Sherry Gorelick Transcript

Jayne Guberman: This is Jayne Guberman. This is October 30, 2005. I'm with Sherry Gorelick. We're in New York at the Barnard Conference, Jewish Women Changing America: Cross-Generational Conversations. So Sherry, why don't we begin by asking if you can tell us when and where you were born and something about where and how you grew up?

Sherry Gorelick: I was born in The Bronx, New York. I lived in New York City all my life, except for three years up in Ithaca, New York, when I was going to Cornell for my master's. My mother was Orthodox, and I was raised Orthodox. My father was an atheist committed to his atheism as much as my mother was to her Orthodoxy, but he was also very Jewish.

JG: When were you born?

SG: 1939. They were both immigrants. He was a Russian Jewish immigrant, and she was from Latvia. I was an only child.

JG: So can you tell us a little bit about – how did that play out in your family with your mother's observance and your father's lack thereof?

SG: Well, pretty much I identified with her through my whole childhood, but Orthodox observance kind of started to peel off, one thing after another. She was tolerant of my doing that.

JG: Your observance started to peel off?

SG: My observance.

JG: Or hers too?

SG: No, no, no. She was Orthodox until she died at the age of 91. But I gradually started to break various rules and then went away from Orthodoxy altogether.

JG: How old were you when that was happening?

SG: Well, the final break was in graduate school; I was twenty-two.

JG: How about your father? How did the two of them negotiate that?

SG: They basically managed to negotiate it. I mean, she was in control of the household. It was a kosher household. He did what he wanted to on the outside. They had a certain kind of tolerance for each other.

JG: So you'd observe Shabbat?

SG: And a lot of dialogue in the household. I mean, I grew up on the debate, and my father would turn to me and say, "Sherry, do you actually believe in a Supreme Being?" We would be off debating. We had debates every Sunday on all sorts of political issues. My mother was very political; she was liberal, and he was communist. So there was a lot of political debate and religious debate.

JG: Around the table kind of thing?

SG: Around the table, just the three of us. Yeah.

JG: Wow, sounds amazing. So as a child, how did you think of yourself as a Jew? What role did that play in your life, and how did it change over time? Was it central to you when you were a child?

SG: It was taken for granted. I mean, it was like the air that you breathe, and we were in an Italian and Jewish neighborhood. It was quite normal. Although we also knew that we

were in this Christian society and very much an alien society, I have always felt marginal in this society as a Jew.

JG: And your childhood was coinciding with the war, the Holocaust, the founding of Israel.

SG: But in terms of the founding of Israel, yes, that was assumed. My mother's family – my mother was the youngest of eight. My mother's family were strong Zionists, and my mother was a strong Zionist. My father died in 1967, and it wasn't until 1968 that the communist world started to recognize the Palestinian movement. Russia was still pro-Israel. My father was doing things that might, might contribute to – well, I can't say that in a short way. He was just assuming Israel; he wasn't criticizing Israel. So, I grew up with the assumption. I grew up with people coming around with pushkas. I grew up with that kind of assumption. The Holocaust was really – I only encountered the Holocaust around 1954 when I was fourteen, and The Diary of Anne Frank came out and was on Broadway, and I saw it, and that's what made the Holocaust real to me. After all, I was the same age as she was. So that made it real to me, but this wasn't the household in which you lived with the Holocaust all the time. I didn't personally know anybody who was killed.

JG: Did you have a Jewish education, formal Jewish education [inaudible]?

SG: I went to an afterschool shula, and I learned Yiddish at a child's level. So I went to a shula for a while.

JG: So no Hebrew school or anything like that?

SG: No Hebrew school.

JG: And not a religious upbringing in that sense?

SG: It was a religious upbringing. My mother was Orthodox. We celebrated Passover. We celebrated all the holidays. We would go back to her mother's house for the high holidays. Yeah, it was a religious upbringing, but there was no theology in it. There was no theology in her either. It was a bunch of rules; you followed the rules. There was no theology.

JG: So, how did you feel about being a girl growing up? Did that seem to –?

SG: I think that being excluded was an early seed for feminism that didn't actually germinate until decades later, but I know that I resented the exclusion of women and the subordination of women.

JG: Within the synagogue, for instance, you mean?

