Q: Okay. Okay, so my name is William Butter. It is November 3rd, 2017. And I am here at the University of Texas at Austin interviewing Sharon Colangelo about her experience as a Rag staffer and her experience with women’s activism in America.

A: Okay, let me just say one thing.

Q: Okay.

A: Sharon Shelton-Colangelo.

Q: Sharon Shelton-Colangelo.

A: Yes, Colangelo is my husband’s name.

Q: Okay.

A: And I didn’t use that name for many, many years. So --

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So Sharon Shelton is --

Q: Sharon Shelton.

A: -- is how I see myself. But I’ve hyphenated my name --

Q: Okay.

A: -- in the past. Yeah.

Q: Okay. So Sharon, first I’d like to learn a little bit about your background. Where are you from?
A: Wichita Falls.
Q: Wichita Falls, very nice. And when were you a student at UT?
A: 1961 to 1971, the best decade.
Q: You said 1961 to 1971?
A: Yes.
Q: Very cool. And what was your major at UT?
A: Well, my undergraduate major was journalism with a minor in English. And my masters was -- which I also got at UT -- was in American studies with a concentration in film and English.
Q: Very cool.
A: Yeah.
Q: So in American studies, what was your main focus of study here at UT?
A: (laughs) I studied everything.
Q: Really?
A: I mostly studied activism, but I -- I guess film probably was my main focus.
Q: Awesome. So what kind of work did you do here at UT? Like, what kind of group --
A: Do you mean professionally? Or --
Q: Or -- or, like, group-wise. Or --
A: Well --
Q: What kind of organizations were you a part of?
A: Okay. First, I worked for the *Daily Texan*.
Q: Okay.
A: Until Johnny Economidy won the election for editor. And he was a member, at that time, of the Young Americans for Freedom. So I was part of those who quit the Texan and joined *The Rag* --
Q: Awesome.
A: -- as an alternative paper. I was a member of SDS, Students for a Democratic Society. Later on I think we had some group -- also was in the Civil Rights movement and participated in some of the sit-ins, like at Kinsolving Dormitory and also at Don Weedon’s gas station. And at Texas theater we had a picket line, because none of that was integrated on the drag. There were black students. But they weren’t allowed to live in the dormitory. They had a dormitory for black students across the street, which was an old house at the time. And they weren’t allowed to buy even toothpaste on the drag. They had to go to East Austin to buy anything.
Q: Wow. Wow.
A: That’s when I first got here. Yes.
Q: So what inspired you to get involved with SDS and the Civil Rights movement?
A: I can’t remember when or how I got involved in SDS. The Civil Rights movement, I knew somebody at the Texan who -- well, actually I was a member very briefly of Young Democrats.

Q: Really?

A: (laughs) Yes, before I got -- before I took it further. So the Young Democrats were doing a lot in the Civil Rights movement. So that was one influence. But there was somebody who worked for the Texan who was very involved in the Civil Rights movement. And he invited me to participate in the protests. And actually, I was in the Civil Rights movement until the whites got kicked out. (laughs)

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Because the whites were trying to run everything. So I understood at the time why that happened.

Q: Very cool.

A: Yeah.

Q: So how did you end up getting involved with The Rag?

A: Well, it was after Johnny Conomody got elected to the Texan. And I couldn’t work for the Texan anymore. Because he was a member of the Young Americans for Freedom. And when he campaigned, he campaigned -- the Texan had had a female editor before that, which was really important.
Kate Northcot was the editor. She went on to become the editor of the Texas Observer. She’s an excellent editor. But he opposed her --

Q: Really?

A: -- because she was a woman. And also because he thought that Texan was too liberal. So a lot of people on the Texan went over to The Rag.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, actually started -- The Rag started as an outgrowth of that election.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: That’s really cool. Let’s see.

A: As far as the women’s movement, I was part of the women’s movement. And I do remember when we announced our first women’s meeting -- and I don’t know when this was. And I’ve meant for a long time to check with other people just to find out more about it. But I remember when we announced it, the guys in SDS laughed.

Q: Really?

A: That was their response. And they laughed, and laughed, and laughed. I think partly because they were nervous. But they said, “How can you meet -- how can you exclude us?” We were saying, “Well, very easily. We need to meet
by ourself.” But I remember that immediate laughter, male laughter. None of the women were laughing.

Q: I’m sure. That’s --

A: Yeah.

Q: That’s crazy. So how did members of The Rag, The Rag staffers, how did y’all reach out to the Austin community? And what parts of Austin did you guys reach out to?

A: Well, we sold The Rag -- I was more involved on the inside of it. But I did sell The Rag on the drag. But I never sold it anyplace else. But I think there was a lot of -- I think there was reaching out in the high schools.

Q: Really?

A: Uh-huh. And of course, you know, there was coverage of what was happening in the Civil Rights movement, and in East Austin, and -- but I don’t really -- I can’t really answer that very fully.

Q: Okay.

