Sara Davidson Transcript

Judith Rosenbaum: Okay. Is this going to be loud enough? Yes, I think so. It is October 30, 2005, and Judith Rosenbaum and Sara Davidson are reunited –

Sara Davidson: Wahoo.

JR: – at Barnard College for the Jewish Women's Archive Oral History Project at the Barnard Conference on Jewish Women changing America. So, Sara, let's start with you just talking a little bit about where and when you were born and your family and childhood, that kind of stuff.

SD: No problem.

JR: So basic background.

SD: Okay. Sorry. I'm sneezing because you know my life story.

JR: I [inaudible].

SD: So I was born and raised in New York City on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, really close to Barnard College, and raised in the Conservative movement. As a child, we attended synagogue every Saturday morning until about the age of nine; went to Ansche Chesed until my brother and I realized we hated it. As we got older, we started going to the Jewish Theological Seminary, where we felt like we fit in more. In addition to that, up until about the age of twelve or so, we were active in the New York havurah movement, which is where my parents have made a lot of their really close friends in the past thirty, thirty-five years and still talk to a lot of these people on a regular basis. A lot of the women were positive influences for me, and I feel like they're family. I knew you, Judith when you were little. Stuff like that was usually just on the two high holidays,

Shavuot and Sukkot, and then occasional Shabbat dinner, other events in people's homes.

JR: You have a brother.

SD: I have an older brother (Aton?), who is married now and going to be a dad.

JR: I heard that.

SD: He lives in Brooklyn with his Jewish wife, who is awesome. She is really great. I really like her.

JR: So, as a child, how did you feel about being Jewish and about the way that your family was Jewish?

SD: I don't think I had any feelings about it, to be honest, because everyone I knew was like me. I went to a day school, where everyone was basically Conservative or Reform. Most of my friends kept kosher. They all lived on the Upper West Side, with the exception of two or three classmates who lived in Washington Heights or Brooklyn, which was like, "Oh my God, who lives in Brooklyn?" We were all white, and I'd known them all since kindergarten. So, to me, this was the only way of life I knew. It was familiar to me, and it was safe. I didn't think to question anything we did. The day school I went to also didn't really teach us to question either. So I just went with the flow and was fine with it.

JR: What about your experience as a girl growing up? Were you aware of being a girl and what women's and girl's place was in the world and feminism being something that already existed, or how was that [inaudible]?

SD: I think I was aware of feminism, but I didn't know I was aware of it just because of my mother being a hardcore feminist and teaching at an all-women's college and attending the same women's college. I mean, seeing positive and strong female roles

was something I was used to just from the women I grew up with. Also, every month seeing my mother with her New York havurah friends, having an Ezrat Nashim meeting, where they would talk about – I mean, as I got older, I'd overhear conversations, but I think things ranged from menopause and the way their middle-aged bodies were changing to politics, religion. Also, growing up in an egalitarian community, seeing that women can be rabbis and that's okay and that women could wear kippot and girls can have bat mitzvahs. Also, seeing that my family was slightly different in the way that my dad wasn't like dads portrayed on TV, who didn't really talk and were kind of not gushy. My dad was always very affectionate with us, and he was the cook and the cleaner of the house. My mom paid the bills and was the one who punished me and my brother. So, in that sense, things were kind of backward. [laughter] I'm trying to think. I think that's it.

JR: So we were talking about your – it sounds like, actually, both in terms of your experience growing up Jewishly and in terms of your sense of yourself as a girl or as a woman that both were to – it just was what it was.

SD: Yes.

JR: It just made sense. It wasn't something that was a big issue. It just was there.

SD: Yes.

JR: So, did that change at some point? How has that experience been for you as you've gotten older?