SG: Yeah. I mean, we didn't live in the synagogue. We went on the high holidays, and sometimes my mother went on Sabbath.

JG: But you were aware?

SG: I was aware, and I don't think it had an effect –

JG: And how about in the rest of your life? Did you feel that there were any particular areas that were closed to you as a young girl or in terms of your ambitions?

SG: To some extent, it was just assumed, in that my parents assumed I would be a teacher, which is classic working-class mobility anyway. But I don't remember. Because I was an only child, I learned a lot of the so-called "male" things from my father. I learned carpentry. I learned about plumbing. I learned a lot of these things. In some ways, it's kind of complicated, and I would like to get to talk about the other things. I could talk for a long time, but we don't have a long time.

JG: That's true. That's true. So you ended up going to college, and where did you go to college?

SG: Queens College.

JG: Queens College.

SG: CUNY [City University of New York], which was free at the time.

JG: And then immediately on to –?

SG: Cornell for my master's.

JG: Were you intending to be a professor at that point? Was that your ambition?

SG: Yeah, when I went to college, and I was trying to think of what to do, and I wanted to teach, but I didn't want to teach children. At that point, I didn't like children. I like them now, but I didn't like children then. So, I wanted to teach the oldest children possible. So, that was in college. And then they told me, "You don't just teach in college; you have a field, and you go into a field, and you go to graduate school." I came from – my father didn't graduate elementary school. So I said, "What's graduate school?" Then I went to graduate school to teach college. That's what I did.

JG: I see. You said in your pre-interview questionnaire that you would like to talk about the Lebanon War and your involvement in a sense.

SG: Well, you asked about transformative moments. As I said, I had grown up with a family that assumed the goodness of Israel. My mother was a strong Zionist for her entire life. But I was starting to have a sense of discomfort about the treatment of Palestinians.

JG: When was this? When would you place this?

SG: I would put it in the early ’70s. I was at Columbia in '68, and I was very much influenced by that revolution, and it moved me to the Left. But then I was uncomfortable because the Left was raising the question of the Palestinians, and I was very uncomfortable with this, and I didn't know quite what to do with it and started talking to people about – reading about it and learning about it. Then Israel invaded Lebanon. I saw on TV the Israelis painting a white cross on the backs of Palestinians in Beirut.

JG: Are you talking about in –?

SG: In 1982.

JG: ’82?

SG: Yeah.

JG: All right. So, we've moved ahead?

SG: We've moved way ahead. But in that whole period, there was this period of being on the Left, uncomfortable with how Israel was treating Palestinians and uncomfortable with the Left criticism of Israel, so not having any place to be. Then in '82, Israel invaded Lebanon, and they were painting white crosses – X’s on the backs of prisoners. I thought, “My God, this is like the Warsaw ghetto.” They were talking about the refugee camps and how they had run out of water and they had run out of food, and how many days of water they had left. That meant the Warsaw ghetto to me. That was a click moment because I identified as a Jew with those refugees in those refugee camps. And I identified – yes, I identified with Palestinians as a Jew. At that time, I met somebody whom I had seen in the – it doesn't matter. I met somebody who was in this new organization called Jews Against the Israeli Massacre in Lebanon, and that was my first participation as a Jew criticizing Israeli practices. There were difficulties in that organization. It was a gender-mixed organization. There were other difficulties in that organization, but it was the beginning of what would really form the heart of my politics

for the rest of my life.

JG: Where was this organization based and founded?

SG: In New York City.

JG: It was founded here by American Jews?

SG: Yes. It was a New York Jewish organization. It wasn't national or international or anything.

JG: All right. So, what were the actions that you were involved in, in the beginning?

SG: Oh, gosh, I don't even remember. Demonstrations. A lot of demonstrations at the Israeli embassy. Leafleting. But I don't remember the details.

JG: So where did your involvement in this organization and this identification with the plight of the Palestinians take you in your own thinking, in your own feelings about the state of Israel and what you as an individual could and should be doing about it?

SG: Well, it led me to learn all the stuff that you don't learn. I really did come to think of the Palestinians as having experiences very similar to the Jews, including learning about – well, for one thing, the learning is an important thing because most Americans and most Jews really do not learn anything about Palestinians.