A: About the community. Later on, there were a lot of ties to the community. And the city council was covered by The Rag. But later on in the ’60s, I was in and out of Austin, even though I lived here ’61 to ’71. A lot of us kind of went to the West Coast or went to New York. I went to Boston. I went to Washington DC. For a semester I went to Boston. I went to New York. And I went to California. So
I was in and out of Austin. So I missed, you know, a lot. And then in ’71 I moved to New York for good.

Q: Really?
A: Not for g-- not forever, because I’m back in Austin.

Q: Right. (laughter)
A: But -- but for a long time, yeah.

Q: What made you move to New York?
A: I had a boyfriend in New York.

Q: Awesome.
A: Yeah, that was -- I think that was -- I moved to New York twice. The first time I had a boyfriend in New York. I married a New Yorker who I met in Cuba cutting sugarcane --

Q: Really?
A: -- for the Venceremos Brigade.

Q: Wow.
A: Yes.

Q: Wow. So what -- what kind of work were you involved with in New York? What were you --
A: I was a member of a group called Media Women and the New York Media Project. And both of them were composed of people from the underground press, which I saw myself as a part of. And what we called the bourgeois press, or the establishment press, who were disaffected and who were against the war in Vietnam or were feminist. In Media
Women, it was women who felt that they were being discriminated against as women.

Q: Interesting.

A: And actually, you probably should know that my first -- even before I worked for The Rag, for my first job interview I was turned down because I was a woman.

Q: No way.

A: And that’s why I continued my -- I probably wouldn’t have ended up being a professor --

Q: Wow.

A: -- if -- I would have been a journalist. But I was interviewed by United Press International. And the person interviewing me -- and I still remember his name, because it was such a traumatic event in my life -- at the Daily Texan, it was -- at the time I worked there it was very progressive. And even though there wasn’t -- the women’s movement hadn’t happened, there were a lot of women who were very strong. So I had great expectations. And I got interviewed -- I got an interview with the United Press International. And the guy told me at the very beginning -- my father also was a journalist, and a lot of my uncles. And my -- actually my -- some of my aunts. But he told me, he said, “Sharon, I’m going to level with you.” He said, “You’re the most qualified candidate. But I can’t” -- he
said, “I’m going to level with you, because I know your
daddy.” That’s what he said.

Q: Wow.

A: He said, “You’re the most qualified candidate. But I can’t
hire you.”

Q: Wow.

A: He said, “Because you’re a girl.” And he said it a couple
of times. “You’re a girl.” And I (laughs) -- because I
wasn’t really aware at the time. And this was very much
the kind of response that many of us women had at the time.
I told him -- I said, “I’m sorry.” I apologized to him for
being a woman.

Q: That is unbelievable.

A: But later, I joined a class action suit against UPI for
discrimination against women. And we won. Because it was
a systematic policy. Yeah.

Q: So you said that was UPI?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you go into --


Q: Okay.

A: But at that time, I thought, I’m going to have to change
careers. (laughs) Yeah. My sister, in the meantime, was a
little bit younger than me, like three years younger. And
she did get a job with the *Houston Post*. So I don’t want to say that women weren’t allowed in journalism. But there were -- there was a lot of discrimination. Actually, there was discrimination by the University of Texas.

Q: Really?
A: My sister was a professor, assistant professor. Her starting salary was $18,000, I think. Or something. It might have even been less, actually, coming to -- come to think of it. But the male people who started who were male made higher.

Q: Really?
A: Yes.

Q: Wow.
A: So yeah. But she did get a job on a newspaper briefly. And then she came back, and got her doctorate here, and taught in the American studies department. Yeah. So I just thought you should know that as far as -- it kind of shows you what the climate was when I was growing up.

Q: Definitely, definitely. Can you -- can you talk a little bit more in detail about the United Press International? Like, about your experience with them and --
A: Well, that’s all that happened. I just got --

Q: Oh really?
A: I was just told I couldn’t be hired. So --
Q: So you couldn’t -- you never were -- okay --
A: Yeah, no. In fact, I left journalism right then.
Q: Okay.
A: That was it. I was offered a job for a newspaper in Abilene. But I -- I didn’t -- I grew up in north -- I grew up in Wichita Falls. And after 18 years there, I was through with --
Q: Right.
A: -- small north Texas -- or west Texas towns. Yeah.
Q: So as a -- as a member of the Rag staff, what were your main issues that you focused on writing about in the underground paper?
A: (laughs) I -- well, I was a journalism major. And I definitely knew how to write. But I never really got the opportunity. I wrote one article the whole time I was at The Rag. And I don’t know -- I can’t remember what that article was about. But I do know that I wrote an article. I mostly typed and sold Rags.
Q: Very cool.
A: Yeah. We had -- it was a male-dominated institution.
Q: Really?
A: Yes.
Q: I did not know that.
A: At that time. I mean, I don’t want to say that the guys were -- weren’t progressive or sensitive. But none of us knew better at the very beginning. Yeah.

Q: What were -- what were some of the hot topics in The Rag?

A: The war in Vietnam, at the beginning especially. I actually wrote about -- in The Rag book, wrote about women’s issues in The Rag. And you can go back and look at it, because there -- it also covered a lot of alternative kinds of issues, like hippie issues. And I felt that they were in a lot of ways male issues. But --

Q: So what women’s rights issues were you most interested in throughout your time in Austin?

