Marilyn Paul Transcript

Judith Rosenbaum: I am sitting here in Lexington, Massachusetts, with Marilyn Paul. Today is July 27th, 2000. This interview is being conducted by Judith Rosenbaum. Maybe we can just begin with you telling me just a little bit about your family background, where and when you were born, your experiences growing up, and your family.

Marilyn Paul: Anything in particular?

JR: Well, where and when were you born?

MP: I was born in Boston Lying-In Hospital [in] 1952 and grew up in Lexington.

JR: Did you have other family that lived around here?

MP: No, just my original family.

JR: Did you have any siblings?

MP: I have a younger brother who's about two-and-a-half years younger.

JR: What was your family's class status like?

MP: My father's a doctor. My mother's a social worker. Does that answer your question?

JR: Yeah, I guess so. How did your family identify, Jewishly?

MP: Not at all that I knew of. I grew up totally assimilated. I knew I was Jewish, and they were Jewish, but there was no synagogue affiliation. Maybe we had a Passover Seder every once in a while with my grandmother, but that's it.

JR: Had your parents grown up in an assimilated environment?

MP: My mother grew up in a totally assimilated family, and my dad is first-generation, and he grew up in, I think, a family where he went to Hebrew school, somewhat traditional, but not much interest.

JR: Did your family have any kind of relationship with Israel?

MP: Not at all. No interest in Israel.

JR: How would you say your relationship to Judaism has changed over time?

MP: Well, I'm definitely interested in Judaism. Growing up, I had no Jewish background at all, did not – I probably didn't hear of the holiday Sukkot until I was thirty. So I'm definitely much more involved, much more interested.

JR: How did that evolve?

MP: I'm trying to think. I went to Israel in probably 1982, mostly because I had a chance to travel in Egypt with some friends and figured, "Okay. I'm going to Egypt. I'll go to Israel," but no particular interest in Israel and found it fabulous, had a great time. I was part of a group called Volunteers for Israel. It was a wonderful experience for me. So it was very, very surprising. I had no inkling that I would be interested in Israel. It was fabulous for me. It was a real discovery.

JR: So did you stay involved, then, in issues having to do with Israel when you came back or was that something [inaudible]?

MP: See, when I came back, I think I studied – I took first-year Hebrew. I was a graduate student at Yale at that point. I took second-year Hebrew. Then I ended up applying for a dissertation postdoc fellowship in Israel, which I got. So I did a fellowship at the Hebrew University. It was great.

JR: What field is your dissertation in?

MP: Management. I'm a Ph.D. in organizational management.

JR: And so then you lived in Israel for a year for your postdoc?

MP: I was there for a year for my postdoc. And then, after that, that's when I got the job in Gaza. So the first year, I was working [in] actually a number of departments at Hebrew University. And then the second year, it was public health.

JR: What kind of work were you doing?

MP: The first year?

JR: Yes.

MP: Working with *matnasim*, which are community centers. Well, it was working with *matnasim* – mostly that.

JR: How did you get involved with the Gaza public health work?

MP: It was a very fluky thing, actually. I was offered a second year for my fellowship but was not interested in doing any more postdoctoral work. I was actually just at a table. I was drinking coffee, I think, at the American Colony Hotel. I overheard a group of people talking. They were speaking English. I knew they were talking about public health issues, which was part of my topic [on] management of public health. So I introduced myself to them. It turned out one of the people was head of what was then called the Office for Health in the Occupied Territories. We got to talking. It turns out he went to Yale as well, so there was a Yale connection and just got to know him a little bit. Somehow, the World Health Organization, whose deputy director also went to Yale and was Jewish – he was Israeli – started to create a project. They started to fund a project in Gaza that they needed someone to lead. So through all these connections, they knew

I was available.

[Recording paused.]

JR: You were telling me about how you met this guy and got involved.

MP: That was it.

JR: So he just said, "Come on and join this project"?

