenager. I thought, well, boy, she called my number. She's right. It didn't matter that I didn't have change. I mean, if I'd had any decency I would have given the person the \$50. But it's like...anyway.

Those are the kinds of things that I think. And I don't mean to be dramatic or exaggerated, but it's like wait a minute. How long are we going to live? This is what it means today to push so that...because things are so egregious. And I think have only gotten worse. I mean, I wish—

Heather W. Oh, they have.

Mary H. —I could say that I, you know? Have you lived to see a better day? No.

Heather W. No. I wish, right? At this point no.

Mary H. I mean, really, have I? No, I have not lived to see it, but I have lived to see Trump as President of the United States. I have lived to see Michael Flynn pleading, you know, go with a plea bargain. I mean, I've lived that long. Is that from it? No. That's an indictment of all of us. So we've got work to do.

Heather W. That's right.

Mary H. All right, well, let's get to it.

Heather W. Sounds good, Mary. Thank you so much.

Mary H. You're more than welcome. And whatever you need, give me a call.

Heather W. Will do.

Mary H. All right. Take good care.

Heather W. You too.

Mary H. All the best.

Heather W. Good-bye.

Mary H. Bye-bye.

[End of recording.]