A: Well, because it was kind of at the beginning of the women’s movement when I was here, we mostly spoke about personal issues. I was in a women’s small group. We had -- -- I don’t know if you’ve studied about this. But we had what we called small groups.

Q: Really?

A: And it was just a consciousness raising group.

Q: Yeah, we’ve definitely studied some (inaudible) consciousness raising.

A: Okay, yeah, that’s what I was in. And we would get together on a regular basis and just discuss our lives. And it was really important. I think it laid the basis --
I think we really had to do that. Because before, most women thought of those issues as being somehow their fault. Like being objectified in -- by men. You know, being treated as an object. We had internalized all the anti-women attitudes. So just like my apologizing to -- for being a woman to --

Q: Yeah.
A: -- the interviewer who was keeping me out even though I was the most qualified candidate. Even apologizing to him. We believed it just as strongly as everybody else. So women who were raped or who were sexually abused, and -- most women thought they were the only person that happened to. And it was because something was wrong with them. So we had to have those consciousness-raising groups to see we weren’t alone. To see, well, my goodness, look how many women have gone through this. You know, we’re afraid to walk in the streets. You know, we’re afraid to walk at night. But look, everybody else is, too. And don’t we have a right to be full citizens on the streets? You know, aren’t these our streets, too? So we had to discover all that. And we helped each other discover it.

Q: How many -- how many people would you say were involved with these -- you said they were called small groups?
A: Yes.
Q: So how small were the small groups? Like, 10, 15?
A: I can’t remember. But I think most of my small group fit in a car. So maybe -- and we used to squinch in, because you didn’t have to have seatbelts. So I would say eight or 10.

Q: And did y’all grow in size? Or did you all stay kind of with the same group?
A: Well, I was in a small group -- I don’t even know how long. But -- and then I -- you know, I was in and out of Austin. So then when I went to New York, I was in another small group. And we continued that kind of work, yeah.

Q: Very cool
A: Yeah. So they probably changed forms all the time. And became more political as time went by, because we started seeing the ties of all those things about us with the overall social structure. And then started having protests and things like that on women’s issues.

Q: So could you go into a little bit more detail about what you guys would protest or what you guys --
A: When we had the protest?

Q: Or what y’all were protesting?
A: Well, I just -- you know, I’ve been writing my memoir. And one of the things I just wrote about was in -- when I was in Media Women in New York, we got a call from women on the
Guardian who worked in, like, typing. Like, we all typed. And they said they were going to take over the Guardian. And the Guardian was a newspaper that had been -- it was an alternative paper. But it didn’t start out -- it didn’t come out of the same impulse that The Rag did, or, like, some of the other alternative newspapers around the country. It had existed longer. And the Communist Party members had been part of it. And -- it was more -- it was probably more an establishment paper. But -- but still it was extremely progressive. But the women called us out and said they were sick of, you know, doing all the typing and all the -- and not having any say in the decision making. So they decided they were going to take it over. And they -- so I responded. And -- to take it over, it was upstairs in a walk-up building, tenement building. And instead of going up the stairs, we went up the fire escape. And so there were all these women going up the fire escape. And so they had to figure out how to get in. So they broke -- started breaking windows --

Q: Really?

A: -- to get in. And just as the police arrived below. So the police were kind of looking up. So the -- one of the women yelled down, she said, “Don’t worry. This is a labor dispute.” So then we all started saying, “This is a labor
dispute.” And then we started climbing through the window. And there were some women on the Guardian who didn’t -- hadn’t joined in the protest. So they -- including one who was a very old member -- probably the age I am now. But at that age -- when I was -- when I was part of that takeover, I thought she was just ancient. You know, and she was very frail. And she tried to keep us out. And it was --

Q: Keep -- keep you all out of what?

A: The Guardian. Because she was on the side of the guys. There -- there were several women who didn’t take part in the protest. But the majority of women on the staff did. So we took it over. And then they started a newspaper called the Liberated Guardian that lasted about three years.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Or maybe -- I don’t know. I can’t remember how long it lasted. I -- I looked it up and put it in my -- in my -- what I wrote about it. But I can’t remember now how long it lasted. Yeah. And actually, I just read that one of the women that I was part of that protest later became an editor of -- oh, what publication? I think it was something like the Wall Street Journal. So I don’t know what happened with her. Yeah. Yeah.

Q: So I guess I’ll change the subject.
A: Sure.

Q: Head back to The Rag. So how did The Rag help shape a flourishing underground press? And how was it able to expand past and beyond the borders of Austin to a more national level? How did it -- how did The Rag get so vast and popular nationally?

A: Well, I don’t think it was.

Q: Really?

A: I think it was a local paper. But I think it was a very respected paper, and for good reason. I think people who had other underground papers in their cities really respected The Rag. Because it actually lasted longer than most of the underground press. And I don’t know the years. But it -- it did have a longevity. And I think that has to do with the fact that it was able to -- instead of the women feeling they had to take it over, I think there was more flexibility on the part of the guys.

Q: How -- I think you just kind of touched on this. Can you go into a little bit more detail if you can on how it was able to last for so long and how The Rag was so influential to people in Austin?