MP: He said, "Come on and join this project." I really did not want to do it.

JR: How come?

MP: I didn't want to work in Gaza.

JR: What year was this?

MP: This was 1987. It was during the Intifada.

JR: So the Intifada had just started?

MP: Actually, by then, it was already '88, so the Intifada had gone on for a year. It was a controversial project. I thought it was a – I would say it was going to take a lot of time and energy and skill. We had a Palestinian-Israeli steering committee that was designed to meet together. I knew that was going to be very, very challenging. The steering committee broke up several times, so I had to meet separately with the Israelis and Palestinians. It was just a very big project that was going to require a lot of time and skill and investment, and I didn't feel that the sponsors of it were adequately prepared for what was going to be required to make it a success.

JR: Who were the sponsors?

MP: Sponsors were the Hadassah Hospital, Hebrew University School of Public Health, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces], and the World Health Organization in the background.

JR: Why did you ultimately decide to accept?

MP: They kept asking me. I couldn't think of any more reasons to say no. I told them I wasn't available. They said, "We'll start later." It was sort of like any reason I gave them to not do it, they came back and said, "Well, we'll accommodate you." So I did it.

JR: So what was the project, actually? What were its goals, basically?

MP: Was to take a group of health administrators from across the spectrum in Gaza and basically improve their management and research skills. Management from the point of view of – it's very hard to manage or make changes in an organization or in a system if you don't have good data about what the system is like. If you don't have good data, good communication skills, [and] good meeting skills, it's very hard to make significant progress. So part of what we were doing was teaching data collection. We taught everything from data collection to how to run a meeting to cross-organizational communication. It was essentially a sixteen-day course with major projects. It was thirty-six people each. There were six groups. So groups [were] divided into project groups. There was a group on dental health. There was a group on administration. There was a group on what they called continuity of care. So each group had a topic, and then everything we taught in the course they had to apply. So they had to apply – in the beginning, if we were talking about data collection and answering the question, "What is the current reality for this," they'd have to go back and collect data. Because often they were saying, "Oh, well, infant mortality is terrible in Gaza." "Well, what is it? What is infant mortality? And what is it for infants, and what is it for six-month-olds? What is it? Why are kids dying?" They really found out all kinds of interesting things that had a lot of implications for how they managed their resources. So the goal was to improve the skills of about – I think it was about thirty Palestinians and six Israelis in management and data

collection.

JR: How did it work in terms of the secrecy of the project and the cooperation of Israelis and Palestinians?

MP: Well, just secret in that we didn't want any media coverage. So that was no problem, as long – if any news reporters came up to me, I was just not to speak about it. Nobody talked about it. People were at risk as it was. There were several deaths during the project because the Palestinians were viewed as collaborators. The cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians was – it was part of ongoing cooperation between Israelis and [Palestinians]. We weren't doing any mediating. This was not a peace project. This was not taking people who were antagonistic to each other to work together. This was working with people from the Health Office in Gaza and the health services among the Palestinians. Everyone knew each other. There were a couple of challenging moments when the Army, who is giving away these certificates – when the Army showed up – and an army general and a lot of soldiers came into a room. But people are used to that. There was a different culture among the group. We built a culture among the Israelis and Palestinians in the group that I think was very positive. But there's ongoing cooperation. So there was no news [on] Israelis and Palestinians were getting along, I don't think.

JR: Were you in Gaza for the duration of the time, or were you traveling back and forth?

MP: I lived in Jerusalem. I was probably in Gaza about once a week.

JR: Did it feel dangerous? Had you been to Gaza before?

MP: Not before I started this project.

JR: Did it feel dangerous to be going there?

MP: It was dangerous to be going. I didn't feel that I was in danger, but it was objectively – I had to either travel in a convoy or I had to travel in a UN [United Nations] vehicle. The reason for the danger was people who were regarded as suspicious; there were kids in the streets throwing stones. There were settings where – there were times when, if we would drive down a street, there'd be an exchange of – or, at least in that time, Israelis firing on Palestinians who were throwing stones. So it was just, in my view, not that dangerous, but there was certainly danger in the setting and a lot of tension. It was definitely not like walking around Lexington center.