JG: What was the way that you actually did learn?

SG: I read books. There was a book called Our Roots are Still Alive. There was a book by William Quandt, who was – I started reading books. There were a couple of books by Palestinian writers, at that time, all men. Part of what I was learning about was the betrayal of Palestinians by some of the Arab countries, like Black September in Jordan. I thought, “Yeah, it's just like the Jews; everybody turns against you.” That was a very

profound identification, and it led me to read on and be open to learning more.

JG: Did it lead you to activism in other organizations at the time?

SG: Yes. Irena Klepfisz formed the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation, and I joined that.

JG: When was that? More or less?

SG: I think it was 1988. Also, this was around the First Intifada, and I met an Israeli woman who was in New York studying for her Ph.D. I met her at the National Women's Studies Association, which I have gone to devotedly for, I don't know, twenty-something years. She was also critical of the Israeli government, and that was very affirming. It wasn't just an American Jew who had never been there, and, in fact, eventually, I did go there.

JG: Was it a revelation that Israelis felt that, or did you know that?

SG: No, I think I already knew that. This woman wound up – when Women in Black formed in Israel, and she was back in Israel, she helped to [found] the Haifa Women in Black. Then when I went there to visit, I went to Women in Black, and I started to meet Palestinian and Israeli women working for peace. That allowed me to bring a feminist perspective and energy into my work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

JG: When was the first time you went to Israel?

SG: 1989.

JG: Can you describe what that experience was like for you?

SG: Well, it was very focused on women working for peace. I went and interviewed people. I spoke with a Palestinian-Israeli who was one of the founders of TANDI. She

was one of the founders of a Palestinian Citizen of Israel organization in 1948 for a two-state solution and for peace, joined by a Jewish organization; they joined together to form TANDI.

JG: What was the Jewish organization?

SG: This was in 1950. Jewish Women's – I don't know, I would have to –

JG: But it was a women's initiative?

SG: It was two women's organizations for peace and for the end to discrimination against women and for children's rights.

JG: In 1948?

SG: 1950.

JG: '50.

SG: In 1950. So I learned all sorts of stuff. I went to the Haifa Women's Center, and there was a sort of festival there, and there were Palestinian women from the territories who had bought goods and woven stuff. They were there illegally because it was illegal for a Palestinian to stay overnight within Green Line, Israel. Then I did go to the West Bank and met some of the feminists in the West Bank. There were four different Palestinian women's organizations. I went to a women's center, which had the same feminist books that our women's center had, and that was an interesting thing to learn.

JG: Now, were there Israeli women's organizations in dialogue with these –?

SG: Absolutely. That's how I got to them. Also, I should say that I also joined an organization called the International Jewish Peace Union [IJPU], which was based in France but had a New York chapter. That was a gender-mixed organization, but with a

lot of women's participation, as so many gender-mixed organizations are.

JG: How did you find that in comparison to the women's only organizations? Did you have a different feel to it, or did the mixed-gender –?

SG: Well, they had men in it, so it was different [laughter] and a little bit of a different focus initially. Although it shifted a bit, it was mostly focused on support. It was a support organization. All American organizations of this kind are support organizations for what happened over there. So, it was a support organization, and initially, they focused on Yesh Gvul and things like that. [Editor's Note: Yesh Gvul translates to "There is a hint," and is an organization of Israeli men who refused to serve as military in the Occupied Territories.] Then eventually, they started to support women's organizations. In Israel, they formed something called Women for Women Political Prisoners, and they would focus on Palestinian women prisoners, how they had been denied sanitary napkins, that there was sexual harassment in the prisons, and they were focused on one or two of these. This was before email. So, they would focus on one and tell people to send letters of protest to the head of the prison or the Israeli government. They would send that information over to us, and we had the Human Rights Response Network, and we would also distribute these names and tell people to send them letters. IJPU started to focus on that. In other words, there was a shift in their focus. They were still looking at Yesh Gvul, but they were also looking at women political prisoners.

JG: Can you tell me about the Women's International Conference for Israel-Palestine peace?

SG: Yeah. The Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation and – I believe it was – the New Jewish Agenda sent me –

JG: You were involved with the New Jewish Agenda?