A: Well, the lasting long part, I wasn’t really here for.

Q: Okay.
A: So I -- I’m -- and it’s just speculation on my part that it lasted a long time -- because it lasted into the ’70s. I left in ’71 for good. I mean, until now. But I left in ’71. So this is just speculation. But I do feel, especially in doing the research on The Rag and its treatment of women, even though the years that I wasn’t here, I think there was more flexibility on the part of the guys. And also, a lot of determination and strength and leadership on the part of the women. There -- there was a woman who’s since passed away, Judy Smith, who worked for The Rag. I knew her, because she worked for it when I worked for it. And she continued working for it. She was a very strong woman and provided a lot of leadership. And there were others who I didn’t know. So -- but I knew her personally, so that’s why I’m bringing her up. But there were a group of women -- I think Glenn Scott, who’s still active here in Austin, was one of the women in the ’70s -- I never knew her then -- but who was very strong in providing leadership and making sure that The Rag was representative of women’s interest.

Q: So of these women’s interest, which -- which of the -- which topics kind of were you most interested in? Which ones did you find most interesting, I guess?
A: Well, at the time I worked for The Rag, the later topics that came out, abortion, you know, abortion rights, birth control, all of those things weren’t really at the forefront.

Q: Really?

A: So I would say just the -- I mean, they started to be. But I didn’t really -- I think that the women’s health issues really became a lot more prominent once the women started having a voice on The Rag. And the women didn’t really have a voice on The Rag when I was working for The Rag.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, so I can’t answer this question, you know. Yeah.

Q: So how did The Rag help merge an Austin community into a political force? Or how did any of the movements that you were involved with kind of merge into a political force?

A: Well, I missed a lot of the transition. But I -- through doing research on my article for The Rag, I realized that a lot of my comrades later on began attending city council meetings and speaking out. Began trying to -- you know, like, have -- force the hospitals to make changes in the way that they dealt with women who had been raped. Just -- they did a lot. They did a lot. But I wasn’t part of that, because I wasn’t here. I was doing something else
where I was. But it wasn’t with The Rag then. Yeah. Or with Austin then. From ’71 on, I was gone.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Very cool.

A: Yeah, all that happened later.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. I mean, we brought it to attention. You know, we brought the war in Vietnam to the attention -- when I first -- in 1962, when I first -- when I had never heard of Vietnam before -- that’s when I first heard of Vietnam, was in 1962. Because the university Y had a -- I’ve forgotten what it was called. It might have been called great issues. But it had something. It had a program where you could learn about different parts of the world. And it was considered sort of a -- it’s hard to explain, because we were all, like, not very politically aware then in -- in ’62, was when this was. We were not very politically aware then. But the director of the Y was trying to really educate people around a lot of different issues. And I took -- I -- they had, like, little -- I’ve forgotten what it’s called. Like, discussion groups about great issues. And I took one on Vietnam. And that’s where I learned about Vietnam. And so then I think my -- that might have
been a small germ of the awakening here in Austin to the war in Vietnam. And then we started having demonstrations and -- so I think that the community was educated about that war because of -- I mean, because -- it wasn’t just *The Rag*. But from SDS and from people who were involved in those struggles. And of course, the white community was further educated about racism. There was a movement in the black community that really brought that to awareness, yeah.

Q: What were -- what were the race relations like back in your time in Austin when you were in college?

A: Segregation.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, was that not on tape when I talked about Kinsolving Dormitory.

Q: Right.

A: And -- I don’t know whether we recorded it or whether we --

Q: No, it was. It was.

A: Oh, okay.

Q: But was there -- was there anything else that you can kind of remember that kind of showed what race relations were like back at your time in college? Like, anything specific besides that event?
A: Well, my -- I mean, there were no black professors on campus.

Q: Really?

A: There was -- yeah. I mean, it was separate. And even in Austin, which was supposed to be more liberal than Wichita Falls.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. But, you know, there’s different relation between the police and the community, the black community, and white areas. You know. But I would say the total lack of access to most of the -- to everything except for what had been legally mandated so far, was -- even what had been legally mandated. You know, black students couldn’t go to the Texas theater.

Q: Really?

A: They couldn’t walk across the street. They had to go to the black community to see a movie.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. They couldn’t sit down and eat close to campus.

Q: Wow.

A: They couldn’t live -- they had to live in an old house across the street from a new Kinsolving was brand new then and very modern.

Q: Jeez.
A: They -- I mean, it was -- you know. And before I came here, I don’t think it -- I don’t remember whether it was true here or not. But I can tell you in Wichita Falls there were separate water fountains. A black person and a white person couldn’t eat out of the same water fountain.

Q: Wow.

A: Drink out of the same water fountain. My friend, Alicia -- actually, you probably should take her name out of this, because I didn’t -- haven’t asked her permission to say --

Q: Okay.

A: I probably shouldn’t continue with that story.