JR: Right. Were you identified as an American or as a Jew in this work?

MP: I was probably identifiable and identified as both.

JR: Were there many women working on this project?

MP: The women? Let's see. I was trying to – I think there were four women in the group. I think there were four Palestinian women and no Israeli women. I'm trying to think. Is that right? There may have been one Israeli woman.

JR: Were there difficult gender dynamics, or was that not an issue?

MP: What do you have in mind?

JR: Well, I don't really know. Did you feel like you were treated differently as a woman working on this project? Having lived in Israel, I know that there certainly are certain kinds of gendered assumptions in Israeli culture, and I imagine that's also the case, if not more so, in Palestinian culture.

MP: I think what I was most aware of is that I don't think – I think part of my advantage was – I'm not sure a man could have done the job. I think part of my advantage was I was a woman in a mostly male setting. I was treated with a lot of respect as a woman

with a Ph.D. As an American woman with a Ph.D., I think I was sort of in a category unique to myself. I think one of my advantages was I was not an Israeli, I was not a Palestinian, I was not a man – because it was mostly men. That put me in this sort of odd category that people could, I think, could deal with me because I was so different.

JR: What were the dynamics like among the Israelis and Palestinians?

MP: What were they like?

JR: Yes. Were people used to working together? Was there a lot of tension over political issues at the time?

MP: For most of my meetings, it was me and the Palestinians. I did a lot of preparatory meetings. Then we met once a week as the whole group. Lots of conversation about politics, lots of concern about the Intifada, a lot of concern with the political situation, [and] how it was affecting children. The situation was – this was a course that was offered by the Israeli Defense Forces for a group of Palestinians who really wanted to improve their skills. So, I think, for the most part, we had Palestinians in the group who were very familiar with working with Israelis, many people who recognized that one way to improve their ability to do administrative work or management work was to press themselves. Gaza's on the Egyptian model. Have you been to Egypt?

JR: But only to Cairo and Alexandria.

MP: Well, you may have noticed – I don't know if you did notice. You may have noticed that the Egyptians are not highly efficient administrators.

JR: Yes, I did notice that. [laughter] It's sort of hard to miss.

MP: So if you noticed that, that management culture is what existed in Gaza, a culture that was not results-oriented. Because the British had been there, they'd been both in

Egypt and in Gaza; it was bureaucratic but not results-oriented. So sort of like a sea of bureaucracy with no impact. In my view – and it would be interesting to talk to the other people in the group – I think people were there to learn. They weren't there to have conflict or political discussions. In some ways, it was – I imagine, from what I heard, that the real controversial relationships were between Palestinians who would be willing to be in a setting like this as collaborators and Palestinians who would view people in a setting like this as betraying the Palestinian cause. But people were cordial. People were learning together. It was very geared towards getting a good educational process going. The Israelis who were there were all people who were very dedicated. I think every Israeli I was working with, the physicians and the administrators, were completely dedicated to getting Gaza and Gazan territory into the hands of the Palestinian people, which essentially is taking place.

JR: Right. How long did this project last?

MP: About a year.

JR: And are there similar kinds of projects that are still going on?

MP: I doubt it. I strongly doubt it. But I don't know.

JR: What were the greatest challenges for you in doing this work?