SD: I think the feminist bit has always stayed constant. The Jewish thing – I didn't really notice I was a Jew until I got to high school, which was not a Jewish school. Most of my classmates were Jewish just out of coincidence, but most of them were not practicing Jews, which was kind of a shocker to me. For the first time, I had to tell my teachers, "I can't go to school tomorrow because it's the first day of Passover, and I'm not allowed to go to school." They were fine with it. I never had heard, "Oh, that's ridiculous. You have

tests." But it was the first time that I felt like I was different, being Jewish. And they would have events on Saturdays sponsored by the school, and I couldn't go to them. I would have to walk to my play rehearsals on the weekends and my dance rehearsal on the weekend. Being an observant Jew was kind of a weird thing, and people were like, "You actually go to synagogue during Yom Kippur? Who does that?" So that was the first time when I felt like I was different from other people and that my world was a little screwed up. I didn't really like being a Jew in that period.

JR: You wrote on your form – and starred – being out [as] Jewish and loving it. So when did that change?

SD: That changed in eleventh grade. I was seventeen; I got hooked into this Israel program called Nesiya, which –

JR: I used to work for them.

SD: Oh my God, I love Nesiya; they changed my life – which takes high school students to Israel over the summer. But what makes it different than other programs is that there are Israeli participants. Now, actually, they upped the amount of Israelis that participate. But when I went, there were four Israeli girls in my group and thirty-two Americans. So they take you there for the summer, and you do all the typical stuff, like the hiking and the swimming, but we also did Jewish text studies and interacting with the Israeli community. Then, throughout the year, they have ongoing programs. So I was actually introduced to this program before I went on their summer trip. I went to a winter retreat that was a week in Connecticut during winter break of my junior year of high school. I was introduced to it because my dad's first cousin (Shlomo?) was the head of the Israeli office.

JR: [inaudible]

SD: So, he was like, “It’s really great. I think you might like it. If you like, you can go in the Israel program in the summer.” So I was like, “Sure.” I didn’t know anybody. It was the first time outside of my day school experience that I had seen Jews who were really into being Jewish. I mean, they all came from different backgrounds. There were kids who were raised just like me, and there were kids who had a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah, and that was it, and they never really did anything about it. Then there were kids who were Orthodox. They loved Shabbat, and they loved singing, and they loved praying. They hated the text studies, but that was okay because they loved being with their friends. It was the first time I met Jews my age, who were really proud of being Jewish and thought it was cool. It wasn’t like, “Oh man, I know it sucks you can’t go to the movies on Saturday, but whatever. We get Shabbat, and we have really cool rituals.” I did a lot of art with them, and I made some really good friends [with] who I’m still in touch with. That summer, I had such an amazing time, and I just fell in love with Israel. A big thing for me that summer was I started praying on my own without being told I had to pray in the morning. I usually do it three or four times a week just by myself in a corner with my siddur. It was such an amazing experience. I remember just feeling like God was watching me and just feeling so peaceful and so happy and refreshed every morning from doing that. It was great.

JR: Did you continue doing any of that?

SD: Yes, I did. Well, actually not the praying as much because high school got in the way. But I was involved with the program and would go to as many retreats as I could. I think I had a record for the most amount of retreats in the shortest period of time because every time there was something, I was like, “I have to go, mom and dad.” They were like, “Okay.” So I stayed active with all through eleventh and twelfth grade, freshman year of college, and sophomore year of college. Then I took a break because everyone else was sixteen, and I was twenty, and I don’t really know these people, and I didn’t really feel much of a connection with them. But the friends I made that summer, a lot of them I’m

still in touch with, and we still talk about it. So they're a part of my life.

JR: That's great. Did you want to talk about all these things, or should we start with the starred ones?

SD: We can start with the starred ones.

JR: So you talk in the successes and challenges piece about overcoming fear and self-hatred. [inaudible] that experience [inaudible]?