SG: Not a lot, but I was a sort of fellow traveler because my focus was on the Jewish Women's Committee. But they sent me to this conference in Geneva, Switzerland, that the Israeli and Palestinian Women's Peace Movement had created. It's a longer story I've written about it. I can give you the articles that I've written on that.

JG: That would be great. What year was that?

SG: 1991. May '91. There were seventy-five women from thirteen different countries, including the Palestinian ambassador to the Netherlands. So there were eight Palestinians because the Israeli government didn't let two Palestinians out, and ten Israelis, including Yael Dayan. They hammered out a three-page, single-spaced Final Document that was completely a consensus document on all the major issues. It was really buried, but it was a real turning point for me to participate in something like that. Then I came back, and I was on some radio programs and trying to disseminate that information.

JG: What impact do you think it had? Did it make an impact on the work as it was progressing towards peace, do you think?

SG: That's always very hard to gauge. It's hard to gauge whether anything that we do makes an impact since we had so little media coverage. We had no media coverage of that event, even though it was historic. It was four months before the Madrid conference. In fact, as I flew back from Geneva to New York, I had the International Herald Tribune, and they were reporting on Secretary of State Baker's failure to create an Israeli-Palestinian conference. It was his fourth failure. It took ten tries to get the men together, and here the women had gotten together and talked about all the substantive issues, a feminist perspective on the conflict, including its relationship to domestic violence, the absence of women from the peace talks, various feminist aspects of it. But also land rights, refugee problems, water rights, [and] all of the major issues. There was not a word in the press about it.

JG: What was the consensus, if you can describe it at all?

SG: Well, it's very hard. It's a three-page document, but it worked out a peaceful way of dealing with all that, all of these issues.

JG: Were the women who had been there –? Were they all people who had been involved for quite some time at that point in peace efforts and in dialogue across national boundaries here?

SG: Well, there were seventy-five women. So I can't say that there were seventy – I don't know all seventy-five women. I knew some of the Palestinians and some of the Israeli women, and they had been involved for a long time. There was Luisa Morgantini, who has been involved in the Italian Women in Black for a very long time. So there were a lot of people who had been involved for a long time, but I really can't characterize all those. But the point is, you asked me whether it has an effect. It certainly had an effect on the people who went there. I think it's really important to say that it had an effect on the people who went there, and then those who went then having an effect on other people. Did it have an effect on the policies? I think it was one of the many factors in getting people to even address the question of whether there could be a peace and there could be a meeting between the two sides.

JG: Do you have a sense of whether there were significant differences at that point between the way American-Jewish women, Israeli-Jewish women, Israeli-Arabs, and Palestinians from the territories were approaching the differences in their feminist perspectives that they were bringing to bear on these issues and how that might have played out at all? They're such different societies.

SG: I'll think about it. But each of those societies have such important differences within them. For example – and this is not answering your question, but in a way it is – there were differences among the Israeli delegation. One of the things that was not in that final

document, because there wasn't agreement on it, was whether there should be an international boycott of Israeli products. One of the Israeli women, who was originally from South Africa, was in favor of a boycott because she said this is what worked with apartheid [opposing South Africa]. Other Israeli women said, "No, no, it's only going to encourage the siege mentality in Israel, and it's going to backfire." So there were differences within the Israeli delegation. In a way, those are clearer to me because I was closer to that, but there were, I'm sure differences among the Palestinians as well. I don't think you could see it as structured as “the Israelis this and the Palestinians that.” There were disagreements about the meaning – this was at the point that the Russian refugees were first coming in. There were disagreements about what kind of policy there should be – the right of return as opposed to the law of return – and that kind of stuff. So there was an interesting discussion of that. But you can't break it down on national lines, either in terms of the Israeli Palestinian policies or in terms of feminism, the way feminism was at the time.

JG: You think involvement in these women's movements towards peace, sort of across lines, also had a strong impact on the way people were doing everything from educating their children [and] working within their own societies to support peace efforts over time?

SG: Well, I mean, the Israelis and the Palestinians were living it every day, and they are living it every day. So yes, I mean, they can't not do it. They can be apathetic the way anybody else can be apathetic, but they can't. So it's how they're living every day. It's how they're bringing up their kids. Yes. And it’s very strongly feminist. I know the Israeli side much better in terms of continuing friendships and therefore continuing contact.