MP: Organizing it. I'm not an organized person. So just figuring it out. I was sort of the faculty member. I was the chief designer. Organizing it was a challenge. I had to get faculty from all over Israel. I wasn't the only faculty member. So got faculty from all over Israel. So I had to find people, meet people, convince them to come. A few religious people [inaudible] wouldn't eat. They'd eat a raw tomato or some lettuce. So one challenging thing was working with people outside of that system who would come to Gaza and have all kinds of preconceptions about what it was like to come to Gaza. Then the second challenge was keeping the steering committee together because there were

just very, very different notions about what this educational process was, what it meant to work together, what it meant to even do a needs assessment, who was in charge of the needs [assessment]. I did the needs assessment. People had to rely on me and my judgment to feel like they were getting a good project. I'm trying to think. Then, probably the biggest challenge for me, personally, was the emotional challenge of going to Gaza every week. It's a desperate place.

JR: What were the most rewarding aspects of it for you?

MP: I think clearly the most rewarding thing to me is I was teaching things I've taught before and taught since to people who really wanted to learn it, had never had this material before, dedicated themselves to their personal and professional growth. At the time – I'm not even sure if I have this anymore – I had a group of projects. I had the project team meet the first week and describe to me the nature of their project. Then I had them meet again, which was probably twelve weeks later. Because we started with a three-day workshop and ended with a two-day workshop. Their understanding of their work had completely changed. Their ability to do their work had completely changed. I mean, essentially, in this process, people really changed. That was fantastic.

JR: Did this experience change your perception of your place in Israel or your experience of Israel?

MP: Change my perception of my place in Israel? Well, I think, in some ways, it probably made me less left-wing, less knee-jerk left-wing. I really believe in a Palestinian state. I think there should be a Palestinian state. I think that, from my point of view, as someone who was pretty involved in Gaza, one of the things I really felt was there's a huge challenge ahead of building a national entity that can really manage itself next door to Israel, that can really galvanize its resources, meet its needs, plan. It was really an eye-opening experience [for] me to see how little people knew about some very basic things. But in terms of my place in Israel, the only thing I can think of is that I'm definitely

not knee-jerk left-wing. I think there's a lot of very, very serious challenges ahead as you create – essentially, what's being created is one more traditional, sometimes totalitarian state next to a democratic state. I think there's just huge challenges about that.

JR: Did you see this as an activist kind of project, or was it more professional?

MP: This was not an activist project. I don't know what you mean by activism, but there was no advocacy. I think of activism as people sort of taking a political stand and advocating a certain position or trying to have a certain political impact. My goal in this was to make accessible – my goal has always been to make accessible some very powerful ways of thinking and powerful ways of organizing. I work mostly in nonprofit organizations. I work in advocacy organizations, but my goal is to raise the confidence level of people to achieve their vision to get things done. But, for me, that's professional.

JR: Do you think that other people who were participating in it saw it as more political?

MP: No.

JR: I'm just asking because it seems like, particularly for the Palestinians, there was such – I mean, they were making certain kinds of political statements by being part of it.

MP: Well, I think most of the Palestinians working in the health system there were there because that was their profession. They were either public health administrators, or they were doctors, or they were nurses. We had a pharmacist. We had doctors, nurses, pharmacists. There were, I think, a few people who were physical therapists. People were living out their professional lives in a very controversial and difficult situation. But I'm not sure that they were activists in the sense of joining a group of people to have their voice heard in a certain way. And the same with me. I saw what I saw as a lot of activism happening in Israel that had no impact – lots of people sort of making statements and trying to get things done. I really wanted to, if I was going to spend my time in a certain way, be doing things that were going to have a really powerful impact.

JR: Did you feel that this program was successful in doing—?