SD: So the Nesiya program bit was definitely a major part of overcoming self-hatred in terms of being a Jew because, in high school, it was just weird. It was weird explaining why I couldn't go to the fall festival on Saturday, why I couldn't go shopping or to the movies with my best friend who wasn't Jewish. She was actually the first non-Jewish friend I had – totally polar opposites of each other. She was raised Catholic. She's Latina, raised in South Bronx. She thought all Jews were Hasidic Jews because those were the only ones she'd ever seen. So she was really thrown off by my dad not having payot and me not wearing a long skirt. She was like, "I don't understand." She opened my eyes a lot up to racism and what it's like not being raised middle-class and not being able to afford summer camp and to go shopping whenever I felt like it. So it was just – oh my God, I just lost my train of thought. So being in a different environment and having this friend, I didn't like who I was and wished I was different and wished I was like the Christian white kids in my school. Going on this program gave me a new sense of self and gave me all these Jewish friends that were really cool people and really nice. Even though a lot of them moved far away, we would talk on the phone or via email, how we all felt the same in our respective schools. A lot of them went to public school and felt like there's something different about them, too, and that they had trouble connecting with their friends. They love their friends, but the Jewish bit was missing, and synagogue with their parents was boring, etcetera. So we were all able to connect like that. I remember [laughter] my friend Jessica always being like, "Okay, why are you so obsessed with

Israel? I know you had a really good time that summer but shut up. I'm sick of hearing about it." She couldn't understand why it was so important to me, religiously and culturally, because she didn't have that kind of connection with Catholicism. She couldn't give two shits about going to church. So it was really a positive experience for me. I carried that on when I went to college. It actually leads into – for the first time, I met people who had never met a Jew in their life. That was a rude awakening. I remember telling people, "Oh, I'm from New York City. I'm Jewish." "You're a Jew? Oh my God. I've never met one of those before." "Where are you from?" "Maine." "Are there not Jews in Maine?" "I've never met any."

JR: Wow.

SD: "There are no Black people in my school, either." I was like, "What? What planet are you from? Where is this Maine?" I think it made me a stronger person because I was so proud of my Judaism and my heritage and my background, but at the same time, I was really pissed off that I had to explain why my parents wanted me to marry a Jewish man, and why I was raised keeping kosher, and why Shabbat was different than every other day of the week, and why I couldn't go to school because it was Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur or Pesach. I felt like [laughter] I was a Hebrew school teacher to them. It was cool because I felt like my friends learned a lot from me, but it also became a really big pain in the ass. I was sick of it, but I also learned that I shouldn't take my upbringing for granted and that not everyone is raised in New York City, where there's all these different types of cultures and religions. So that's that bit. What was the other?

JR: The LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] part.

SD: Oh, yes. Okay. So when I was seventeen, I also realized that I liked women, and that freaked me out completely.

JR: That was a big year for you.

SD: Yes. Seventeen was my first quarter-life crisis. I guess it's more like an eighth-life crisis. It literally was an overnight realization, which most people, I'm sure, cannot say the same thing. But it wasn't like, "Oh my God, I'm a lesbian." It was like, "Oh my God. I like girls, but I also like guys." So that makes me bisexual, which seemed even more confusing and just stressful to me because I didn't know anyone else who was going through that. I knew my parents would be okay with it because we had gay family members, and they had gay and lesbian friends. So I knew that wouldn't be a problem. But for myself, I didn't know how to deal with it. I really remember the few months of realizing my attraction to women; it pissed me off. I was like, "Why am I this way? Why do I want to kiss that girl? Why do I want to hold her hand? Why? This isn't fair. Why can't I just be like everyone else and like boys, just boys?" I didn't know what to do. I remember I was in therapy at the time but felt really uncomfortable talking about it with my therapist, who was a male, and we'd just brush over it and be like, "Oh yeah, I like girls. Next." I couldn't really talk about it with my brother, and I couldn't really talk about it with my friends who were supportive and were like, "Whatever, I don't care. You're still you, and we like you." But none of them had the same feelings. So it was really hard. It wasn't until college, when I started hanging out just a whole bunch of lesbians, that I was like, "Oh, it's okay to be like this." I have a lot of friends who are straight, and I have a lot of friends who are gay and a lot of friends who aren't sure where they fit. They seem like they're doing all right. Fortunately, a lot of them had really accepting families, too. I just remember thinking sophomore year, "All right. There's going to be some point where I'm going to have to tell my mom about this. I'm sure she's figured out, but I got to tell her." She actually did figure it out because she's conniving and got it out of one of my friends. I just remember I had gotten my eyebrow pierced, which is my first form of rebellion. This is very exciting. I was like, "Hey, mom. I have something to tell you." She goes, "What, honey?" I said, "So I joined the gay and lesbian group on campus." She goes, "Honey, do you think you're a lesbian?" I said, "Mom, I'm bisexual." She goes, "That's okay. I still love you. Your father and I support you no matter what."