JG: What do you mean when you say very strongly feminist? Can you describe that?

SG: In terms of the importance of women, in terms of the importance of women taking action, in terms of the importance of women taking leadership – Women in Black, in part, emerged out of the exclusion of women from the peace organizations in Israel, and

women said, “We can speak. Why aren't you putting us on the podium?” So it’s that part of it. It's that the feminist organizations in Israel prior to the activities of the peace feminists was focused entirely on the oppression of Israeli women within Israel, without talking about the war. And the important contribution of Women in Black is to say you cannot talk about the position of women in Israel without talking about the war. It permeates everything. So you have to relate the position of women to the continual war, domestic violence, the devaluation of Israeli women as opposed to men because of the continued – I mean, you could write a whole book about the impact of the war on the subordination of Israeli women. Therefore, you have to talk about the war if you're going to talk about the subordination of women, and you have to talk about the subordination of women if you're going to talk about the war. That's what they presented. So a lot of them were lesbians, and they were raising the question of patriarchy, hetero-sexism, and the power of women. I mean, a lesbian couple presents a whole different idea of how you actually live your life in a daily way.

JG: Right. And different societies, obviously. We're in different places. Where was Israeli society, in terms of its ability to accept lesbian couples and activism?

SG: At the point that I first – in 1989, they were very much in the closet, and it was something that could not be spoken. But they then formed CLAF [Community of Lesbian Feminists]. It was the lesbian organization. Then they started to really make enormous strides, conducting legal battles for adoption, second partner adoption, and for various rights. Now, the gay and lesbian movement is a very important part of the anti-militarist, anti-Occupation peace movement. They have shirts that say, “No pride in the occupation.”

JG: Really? I haven't seen this.

SG: Double meaning on the word pride, “No pride in the occupation.” There's an organization called Black Laundry, in which they are saying, "We are going to wash our

dirty laundry." They're playing around with that. It's like appropriating the word dyke; it's the same kind of thing.

JG: Right. Then next summer, supposedly the big international pride in Jerusalem.

SG: Yeah. That's controversial, actually, yeah.

JG: Is it?

SG: Yeah, it is controversial.

JG: Within the gay-lesbian movement in Israel?

SG: Yes.

JG: Why is that?

SG: I'm not up on it enough to go into it, but it has something to do with the positioning of Jerusalem with respect to the occupation. They oppose "pinkwashing," that is, pretending Israel is enlightened because it permits gay pride, while it is brutalizing Palestinians at the same time.

JG: I see. Sure. So what's happened in your own activism over the last sort of five to ten years? The situation has changed a lot since the Madrid Conference and 1989, when the international conference took place, and the Intifadas, and many other things that have come into play.

SG: Well, I've been active in Women in Black, and I go every Thursday, 5:30 to 6:30, Union Square. I'm on the steering committee, and this is what I do. This is my life. I do Women in Black. Sometimes it swells to many people. Six of us started it. For a long time, we were six.

JG: Here in New York?

SG: Here in New York. There are three in New York--three Women in Blacks in New York, [and] two focused on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. Sometimes we are bigger, sometimes we are stronger, but this is what I do every week and help to organize it and stuff like that. And in discouraging times, people get discouraged, but I think it's very important to keep on keeping on. And they keep on keeping on in Israel and Palestine, and they are having to dodge all sorts of difficulties that we don't have to dodge. So, if they keep on, we should keep on.

JG: Who's involved here? Who comes to Women in Black?

SG: Different women come. Each time, different women. I mean, there are a couple of regulars and then different women.

JG: Are they American or Israelis who are here?

SG: Well, Israelis come by when they're coming through, and they make sure to come by when they're here. But mostly, we're New York Jews. That's what we are. [laughter] But there are Women in Blacks all over the country and all over the world, including Australia – all over the world. But at Union Square, we are New York Jews. A number of non-Jews, I should say, and a number of men – ever since Women in Black in Israel started allowing men to stand with them, we've had some men with us, but it's a women's organization; it's women-run.

JG: So standing here in 2005, as you sort of look at the impact all this has had, and the situation of the world right now, what are your thoughts about where this will all go? What are your hopes for the future and how to get there?