MP: It was amazing. A year later, actually, the same group of people I was working with – I went back. I was invited back to Gaza to do some work with them. It was during the Gulf War, which, I guess – I'm trying to think sequentially. It was about a year after I left. People were just up in arms about the fact that there was really no emergency preparedness in Gaza at all. If a missile fell on Gaza, there was no preparation. The reason was that no one in Gaza could say, "Saddam Hussein might miss Tel Aviv." I mean, we're not talking about – it's not so close, but it's not so far. So no one could say, "Saddam Hussein might miss," because he was sort of infallible. So we had a meeting in which this came up. It was a private meeting. There was no press or anything. They were able to talk about the fact that none of them – public health people – could say, "Look, we have a problem with emergency preparedness." Within, I think, four hours, this group of people met, used the tools they'd learned, started to create an emergency response plan, [and] did it as a group so no one would get killed. Essentially, someone said, "Look, if any of us says this publicly, we'll get killed." No one got killed. And implemented a plan for the ambulances, a plan to get people gas masks. It was fabulous. They were, on the one hand, saying, "Look, we don't need gas masks because Saddam Hussein will never hit Gaza City." On the other hand, they were saying, "How come every Israeli has a gas mask, and we have nothing?" They were able to get through their dilemma and handle the situation. So that was pretty fabulous.

JR: Did you leave Israel right after this project ended?

MP: Yes.

JR: Did you remain involved in some of these issues of public health in Gaza or in touch with any people there?

MP: No. By that time, I think – let's see. I came back here. I remained in touch with some of the people when I came back here. I've gone back during the Gulf War. After the Gulf War, it was very – I was there, at some point, seeing how ecstatic a lot of people were that bombs were falling on Tel Aviv. They were dancing in the street. After that, it was hard for me to stay involved with it. I wasn't really excited about being with people who were so thrilled that bombs were falling on Tel Aviv.

JR: And now you're going back to Israel?

MP: Yes.

JR: What kind of work are you going to be doing?

MP: I'm not sure. Probably consulting work. Hopefully, work in some nonprofits. There's a group called the Institute for [Mediation and] Conflict Resolution, and we're in touch with them. We're in touch with a group for businesses for social responsibility. We're working on a grant to do some work in the West Bank around youth education.

JR: Is "we" you and your husband?

MP: Yes.

JR: Does he do similar work too?

MP: Yeah. So there's lots and lots of possibilities for work.

JR: So what's drawing you back there?

MP: I loved living there. So I'll be very happy to get back.

JR: What do you love about it?

MP: I think the thing I most – I love the weather. But I think what I most love is there was a quality of connectedness that I felt with people that I really enjoyed. There was some way – I still don't quite understand it – that I felt much more part of society there than I'm able to feel here.

JR: Do you have children?

MP: No.

JR: Have you been back and forth there a lot in the years since you lived there last?

MP: Yes. About once a year. We have really good friends, and we have family.

JR: Sounds great. [laughter]

MP: Yeah.

JR: Have you been involved in any other aspects of Israeli-Palestinian politics kind of stuff?

MP: Let's see. I've been involved with a number of dialogue groups. I've been involved in Arab-Jewish relations within Israel. I've been invited to consider – I facilitate something called Dialogue, which is related to organizational learning. I've been out to Beit Sahour to talk about organizing that type of dialogue. I have been invited to do some work in a mental health center in Bethlehem around improving the quality of healthcare delivery there. I did a series of stress management trainings for Palestinian health workers in Beit Hanina, which was really wild, sort of meditation and stress management, which was great. I'm trying to think. Just a range of what I would actually call more professional activities. I give to the New Israel Fund, and I've done a little bit of work with Shatil on improving communication skills.

JR: What kind of work have you been doing here?

MP: I'm an organizational consultant. What that means is I work with groups, organizations, teams, sometimes individuals. I do a lot of team building, helping people work together better, that type of work.

JR: Did you have any role models in your life?

MP: Let's see. You mean in terms of the work I do?

JR: Sure.

MP: Sure. I mean, I think everyone has role models.

JR: People that you worked with or –?

MP: I mean, every step – through high school, college, graduate school, there have always been both women [and] men I've admired a lot, and I've learned a lot from. Definitely.

JR: How would you say that your contributions have affected other people?

MP: In my current work or in the Gaza work?

JR: I guess both.

MP: How have my contributions affected people? I don't know. It's a good question. My hope is that my contributions have helped people do two things. One is [to] reflect better on how they manage themselves and others. And two, I hope that people have actually learned to be more skillful in how they take action to get the things done that they really want to get done.