JR: That's a pretty good coming out story.

SD: It was great. Then, five minutes later, I go, "Guess what else?" She goes, "Are you bringing someone home for Rosh Hashanah?" I went, "No, but I got my eyebrow pierced." She goes, "Oh, okay. Sara, just never get your tongue pierced, never get a tattoo, or I swear to God, I will kill you." I was like, "Okay." A year later, of course, I did get my tongue pierced, and she was really pissed off about it. But in college, I just continued to experiment with women, experiment with men, not really sure where I stood, and definitely started to feel more comfortable with myself. But sophomore year, I remember really freaking out. It was the first time I'd ever become intimate with a woman. That scared me a lot because I was like, "What does this mean? Is she my girlfriend now just because we kissed? Do I have to date her? Do I have to be in love with her? Do we have to have sex? What's going on?" I freaked out so much that I ended up, a week later, being like, "I can't date you. I'm sorry. Goodbye." Because I didn't know what it meant, and no one could tell me what to do or how to navigate through it. So I just let it lie and was like, "Maybe I can just try liking boys again?" It didn't really work. But now I'm at a point in my life where I have a girlfriend who's Jewish. Mom and Dad love that. I still think about men and still would like to know what it's like to have a boyfriend and to even marry a guy, but it doesn't bother me as much as it used to. So that, to me, is a good sign that I'm just glad I have someone to share my life with. I'm glad my family is supportive, and her family is supportive, and our friends all like each other. It is a good place to be romantically. It's nice feeling like I can fit into the queer community and the Jewish community. I've met a lot of other queer Jews. It's just peaceful at last. I think also a lot of it's just growing up in general and finding my place in the world.

JR: But for a lot of people, it takes a long time to find that.

SD: Yes.

JR: It does sound like you're lucky to be in a good place.

SD: Yes. I'm definitely in – yes, I haven't been in such a good place in a long time. It's great because even my older brother, who was totally weirded out by it at first, was like, "Jessica is really cool. I really like her. She's sweet. You guys have to come home for Shabbat dinner." So it's nice.

JR: Did you tell him at the same time you told your parents?

SD: I actually told him when I was seventeen. I remember, every time I told someone I was bisexual, I flipped out and would start crying. They were like, "What's wrong? My God," thinking I was going to be like, "Somebody's dying." I just remember hyperventilating. I took him into the laundry room in my parents' apartment, and I go, "(Aton?), I'm bisexual." He goes, "Okay. So what? Why do you have to label yourself? Labels are for cans." I was like, "Oh, that's it?" He's like, "Yeah, whatever. I don't really care. You are what you are. It's fine. Figure shit out." I was like, "Oh. Okay then. Nice having this chat with you. Goodbye." [laughter]

JR: Right. Did you find a gay Jewish community in college, or was that something that you found after college?