SG: Gosh, that's a large question.

JG: It is. Well, it's what we've been struggling with all the last two days here at this conference, in some ways.

SG: Well, my hopes are we could get a regime change in the United States and a regime change in Israel. That's what we need, really. That's what we need to start with. Basically, to start with. I think that both of those regimes – and they are very interconnected – are lethal; they're deadly. People are dying every day because of those regimes and their priorities, where they put their money, where they put their military, and where they put their policies. That's what we need. We need regime change in both countries. Am I hopeful? It's hard to be hopeful because people are not mobilized; they're pissed, but they're not mobilized. This is such a deeply politicized society. But one good thing about living a while is that you get to see the changes. When I think about the fact that in the – I lived through the 1950s. I was a teenager through the 1950s. When I became radicalized in '68, I suddenly realized that what my father was saying, which seemed so simple-minded to me up until that point, was really true. There was a whole set of movements in the '30s that gave us social security, that gave us all the safety nets. I thought, "What was it like for them to look at us as a generation and to look at what happened after?" There was McCarthyism, which I remember a little bit of, and it must've seemed like everything was falling apart. Then I lived through the '60s and '70s, where we thought we were really going to make a new society. Then we got Reagan in the '80s. And I thought, "Well, this must be just what our parents' generation must've felt like, like everything just sort of went backward and crashed to a halt." But having been through those ups and downs, seeing that there are young people now who question things and want to change things, and there's so much wonderful energy, I think we just have to live long enough to watch the ups and downs and hope that it's going to turn around and turn out well.

JG: And keep working at it.

SG: Absolutely. Absolutely. It's what sustained – activism sustains me. You asked that in your questionnaire about activism. The first thing I remember was standing outside of Woolworths when the sit-ins were happening in the South. We were demonstrating up

here in the North.

JG: This was in 1954?

SG: In 1954. I think it was in '54. I was in high school. The most recent was the anti-war movement and the anti-war march just this past whatever, when I went down with my scooter and demonstrated. This is what gives meaning to my life, working with other people for progressive change, anti-racism, as well as ending all the other evils.

JG: So if you had to say anything to the younger people who were with us at this conference and who are all around us, what would you tell them [about] how to proceed? We've had people this past two days telling us that demonstrations do not work anymore. So, I don't know if you agree with that.

SG: I don't agree with that. I spoke against it. I think we have to try everything. I'm not a good strategist. I've never played chess. So, I can't tell people how to do things. I can tell them that I feel that everything we do contributes, and doing nothing is not acceptable because it contributes to keeping things oppressive. I can say that marches, for instance – I think marches are wonderful, but they're not enough. I think they provide a sense of empowerment, they provide the possibility of educating each other, they provide energy even though they take a lot of energy out of us, and they make us feel not so alone. I mean, there's so much in this culture that's oppressive, including the fact that the media doesn't cover any dissent or hardly covers any dissent, except for Jon Stewart. There's so much to feel ground down by, that we really need each other. One of the ways – one, only one of the ways in which we know that we have each other is marches and demonstrations, where we say, "Hey, we're not alone." And buttons. I go around with my impeach Bush button on my backpack. Almost invariably, somebody says, "I like your button." When they say, "I like your button," they are saying, "I am in community with you. We are together against all the horrible things that are happening." That is empowering for the person who says it and for me. So, that's all I can say. I can't tell

people what to do because I don't know what to do. I just know it's important to do something.

JG: Well, let us hope that there are many good changes that will come about through the solidarity that that kind of working together will bring. It's been an amazing process seeing what's happened over the last decades of our lives. We will continue for sure. We thank you very much for sharing.

SG: I want to say one other thing.

JG: Sure.

SG: Because you asked me about obstacles also.

JG: Oh, please.

SG: One of the modes of my activism has been teaching, teaching race, class, and gender, and that kind of stuff.

JG: At Rutgers.

SG: At Rutgers. And one of the obstacles is homophobia, my own homophobia because I never came out when I was teaching. Well, in teaching, I never came out.

JG: Meaning, you were never open with your students about your own identity?