Q: That’s okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, well, I could change the topic. So could you talk about how birth control was much different back -- back when you were in college. And how it was --

A: Yeah, I’ll tell you my experience with birth control. I totally had no need to take birth control, because I was so innocent when I came to the University of Texas. But I had terrible cramps. My sister and I had terrible cramps. And birth control pills were just beginning. That was just -- they were experimenting with them. So my do-- my -- we -- my mother mentioned to the doctor that we had bad cramps, my sister and I. So he said, “Well, you should have them
take birth control.” So my mother got a prescription and sent it to us. The doctor didn’t even see us. He gave us this birth control. I mean, everybody talks about how it was withheld. But there was no -- there was such a strong belief that someone my age wouldn’t do anything that would lead to needing to take birth control, that my mother totally didn’t question giving me and my sister birth control. And the doctor didn’t question it at all. And we didn’t even question it, because we were taking it -- he had told us it would stop our cramps. The -- so -- but these drugs were really just under development. So I took -- the first time I took a birth control pill, I threw it up immediately, because it was so strong.

Q: Really?
A: Yeah. So I just -- you know, what was it.

Q: Wow.
A: And thank goodness I didn’t continue, because who knows what was in those things then. Yeah.

Q: So you --
A: It was later that there was the huge issue about birth control. Because by then there was the sexual revolution. People used birth control for sex -- you know, whenever they had sex.

Q: Yeah.
A: So it was different. And then the opposition to birth control grew. But this was so early that no one would ever imagine that my -- especially no one from Wichita Falls -- that my sister and I might have sex at 18 years old. Yeah.

Q: So I read -- I read somewhere online as I was researching prior to the interview that as you -- when you’re on The Rag that -- was it some of the male members of The Rag were trying to get you to pose for them (inaudible)? (laughter)

A: Yeah. I was still very -- I never -- I’ve talked to my friends about this. I was never really -- I mean, I went skinny dipping. But I was never really -- I was pretty prudish.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Even in my Rag days. I had boyfriends, but I didn’t, like, sleep around. But yeah, one time we were -- whenever The Rag sales got down, sometimes we talked about how to build the sales. And someone said, “Well, let’s put the nude on the front page.” And then they said, “Well, who’s going to be the nude?” And (laughs) I always got kind of uncomfortable when it -- they started talking about who’s going to be the nude. And then somebody said, “Sharon, you haven’t been the nude.” And I said, “I don’t want to be the nude.” And they said, “Well, you’re from Wichita Falls. It’s because you’re from Wichita Falls.”
And so then that person was -- I’m not going to say what town he was from. Because everybody would know immediately who it was. I said, “Well, you’re from so-and-so, which was even smaller than Wichita Falls.” So then -- then for some reason -- and this is before the women’s movement -- I said, “Why don’t we have a boy for the nude?” And no one had ever thought of -- I mean, I don’t think anyone had ever thought of that. And everybody was like -- it was quite for a minute. And then some of the women were like, “Yeah, why don’t we?” (laughs) So I think -- I always said my feminism began then.

Q: That’s funny.

A: Yeah.

Q: So -- but y’all would -- would y’all -- y’all would put nude pictures on the -- on The Rag and then just dish them out on the drag?

A: Oh, of course.

Q: No way.

A: It was considered the sexual revolution. Before that it was like the birth control. And no one would imagine, you know. But -- but afterwards -- I mean, I’m sure things didn’t change that much. There was a lot of -- you know, a lot of things going on that just weren’t public. But we were pretty public.
Q: Really?
A: Yeah. My generation is what I’m talking about.
Q: That’s funny. So prior to taking this class, I kind of assumed that most of the women’s movement were kind of anti-war.
A: Yeah.
Q: In your experience, how can you explain how this is not so true, and what were some of the other major movements beside the anti-war?
A: Well, there was the black and Latino struggle. And (phone rings) -- let me just -- I just want -- just a second. I’m sorry that this is ringing. And I don’t know where my phone is. Just see who it is. Okay, sorry.
Q: It’s okay.
A: But I would -- I mean, the thing is I’ve heard people say that, that -- what was your question again? That -- what were some of the other -- other iss-
Q: Some of the other women’s movements besides the anti-war that --
A: Oh, oh, okay. In all the movements, women were half of what was happening.
Q: Really?
A: Yeah. So that, you know, in the black and Latino movements, there were women at the forefront. There were
women who were becoming conscious and strong. And so -- it’s just, for me -- it was first the Civil Rights movement, then the anti-war movement. But it was the anti-war movement that led most directly, for me, into the women’s movement. But -- but I think there were many ways that many women got there. And also, it’s my feeling that all these movements are connected and are part of the same impulse. Yeah.

Q: Interesting.
A: Because the women’s movement incorporates all those other movements. Because women -- it’s such a broad area. There are women from all classes and cultures who are part of -- what it is to be women. Now, in some of the white women’s groups there might not have been an awareness of that. But, you know, but it’s a truth that -- that if you look at women, women aren’t all white.

Q: Yeah.
A: Yeah.

Q: So earlier, you were talking about the small groups and your local --
A: Yeah.

Q: These were kind of like local cultural gatherings, right? Or were they more just -- more women’s gatherings?
A: Well, we just met as a group. So it could be called either one.

Q: Yeah.