SD: I did not find that in college because – did I have any lesbian –? No, because all of my lesbian or bisexual friends were either atheist or not Jewish, like Catholic or Presbyterian or whatever. Actually, this is a funny thing because after college, a lot of my friends, some of them actually through Nesiya, started coming out. So it's like, "Hey, we're Jews, and we're queer at the same time." We almost had our own little mini-community, just in the Nesiya community, which was really interesting. I have some other friends, friends from different periods of my life, some through Nesiya, some in high school, who are Jewish and either just curious about their sexuality or identified as lesbians or gay. So it's nice because we can talk about everything together. We can go

out dancing in a lesbian nightclub, or we can be like, “Hey, you want to have Shabbat dinner with me and my parents on Friday?” “That’d be great." So it’s nice to have two in one.

JR: Right, exactly. You get to have an integrated [inaudible].

SD: Yes.

JR: You put down on your form – also talking about taking a women’s studies class in college, and I’m wondering what that meant to you.

SD: I think that was the first form of active activism.

JR: Because I never was the type to go to protests or rallies or sign petitions. I was a silent advocate for women’s rights. Also, I felt like my mom was so annoying about being a feminist that I was thinking, “I don’t want to turn into my mom who gets really excited over abortion rights?" [laughter] I just didn't want to be one of her – it's actually was funny because when I was sixteen or something, she brought home this T-shirt from the women’s – from Barnard – center, whatever the acronym is.

JR: Right. [inaudible]

SD: That was like, “Dare to use the F-word,” and me being like, “Oh, it says fuck on the back.” It said “feminist” on the back. She’s like, “Is this great? Don’t you love it?” I was like, “No, that’s so ugly.” It was magenta and an extra, extra-large. She was like, “This is a present for you.” I was like, “Why would I wear this, ever?” [laughter] I was just totally horrified. So it’s like, “I’m never going to be one of those scary feminists.” But I remember looking at the course description for this women's studies class and being like, “That seems cool. A good elective. Whatever. I will give it a try. Take it as pass/fail, so it doesn’t affect my GPA [grade point average]. La, la, la.” It was multicultural women’s studies, and now I refer to it as Propaganda 101 because the professor was this really

intense radical lesbian, who was white, as white as you can be, but also, I think she wanted to be Black because every author we read was Black or Latina or Asian, and she was teaching it to a class full of white chicks. I think there was one Asian-American girl and one girl who was Irish and Puerto Rican. That was the diversity we had in our class. Everyone else was like, "My name's Susie. I'm from New Hampshire. This class looked really cool, and I have blonde hair and blue eyes." That was it. So it was the first time that I ever became interested in feminism and women's rights in the academic sense. I learned so much. I had never thought before that being white was an automatic privilege. I learned that being a white person, I will get way more respect than the Black chick sitting next to me and learned about different inequalities in the world. I remember that was also the same year that the attacks on September 11th occurred. So we'd talk about women in Afghanistan and how men were taking away their rights and abusing them and killing them. It just opened my eyes to a lot of things that were going on in the world that were not good at all and made me want to be aware. I remember coming home one weekend and telling my mom about class that week. I was like, "Blah, blah, blah, the Taliban. Blah, blah, blah, [Afghanistan]," and ranting and saying, when the US was bombing Afghanistan, "It's the women who are getting killed because they can't leave their homes, and they're trapped." She was like, "Who are you, and what have you done with my daughter?" She was shocked by all these things coming out of my mouth. My dad was like, "What did you just say? Did I hear you?" So I think they're really proud of me, too. Through that class, I actually ended up going to a couple of protests in college and to an anti-war rally senior year. That was really exciting.

JR: So the lessons of that class stuck with you?

SD: Yes. Now that I look back on it, even though some of it was a little too intense for me, I could pick and choose and be like, "You know what? I'm not as crazy as you are, so I'm just going to let that sit."

JR: Do you consider yourself a feminist now? Is that a word you use to describe yourself?

SD: Yes. Not a staunch feminist but, like I said, I'm still behind the scenes, but yes, definitely a feminist.