JR: How would you say that your work, and particularly, in this case, your work in Gaza, affected you?

MP: Well, the work in Gaza was probably one of the best jobs I've ever had. It affected me very deeply because I was working with people who had such incredible courage. I could see what it's like and feel what it's like to be with people who are working at the edge of their lives. There's no slack in Gaza. There's not fifty dollars extra for muffins. Now I work in nonprofit organizations that feel they're strapped, but there's money for refreshments; there's money for lots of waste. There was something very powerful for me about working in a place where there's no waste. It's really poor and it's really rich at the same time. It was really powerful for me.

JR: Is that what made it the best job?

MP: Yes. I think people really used me well also. If you're a consultant like I am, people can always say, "Well, we didn't like what you did. We'll hire someone else." There's always competition. There's always a sense of people perhaps not being able to really use me because they don't maybe like what they – and often, they do like what I have to offer. But there was a feeling there of people really mining my value, which was also great.

JR: I'm interested. It seems like, at least in the way that I'm thinking about the way you described your work, that there's this kind of relationship between the professional work you do and other people being able to do activist work, that there's a certain kind of enabling link there.

MP: Yeah, I hope so. I mean, I hope that [if] someone walked away from working with me, they'd be able to say, "We work better together now than we did before." I just facilitated a meeting with the top team at a nonprofit. I do know that these three people have not gotten along well for five years – walked away and said, "We've had conversations with each other that we've needed to have, and we've not been able to have for five years. Because we've had these conversations, we're able to work together far more effectively, to have far more impact than we were able to before." That’s

something I'm really happy about. That one conversation, which took months of preparation to have a three-hour or four-hour conversation, will just change how they work together [and] change their understanding of each other.

JR: I think that's [it]. Actually, no, I had one more question that I meant to ask at the beginning, but I forgot to ask. How did your family feel about your connection with Israel?

MP: Surprised, I think. Totally not a Zionist family. In fact, my mother's mother was sort of anti-Zionist. "What do we need Israel for?" I think primarily [they were] like, "What is going on here?" Not very understanding.

JR: Did they become more interested in Israel because you had [inaudible]?

MP: I don't think so. There's no one in my immediate family whom I think is particularly interested in Israel. My brother, who's forty-five, I don't think has ever been. He and his family may come this year because we're there. I know if I weren't involved – my father and my mother, who's no longer alive, came and visited me. But I don't think there's any organic connection with Israel in anyone else in my family.

JR: Were they supportive of you spending a lot of time there?

MP: Not very. Two years was about as much as they could handle. They tried to figure out how to get me back. I mean, I don't think there was any concept of supporting me to stay there longer – and not too happy with me just doing the postdoc there in the first place. It's an odd thing in my life. It was something that I didn't expect. Never would have expected to get involved in Israel or even enjoy it. I'm lucky that my husband is interested. He's some interest. So that's nice for me.

JR: Did he have an interest before?

MP: No.

JR: Did he learn that through you? I mean, come to develop that interest through you?

MP: He'd been to Israel. He has family there. But I'm not sure he would have ever gone back if it weren't for me. I'm not sure. Maybe once.

JR: It's so interesting because, in so many of the interviews that I've done, people have said that a key part of what enabled them to tell the story that they told was like a total fluke.

MP: Oh, yeah?

JR: Yeah. It's very interesting. It's very inspiring. I guess some people might see it as somehow scary that things happen without – people who want to plan their life more. But, to me, it seems very exciting to think that things that you don't expect or plan for just kind of –

MP: It's the fluke effect.

JR: Right, just become a passion.