A: But we shared our personal stories. And also, you know, that was one of our slogans, the personal is political. And I think that’s part of why the personal is political, because -- I mean, I think what that slogan meant was that those personal experiences that we thought were just ours, you know, were part of the social -- were embedded in the social structure. We had just felt responsible for -- and that it was our fault that we were women and were second-class citizens. Or considered second-class citizens. Yeah.

Q: In what kind of ways did y’all aim to raise consciousness in those -- in those small groups? Like, how did y’all -- did y’all go beyond the small groups and out to other communities in Austin, or --

A: Yeah, well, I don’t know about in Austin, because I left at the time we were just at the stage of meeting and sharing personal stories. Although, that’s not really even true, because I remember being part of a protest at Neiman Mar-- Neiman Marcus was having a fashion show on campus. And we put makeup all over our faces. And we made cardboard
cutouts. And we disrupted the -- we started walking down the -- whatever they call that.

Q: The drag?
A: No, the runway.
Q: Oh.
A: Yeah. At -- so we disrupted that to kind of draw people’s awareness. And actually, there were a lot of protests. I can’t remember them. But there were a lot of -- I don’t know. They say if you were part of the ’60s, you -- you don’t remember it. (laughter) Yeah. So -- so I -- yeah, even in the early days, there were -- there were a lot of attempts to bring it to awareness. I would say much more so, though, later when women were more in the leadership of the movement and The Rag. Yeah.

Q: So could you tell me a little bit more about Media Women and kind of what that was about?
A: Yeah. Media Women -- well, it was -- I -- I ended up joining a socialist political party after I went to Cuba. And I knew a woman who had been part of Media Women who was also in that organization. So I know kind of the backstory on this.

Q: Really?
A: And that was -- like, she had -- she had been an editor at Random House, or -- was it Random House? Or at one of the
publishing companies. And she had been fired -- oh, now I’m trying to remember why she was fired. But she was fired, I think, for taking part in a protest. Something like that. And women came to her defense and had a big picket line. That was at a time when I was in Media Women. And I just knew her name. And later on, I knew her well. That’s why I remember this story. So Media Women had a lot of -- I remember the head of it. Her name was Florence Kennedy. And she was an African-American woman. And -- let’s see if I can remember any of the -- so there was that protest And we had others. We participated in the liberation of the Guardian. And -- oh. I wrote something for Liberation News Service that went out when I was part of Media Women, with somebody else. And it was an analysis of -- it wasn’t a feminist writing. It was an analysis of Newsweek Magazine’s treatment of black men, actually.

Q: Really?

A: And we went through a Newsweek article. And we made notes in the margin about everything. Like, instead of saying they walked, instead of using that verb, Newsweek said they strutted.

Q: Really?

A: And it was just very loaded words, really that showed -- that not only reflected racism, but we felt that it was
part of the reinforcement of racism. Almost -- it felt almost conscious, because everybody was upset about -- I mean, everybody. All the ruling class was upset about the Panthers, the Panther Party. And that’s when they had this article -- they were talking about the Panthers. I should have said that at the beginning. The Black Panther party. So we analyzed it. And that went out all over the country. And, you know, progressive people were -- we think it opened some eyes and -- yeah. But I can’t remember other specific -- I know we had a lot of protests. But I just can’t remember specifically what it was. I remember marching around with signs.

Q: Right.

A: Later -- I can tell you later, as a member of a political party, I protested everything. You know, all the issues.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Where would y’all protest? Just, like -- or where would y’all --

A: Well, I lived in New York City. When --

Q: So that’s --

A: What do you -- do you mean Media Women? Or do you mean later?
Q: Well, where did you do your -- most of your protests? You said you protested everything?
A: Yeah, as a member of a political organization. As I -- after I got back from -- SDS had fallen apart by then. And I got involved in a political organization. In a party, actually. And became one of the editors of its newspaper. And we protested everywhere. We had protests all the time. We had protests on everything, including women’s issues. And I mean, I can tell you anything you want to know about that. Because it’s in more my recent history.

Q: Really?
A: Yeah.

Q: So what -- what were the main subjects you protested --
A: Anything that happened to working people.

Q: Really?
A: Which was racism, sexism, anti-lesbian and gay bigotry. We did -- we had protests on all of that.

Q: Really?
A: All the time, yeah.

Q: What was -- so what was kind of -- or what are some of the main things you wrote about in those --
A: In the paper?

Q: That -- yes. In --
A: I wrote about international issues. I remember I interviewed some participants in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

Q: Really?

A: I actually -- I actually -- no, I didn’t. It was -- I can’t remember -- I think it was Russell Means. I drove to -- I drove around when he came to New York.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. When Jesse Jackson ran for president. Well, this wasn’t writing. Let’s see. What was your question again? I’m sorry, I lost my train of thought.