SG: I was never open about being a lesbian. Yeah. One of the other obstacles that I encounter right now because I have MS [multiple sclerosis] is just the physical obstacles, and there needs to be more of a consciousness in organizing things about disabled people. For instance, having big marches in Washington is more difficult than having decentralized events where things happen in every community because if things happen in your community, you can probably get to it, whereas going to a march in Washington is

much more difficult. This is a new identity for me because I'm newly disabled, but it's a new source of knowledge for me. That's an obstacle and also something that I need to make myself and other people aware of.

JG: So is there anything else you'd like to say about how you've dealt with your own homophobia, and how do you see yourself acting on that in the future?

SG: Well, now that I'm no longer teaching, I'm very open. It's sort of a cop-out because I'm safe. [laughter] I'm very open.

JG: Well, the times have also changed.

SG: Yes. Yeah, absolutely.

JG: It's hard to say what you would do if you were young and teaching today.

SG: Right.

JG: Anything else you'd like to add?

SG: I'll probably think about it tonight. [laughter]

JG: If you do, you're welcome to write me an email.

SG: Okay.

JG: We'll add it.

SG: Okay, I will.

JG: Well, thank you very much. It was wonderful to talk to you.

SG: Thank you. It was a pleasure.

JG: Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Addendum to Interview – “Reflections on the 2005 JWA Interview”

Much of our interview focused on my attendance at the “Women’s International Conference for Israeli/Palestinian Peace” held in Geneva, Switzerland in May 1991. On page 12 of the transcript, I promised to end the articles I had published about the Conference. They are “Peace Movement,” in Jewish Women in America: an Historical Encyclopedia, Volume II, pp. 1033-1040. [(1998) Edited by Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore], and “Geneva Conference [in Bridges: A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends (Fall 1991/5752, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 120-123)].

These two articles clarify matters about which I was much too vague in our interview, and to provide a groundwork to answer Jayne Guberman’s question about how much changed in the years from 1991 to 2005, when the interview took place (and indeed in the years that followed).

Most importantly, the article in Bridges reproduces the very comprehensive three page “Final Document,” agreed to by all 75 participants.

In it they “express concern about accelerated development and expansion of the settlements,” and in a section called “Economic and Social consequences of the Occupation and Possibilities for Future Development,” they say “We recognize that the immediate economic problems of the inhabitants of the occupied territories demand urgent solutions. Most urgent is the need to halt the confiscation of land and water resources.” They call for “the establishment of an independent economic infrastructure in

the occupied territories to lay the groundwork for a Palestinian state." After listing specific policies to carry that goal forward, they call for "An end to the Occupation, the major source of economic and social crisis for Israeli society and for Israeli women in particular."

But in the years since that very hopeful, urgent, comprehensive, and carefully argued Final Document was created, the possibilities for Israeli/Palestinian Peace became much less promising. While the women had "express[ed] concern about accelerated development and expansion of the settlements;" the number of settlements has since exploded, and continues to expand daily. By 2019, there were over 622,000 settlers living in Jewish-only settlements on confiscated Palestinian land. The land on which the future Palestinian State was to be built has been confiscated, walled-off, or turned into Military zones. The "Two-State Solution" which they advocated has been destroyed by each and all of the successive Israeli governments.

The Geneva Conference was created jointly by Israeli Women in Black, other Israeli women's organizations, and Palestinian women's organizations. They modeled feminist approaches to resolving conflict and feminist analyses of militarism. International Women in Black conferences have since been held in Jerusalem, Beijing, Serbia, Brussels, Italy, Spain, India, and South Africa.

Although diminished in number, International Women in Black still extends from Australia to Africa, to Europe, to North and South America. Although each WIB is autonomous, I think it is significant that the shared motto is "Women in Black for Justice, Against War." There is a recognition that the Peace that the women sought at the 1991 Geneva Conference requires Justice. There is a very strong Lesbian Caucus, in which I am happy to participate.

Our New York City Women in Black continues to vigil in Union Square every Thursday, and it is the main focus of my own political activity. In the 22 years since we began, and in the 18 years since the 2005 JWA interview, the situation in Israel//Palestine has become steadily more dire and deadly. Israeli governments have moved steadily to the political Right, and in response an increasing number of Jews (and others) in the US and around the world have formed organizations actively critical of Israeli policies regarding Palestinians. The younger generation is stepping up.

[END OF INTERVIEW]