MP: Well, there were two things that were fluky here. One is it was barely planned that I would go to Israel in the first place. The second thing is if I had not had the courage to walk to the next table at the American Colony Hotel and say, "Excuse me, but it sounds like you're talking about some things I'm very interested in. Can I introduce myself?" If I had not done that, this never would have happened. So it's just that it just would not have happened. I may have met those people in some way at some point, but that was one of those turning point moments. I certainly had no idea at the time that anything would come out of it. So that was also – the fluke was these people were sitting next to me, and I could [overhear]. The fluke was I could overhear that conversation.

JR: Right.

MP: If I even did one table farther over and hadn't been able to hear what they were saying, it never would have occurred to me to go over. So that's a very fluky thing.

JR: Yeah. Wow.

MP: Yes. Think about that.

JR: I know. It's kind of scary. What kind of opportunities might be missed every second?

MP: Well, you could think about it that way; there was something in me that said, "Go introduce yourself. Go say hello."

JR: Right.

MP: I'm sure we're missing things all the time, but I think what's really amazing is how often we may not listen to our own inner voice that says, “Do something,” because we're busy doing something else.

JR: I think also it's easier to do that kind of thing in Israel because people – it’s okay to eavesdrop and to talk to somebody you don't know.

MP: Yes, I think that's true.

JR: And here, people have the sense – if you were to go over to someone sitting at a table and basically acknowledge that you were listening to their conversation, they might look at you in a funny way.

MP: Yeah, I think that's really true.

JR: Whereas, in Israel, people jump into your conversation all the time.

MP: "Hello." One of my first trips on a bus in Israel, there was someone who was smoking right over someone else. It was already, by then, no smoking on buses or something. So someone said, "Could you please stop smoking?" Someone else said, "Well, you know, there is a rule against smoking." Then, all of a sudden, half the bus – this was in Hebrew, and at the time, I didn't know Hebrew. But all of a sudden, there was this huge conversation going on about the pros and cons of smoking on buses. I had never seen anything like that in the United States. [laughter]

JR: Yes, there's a certain kind of national conversation that happens there that doesn't happen here in quite the same way.

MP: It was really wild.

JR: I think that's about the end of the questions that I had, but is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to tell me about?

MP: Let's see. Well, I think one – there are several things. I mean, the things that were interesting to me were things like there was a moment at graduation that was very moving when everyone got their diplomas. I think there was a three or four-star general who had come in to give out the diplomas, and he gave the congratulation speech in Arabic. I think he was from an Arabic-speaking home himself. So there were many moments that were not at all about preconceived ideas of what peace was or what activism is, or what sticking up for your rights – all of that was gone. It was a very human setting, and a human – how people were trying to improve their lives through learning from each other. It was very moving for me. Another most exciting moment was that – I am a strong believer in public health and stress management and breathing and yoga and really using our skills to sort of calm things down. We had prayer throughout the day because there are many people who prayed at various times of day. And we had yoga. We had fifteen minutes of yoga every session. On the last day, we had a day-long meeting, and people had come from the West Bank. Senior health people had come

from the West Bank. We were in a setting with the military around the room. There are armed soldiers around the room. We won't do our fifteen minutes of yoga. It's too far out. So it came time to do yoga, and I said, "Well, we won't do any yoga today." They said, "Yes. We want to do our yoga." So at that moment, I said, "Well, okay, we're going to do yoga." I said, "Okay, put down your *neshek* [weapon], and everyone come in." Even the West Bankers, who are very much – the attitude of people from the West Bank towards Gaza is like thumbing their nose at them. That was also interesting to me to see all the attitudes, the Israeli attitudes, the West Bank attitudes, the Ashkenazi attitudes. There's no lack of attitudes. It was just a great moment when we were all doing something from a *totally* different culture together that was designed to essentially bring people into union with the life force. So that was a great moment.

JR: Did the soldiers participate?

MP: Oh, yeah, the soldiers participated.

JR: That's great.

MP: Yeah. I think I said something like, "[inaudible]," something like that. But anyway, they put down their weapons, and they did their stretching. It was really great. This is probably the greatest moment.

JR: Yeah. Now that so many Israelis go to India, they might even be more into it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]