Q: I was just asking more so about what you wrote about --

A: Oh, oh, yeah, that’s right. So I interviewed those guys from South Africa. I wrote about -- we wrote about -- I remember there was a revolution in Afghanistan at one point. And we wrote about Afghanistan. All about Latin America, Nicaragua. We protested. And I wrote about -- a lot about Nicaragua. I wrote about women’s issues. I’m trying to think of some of the interviews I had. I think -- -- I forgot how long I edited that newspaper. And later on it was mostly editing, because I didn’t have as much time to write. But -- but I also wrote a lot. Yeah, so. What were some of the -- the US involvement in Central America was a huge issue. And we had a big demonstration in
Washington to protest it. And we had a lot of articles. I remember from Brooklyn, where I lived, my husband and I organized in Brooklyn. And we took maybe 30 or 40 buses.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah, we had -- we were just like every day out in the streets about that. We -- I remember once -- oh, we -- I get the protest mixed up with the writing. I don’t know if I wrote about all this. But --

Q: (inaudible) [protests, too?].

A: Yeah, but I did -- I did a lot of this. I remember once we had -- just a little -- there was a street fair on the street where Al Sharpton had his church. And it was on a Sunday. And the -- I think Koch might have been the mayor of New York City at the time, but I’m not sure. But Sharpton had arranged with the city not to have a parade down the street while his church was in session. And the city agreed. And then they started the march anyway. I mean, they started the parade anyway while the church was in session. So the people inside the church came outside. In the meantime, the organization I was in had a table. And we were passing out newspapers and leaflets about demonstrations at our table. And the -- other tables that were craft tables and things like that. So it wasn’t a political street fair or anything. But we just happened to
be there. So the people from the church -- like, I just remember all these old African-American women -- and there were guys, too -- came rushing out of their church whenever it was disrupted by this loud parade in violation of the agreement. So they brought in the cops and started beating up the people from the church.

Q: No way.
A: So the -- so one of my friends -- we were selling hot cider to raise money. One of my friends who was selling the hot cider threw the whole -- there was a -- a cop who was holding down this little woman, and she threw the cider all over him.

Q: Over the cop?
A: Yeah. Yeah. And he let go of the woman and turned around. My daughter was there. And she was three at the time or something.

Q: Wow.
A: Or -- she was very young. She turned -- and when the cop turned around, my husband was standing next to the woman who had thrown the cider. And the cop probably couldn’t imagine that my friend had thrown it. So he started chasing my husband. My husband saw immediately that he was -- so he ran. And my daughter started crying. And everybody at our table joined the fray and was trying to
liberate these poor black women with little hats on. And little nets over their face. You know, trying to help them and get away from the cops. It was just a huge mess. And then my husband evidently escaped and changed his shirt. He took off his shirt, and he had another shirt on under it. He had, like, a sweatshirt on or something. So they were looking for somebody else.

Q: Right.

A: So he managed to get away. But he couldn’t come back, because they might recognize him. So my daughter was just distraught. That was one of her early bad memories. Because she didn’t -- neither one of us knew what happened to my husband. But then we found out later the had gone to a friend’s house near there.

Q: Wow.

A: But anyway, that’s just one of many protests.

Q: What other protests kind of --

A: Well, there was a big protest -- and I can’t remember what it was. It was in Washington. And it might have -- I don’t think it was on Nicaragua and El Salvador. But it might have been. But I do know that there was a lot of harassment, a lot of personal harassment. And some people got arrested before they could arrive in Washington. There were police all on the highway. And other people had
things like their jobs call them and said they couldn’t -- I -- I don’t know. It was just like -- it seemed like there was some kind of organized campaign to try to keep people from going there. And I’ll tell you what happened to my husband and me. We were driving, going to Washington for this protest where people are all getting -- and then luckily -- I’m not too fast a driver. But we were going down the Jersey Turnpike. And we heard this huge noise. And our tires had been unloosed. And they were coming off of our car.

Q: Wow.

A: And luckily -- and all of them were loose. But luckily one of them was on the way to coming off --

Q: (inaudible)

A: -- when we stopped.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. So we had to tighten all the bolts on our car.

Q: Wow.

A: But, you know, that could have killed us.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: How did you -- did y’all just have the tool to tighten the bolts in the car?
A: Yeah, we did. And we just tightened our bolts and kept driving. But --

Q: That is wild.

A: I -- yeah. But a lot of our friends were -- actually didn’t make it through Maryland. Like, if there was anything wrong with their car, a taillight or anything like that, they were stopped and detained.

Q: Right.

A: Other people -- you know, too many -- I don’t know what all the reasons were for stopping people. But a lot of things happened.

Q: That is crazy.

A: Yeah.

Q: Let’s see how long we -- so --

A: I’m trying to remember if there’s anything I can think of that you should know. But probably I can’t right now.

Q: That’s okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, I’ve gotten a lot so far. I guess the last question I’ll ask is kind of -- you had -- what you just kind of said. If there’s anything else in women’s liberation, or women’s movements, or in your writing or protest that you’d like to --
A: Yeah, I’d like to -- I’d like to tell you about one thing that I just thought was kind of a beautiful moment in my life. When I went to Cuba and we were cutting sugar cane -- by the way, that’s where I met my husband.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. We were -- when the Americans cut cane, we used to compete to see who could get to the (phone rings) -- it’s my daughter trying to call me. Oh, no this isn’t. I’ll just -- sorry.

Q: That’s okay.

A: I should turn this off.

Q: It’s no problem.