JR: So what ways do you think –? How can I phrase this in a way that makes sense? I guess I would say, do you feel like when you look at your life, you feel like the women's movement or feminism has affected your life or no? And if so, how?

SD: I think yes because it showed me how strong women can be, and not necessarily in a political way, but just in their own daily lives or in the home. My mother is a very strong woman in many ways. I look up to her because of that. She's always taught me to speak for myself, whether it's like, "Mom, someone said something to me that upset me," or "My boss is pissing me off. Help. What do I say?, or "Things on my college campus are weird. What do I do?" Her friends were always the type that would always say what they were thinking. I'd get embarrassed and be like, "Oh my God, mom, please be quiet. I'm in school." But I knew that whatever I wanted to be, whatever I want to do is okay and that these women would always support me. They were amazing. All the friends my mother had were always professionals. They had college degrees, sometimes PhDs or master's degrees. They were mothers. They were married. They were divorced. They adopted their kids. The men, too, were very strong, but not in the scary, patriarchal kind of way. They were just always really warm, loving men. [laughter] They're also feminists. I think of my dad and Phyllis Sperling's husband, Herman Sands, who is just the sweetest man in the world. I love him. He and Phyllis together were always pro-education, political activism, everything. I just loved being with them and having them teach me all about life, in addition to my parents.

JR: As you look towards the future, especially as a young woman – when I ask this question to older women, I ask what's the kind of world that you would imagine or your

vision for the future, your hope of what could happen in the world for your kids. But as a younger woman, I can ask you more what your vision of how you hope the world that you can be part of and the kind of change that you can be part of might look like is? What are your feelings about where the world is today and where you hope it might go or could go?

SD: I definitely hope it's more peaceful. [laughter] Because just in the last few years, things have not been good. There's so many wars. What is going on? So, I'm not saying, "Oh, I hope everyone declares the world peace" because that's not going to happen, but that there's less fighting going on, on a large scale, like war and just small scale, like crap that goes on in people's neighborhoods, neighbors against neighbors or gangs or whatever. So that's number one. I hope that more people can get an education, especially those who really want an education and can't afford it, especially in the US. That's one of the things that really pisses me off, is that – when I studied abroad in Australia, just talking to students there, who were complaining about paying tuition, but how their government would subsidize their education, and they could get really good financial aid. They were like, "How much does school cost for you?" I said, "Thirty-two thousand American [dollars]," and their jaws would drop. They were like, "Excuse me? How is that possible?" I'm like, "It's a private university." "How much do the public universities cost?" "Between fifteen and twenty." They were like, "I could buy two houses with that much." They were just astounded. It upsets me that when we graduated, my friends were like, "I owe fifty thousand dollars to this loan agency." That's not right. That should not be happening. I hope that when I have children that I'm able to support them enough that they don't have to go through that, all that loan crap. Women's rights – I really hope abortion stays legal and gay marriage becomes legal all over the US. I really would like that to happen. Less racism. I know most of this isn't possible, but I think there are so many things that our government could do to make people happier and healthier, and more educated, and they're just not. I don't know why. Politics [and] religion get in the way. But things like keeping abortion legal – that would save lives. It would prevent so much unnecessary emotional and physical damage to

women –

JR: In poverty.

S: – in poverty. Just choice. I want people to have choice. Okay. Choice and peace, education.

JR: So one question I want to ask – one of the things that's come up over the course of this conference today is this question about the younger generation and why aren't more young women interested in feminism? Why don't they identify as feminist? Why aren't they more involved in politics and those kinds of things? How do you think the women's movement could appeal more to young people? First of all, do you see that as being true, that young women are less identified and less involved in the women's movement? If you do perceive that as being true, is there a way that you think the women's movement could appeal more to younger people?

SD: Well, I think it is true that my generation and the one slightly younger than me aren't really involved. I think because our parents' generation, our grandparents' generation have made so much progress. I'm sure, without even realizing, a lot of people in their twenties and thirties are like, "Well, we don't have as much to fight for. We're not just secretaries anymore. We can get real jobs as executives, managers, and businesswomen. We don't have to stay at home with the kids. We don't have to get married." Do you know what I mean?

JR: Yes.

SD: Professionally and domestically, there's so many more choices that our grandmothers didn't have and that our mothers fought for. I think those are the most visible changes that have occurred. But like I mentioned, there's still other things that I think people aren't aware of [such as] abortion or daycare for your children because you want to work or you have to work, education, racism. There's so many other things that

aren't as visible that I think people don't fight for them or not enough people fight for them, and me included. I think feminism is still a scary word to a lot of people because they think there's still that stereotype that you're a man-hater or that you're a really angry woman, or that you're gay, or just all the nasty connotations that go with it. I remember not wanting to be associated with the hippy chicks at protests wearing their Birkenstocks. That freaked me out a little bit, but not all feminists are like that. I honestly don't know how it can appeal to younger generations, but maybe by introducing it in the schools or synagogues or whatever youth movements kids are part of. It doesn't have to be like, "Rah, rah, sign this petition, go to this protest, hear this speaker," but just talk about women can do amazing things, and men can do amazing things, and they can work together. It's not about man-hating. It's not about overrunning men's power. But I think it's about partnership as well. People just need to open their eyes. Also, teaching kids at a younger age that life isn't dandy. I'm sure kids now are seeing that just because of all the wars going on right now. In my case, I didn't know that – I saw people of different religions and races, but I never associated with them. I think if I'd learned to hang out with people different from me at a younger age, high school wouldn't have been as much of a shock and just open up kids' eyes at a younger age to different cultures and different issues around the world and tell them, "You don't have to be rich or really smart or really famous to help, but just by knowing about this stuff, you can make a difference." Maybe that'll get them excited.

JR: Yes. Well, thank you so much. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you want to talk about?

SD: I just have one thing to say that I just thought about during the panels today. I really wish that day schools would teach about Jewish women because I didn't learn – they just brush over it so quickly that it was like, "Oh, whatever. You said the four mothers' names. Okay. We're done." I think that's a really important part of Jewish identity because without them – whether or not I believe everything in the Bible, they're really

good stories, and they're really good ways to show little girls that even through all this struggle, these women did amazing things and that you could be like Esther or Naomi or Ruth and do all this stuff too. It's not just about Moses and Abraham.

JR: Well, I have to say that's a wonderful way to end because, in addition to this exhibit on Jewish women and feminism, one of the other big projects I've been working on that we finished last year is a curriculum. It's not on biblical women, but it's on American Jewish history, looking at examples of women who contributed in different ways as activists, as community builders, community organizers, as rabbis, as educators in all different kinds of ways. To make sure that those stories – and this is a big part of what the Jewish Women's Archive does – to make sure that those stories get used in Jewish education so that it's not just that you learn maybe about the matriarchs and maybe about Golda Meir. I went to day school also, as you know, through eighth grade. I think the only Jewish women we ever talked about were Golda Meir –

SD: Yes. I did a report on her.

JR: – and Emma Lazarus because when I was in sixth grade –

SD: We didn't even touch her.

JR: – when I was in sixth grade, we did the Statue of Liberty. It was 1986. So it was for the [inaudible], which was a hundred years since they put up the Statue of Liberty. So we did this big thing on Emma Lazarus and the Statue of Liberty. That was pretty much it. And then, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel.

SD: Yes, it's nothing.

JR: I'm the daughter of a feminist mom. I didn't really know of anybody else. So one of the things that we really try to do is to make available a lot of different kinds of curriculum materials so that Jewish educators can teach about all different kinds of Jewish women in

history so that girls and boys grow up knowing that Jewish women made huge contributions to our communities, and they don't only assume that –

SD: Yes, we learned only about dead white men.

JR: So that's a big change that's happening [inaudible].

SD: Yay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]