A: That’s what I should do. Anyway, when we went to Cuba to cut sugar cane, the Americans would compete. Because we thought that -- if we raced each other to the end of the row to see who could come first that that would make us cut more. You know, cut more cane. And we thought we were just really great. And then when we got to the end of the row, we would wait for the other one to finish. And then we would start the next row. But at one point, a brigade from North Vietnam came and cut cane with us. It was a very moving thing. Because we were allegedly at war in --

Q: How long were you in Cuba for?
A: Oh, maybe -- I think I went sometime at the beginning of the year and came back in the late spring. So it was a few months.

Q: Wow.

A: Anyway, so we were assigned new cane cutting partners. They would pair one Cuban -- I mean, one American and one Vietnamese. So this little -- this very small woman, very short, very slender, and also very strong, and I were cane cutting partners. So I was going down my row as fast as I could. But she was, like, really good at it. She was really strong, even though she was very slight. And she cut all of her cane. And the minute she got through with her row, she came up and started cutting my row.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And I just really learned something then about the shortcomings of our culture, and about how competition drives so much. But she had really taught me about cooperation. Yeah.

Q: That’s awesome.

A: And so that was a real moment of woman’s international solidarity. And also I learned a real lesson. Yeah. Wouldn’t have occurred to me to do that.

Q: Yeah, that’s awesome.
A: Unfortunately. But it wouldn’t have, yeah, to be honest. So.

Q: (inaudible)

A: Yeah. I’ve -- you know, I’m sure there’s a lot more that we’re not touching on. And I should have -- I’ve done some autobiographical reflection. But I don’t have a great memory. So.

Q: That’s okay. I -- I think I’ve gotten -- I’ve gotten plenty.

A: Okay.

Q: I really appreciate you coming and interviewing with me.


Q: Thank you so much.

A: Okay, great. And I --

END OF AUDIO FILE

Shelton-Colangelo.Sharon-additional 5min

A: -- what was the one I was going to tell you about? Oh, okay. So I was going to tell you about this protest. There was a group called New Left -- NLEP, New Left Educational Project, here in Austin. And there -- the whole army in the South was going to -- oh, I -- I think this is important, because it shows how we went from a
small organization to a large one. And actually, I’ll tell you about another protest, too. There was a time when we ask -- and I don’t remember when this was. I know nothing -- I just have a memory of it. And I asked a couple of my friends if they remembered it. And they didn’t know whether it had happened when they were in town or out of town. But at any rate, we asked for a permit to have an anti-war demonstration on Congress and were turned down. They said that we didn’t represent Austin. And then later we found out that the Ku Klux Klan had gotten a permit to have a demonstration at Congress.

Q: Wow.

A: Down Congress. So we had a demonstration right next to theirs.

Q: Wow.

A: They were marching down in their hoods. And we were walking on the sidewalk next to them with signs.

Q: Wow.

A: And it just -- so -- and it was small. We were small. So that’s one demonstration. That was earlier, obviously. But this demonstration that I remember, that I want to tell you about, that -- I think it was NLEP that planned it. It was later, and the campus had started to change. Like, ordinary people on the campus had started to turn against
the war in Vietnam. The Army was having a review on one of our fields, intramural field. That’s probably not -- it’s probably covered with some big old building now. But at any rate, then it was a field. And it was right next to a men’s dormitory that had balconies. And we went to protest it. And all these generals were sitting in the bleachers. And they had a band that was -- you know, some army band that was blowing their horns and marching. So we -- we went and marched with them. We just walked out there and started marching with them. And even pinched them -- pinched their rear ends and (laughter) -- so -- and then we unfurled -- oh, and the guys from the dorm all came out on their balconies and started watching us.

Q: Really?

A: And then one of them played really loud -- brought out his stereo. Or hi-fi, probably it was then. And started playing Phil Ochs’s “I Ain’t Marching Anymore.” And we took a Vietnamese flag, and went to the flagpole, and took down the American flag --

Q: Wow.

A: -- and put up the Vietnamese flag.

Q: Wow.

A: And the generals were freaking out and ordering us to stop. And of course, we wouldn’t. So somebody called the campus
cops. And the campus cops came. And the generals were, like, telling them all, you know, how horrible we were and that we had to get arrested. And we were saying, “We’re the ones who belong on this field. We’re students.” Although I don’t think I was a student then. I think I was, like, you know -- most of us probably were dropouts or something. But we said, “We’re the students. We belong here. You don’t -- we don’t need a military on our campus.” And the campus cops took our side. And they refused to take down the Vietnamese flag.

Q: Wow.
A: Yeah.

Q: That’s pretty cool.
A: Yeah, that -- so that sort of shows -- I just wanted to tell you that. Because it sort of shows -- you asked me a question about how we made an impact on the community. That’s one real way that I personally saw the impact. Those two protests.

Q: Definitely.
A: Yeah.

Q: That’s really cool.
A: I’ll let you know about other ones I think off, too. Because, you know, I’ll look through what I’ve written. And maybe I’ve written something about them.
Q: Okay. I appreciate it. Thanks.
A: Yeah, good luck to you.
Q: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE