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JP: I am the second daughter of five immigrants from the Netherlands. My parents grew gladiolas--being from the Netherlands, kind of an obvious thing to do. The five of us got to work ... when we were teenagers we didn't think of it as necessarily a fabulous thing, but we got to work out in the fields, so that was really neat, cutting flowers and working together as a family and earning money, which was quite unusual. Where I come from, Leamington in southern Ontario, tomato capital of Canada, it's an immigrant community; so a lot of kids worked on the family farms. My parents were a little unusual in that they paid us. Most of the immigrant kids when they worked on the farm, their parents would buy them things or buy them a car or pay for their education. My parents chose to pay us 50 cents an hour, eventually up to \$3 an hour, so we all saved money to put ourselves through school. We had that kind of background and starting to work when we were 13 or 14 years old in the family business. It was hard work but it was also a lot of fun. We got to be outside a lot, so that's good. After high school I moved to Toronto to go to the university, with no particular goal in mind, not really sure what I wanted to do. I was sort of aware, as you can imagine, growing up with all sisters. My mother's a very strong person and my father was a patriarchal guy, but he didn't stand a chance with six women. They also brought us up to assume that we would all go to university or at least college. So we had that way of thinking. I realized later I did have some very feminist ideas growing up, and recognized to a certain degree that things were not fair. Not with any deep analysis or anything, never thought of myself as a potential in-the-street activist. I was very timid, and where I grew up, that kind of thing didn't happen. It was a town of 10,000. I never thought of that as being me, but I thought it was a good idea, kind of interesting and neat. I finished high school in '76 and started university in '78, right when a lot of things were happening, so I certainly heard about it. And as often happens, personal experience. I got pregnant when I was in my early__, with my steady partner who is still my partner. We had talked about the possibility this could happen. We had all the conversations around marriage, a patriarchal institution; we were going to get married and all that sort of thing. We had talked about the possibility of pregnancy, recognizing

that that can happen. So we'd already talked through what would happen. I was absolutely sure and he was equally sure that we did not want to have a child. So in that sense I was fortunate because it was a steady partner and we had already been realistic about recognizing that in spite of all our precautions something could happen. The decision to have an abortion was fairly easy. Getting one was a little bit more difficult. This was '83 or '84, shortly before the Morgentaler Clinic opened. It was still complicated and hard to figure out how to actually access the services. Ironically, in my Masters of Health Science program, I had done a paper on teenage pregnancies. It just so happened as part of that I had interviewed someone at a birth control centre. So I'd found out from them the procedure, which hospitals did it, and which days. They'd walked me through the procedure. My own physician was sympathetic but not helpful. She basically said, well you have to figure that out yourself. I didn't press it because I happened to know how. So I went through that process and realized in that process how there was a fair amount of just luck that I was able to go through that. It was through the hospital system so it didn't cost any money, but it was this long drawn-out procedure. I was very lucky I'd figured it out early on and knew the process. It still took several weeks because you had to call on a certain day. There was only one day and you had to get on the phone and call and call until you got through. Then they would book you for an appointment the following week. You'd go in the following week and talk to the doctor. You had to talk to the birth control counsel, have various tests. Then it was the following week after that, if you were lucky, you'd actually get the procedure. So I realized there was a lot of luck in there. That's when I joined the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics. That experience was a major turning point. That's when I started to realize even if I'm timid and shy and don't think of myself as somebody who can do that, there's got to be something I can do. I joined that group and it was amazing experience. The people involved there were Judy Rebick and Caroline Egan and Linda Gardner. They were fabulous. This was just after the clinic had actually opened was when I joined, and they'd been active long before then. It was my very first experience in a feminist collective. The whole thing helped me realize I'd been a feminist for a long time. My oldest sister was and my mother in her own way was and my father in his own way was. It was interesting pulling the pieces together. I'd taken Women's Studies courses at university as well; so I had actually started to

realize it before then. But that experience in that group was really formative. There were a couple of men in that group and they didn't shy away from speaking out. You realized how important it was for the groups to be predominantly women, but they were very supportive, good men. There were two or three; so it was mostly women, a lot of very strong women, a range of women. There were a couple of things about that group in their meetings. There was the consensus-building and the very collective way of working, which was a little bit of a challenge because it was a fairly large group. The other thing was the mentoring process that went on. One of the things they did, the coordinating committee, there was a coordinating committee. That's one of the advantages of being that kind of political group. You don't stand a chance of any public money; so you don't have to do the president, vice-president stuff. You get to structure yourself the way you want to. So there was a coordinating committee, and one of the things they recognized, Judy Rebick and Caroline Egan and Linda Gardner and a couple of others, is that part of what happened was the experienced, stronger, knowledgeable people kept being the ones that were the spokespeople and the coordinating group and a lot of the younger ones were a bit intimidated and shy. They established a mentoring program and they targeted a couple of us younger women who were in our twenties. We teamed up with someone. So they got us to go out and speak at public rallies. That was a big part of it at that point. It was very much in the street, demonstrations and rallies and working with other groups. My very first experience of being clearly a political activist, I participated in the marches and helping out with the clinic, I have a speech on the steps of the legislature in Winnipeg at a huge rally when it was -25. I'd never experienced that before. They'd set it up so well because I was teamed with Patricia and we worked on the speech together. I learned how to write the speech and she worked on it with me. So I had total confidence in what I was going to say, and all that encouragement. I'd never spoken in class; a class of 20 I could barely make myself speak. It was that mentoring, knowing there was an organization, plus a person right behind me. It was obviously a very favourable crowd because it was a lot of people from the labour movement. I was the last person to speak and it was so cold the only way I could make my mouth work was to yell. I started out by saying, I bring you warm, warm, greetings from Toronto. People sort of laughed and I thought, this isn't so bad, this isn't so scary. For me personally, and for one of my close friends in the group

who had a similar experience in terms of the mentoring, it was just such a positive experience to have that kind of support and encouragement to be able to grow and develop. That was quite incredible. The other thing, I'd never had any direct experience with the labour movement before. That was something. Cliff Pilkey, that was his name, he was a labour leader in Toronto. He was a big supporter. That whole concept of working in coalition and working together and groups supporting each other was really quite exciting. I found that part quite exciting. Another important part in there was the International Women's Day marches. I attended those. I would've helped out, but I was in Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, OCAC. Being involved in OCAC and speaking out there was enough for me in terms of my own level of confidence. In retrospect I wish I'd participated more. I didn't think I had organizational skills and stuff like that. I had that incredible experience for quite a number of years, big in the street kind of marches. OCAC, International Women's Day, and other labour rallies and whatever else was going on. That exciting stuff in the '80s of being in the street and actually seeing things happen and change, and being aware of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and all those kinds of groups, was very exciting. Then my partner got his first job in Houston, Texas, which was a bit of a shock. I just volunteered, because I couldn't really work too much, and I was just there for one year. One of the places I volunteered was the Pacifica Foundation Radio Station. There's a set of five of them and they're very political radio stations. They have The Atheist Hour, they interviewed Noam Chomsky fairly frequently, there were shows from people from Latin America talking about what was going on. The war in El Salvador was happening then, the United States in El Salvador, and that stuff. Being in the U.S. in '86, '87 when that stuff was going on, stuff I'd been a bit aware of in Canada, what was going on in Latin America, and being in Houston, Texas, and actually reading stuff and hearing people in the mainstream media saying these ridiculous things, and having a friend who was from El Salvador who had fled, and getting his take on the political situation. Having that kind of personal contact really helps a lot. A lot of the people at that radio station were very politically aware and politically motivated. They also had folk music, and one of the oldest shows was Musical Trot with Lisa Lott; so they had a range of things. But it was being exposed to that range from her to the Cajun music to the peace pipes and visions to the black activists, which I

hadn't grown up with in southern Ontario. Being exposed to all of that was really important. Then I moved to Calgary. From Toronto to Houston to Calgary. I was so happy to be back in Canada. I started volunteering right away. I did end up working a bit for the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee, one of those little summer jobs. The Calgary Status of Women Action Committee and the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, that's the national group, and I was on the board. Did we call it the board? We must have, because we had federal money; so we must've had a board. We had those positions but that's not how we operated. We didn't operate with votes; it was still the consensus model. I also volunteered with Salvaid, a small organization raising money to help support people who were trying to return home after the war in El Salvador. That was less politically oriented in an overt way, but certainly politically oriented because you're trying to help people get repatriated. My experiences with ASWAC, the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, were again really interesting. That was now '88, '89, '90 because I was into Calgary just one year and I was involved with the group when I was in Calgary. Then I was in the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee too. So that was the Calgary group. So we met regularly and organized various things and had projects, worked in some coalition with the law organization, women in the law, I forget what it was called. It was a Calgary group, they may well have worked with LEAF. There's a national organization. Maybe they were an arm of that. Meryl Cooper was the name of the woman who worked there. Then International Women's Day. I got really involved in organizing International Women's Day. So that was in Calgary. Then, with the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, I continued to be involved when I moved to Lethbridge. I was in Calgary just one year, and continued to be on the board and then got involved with what's now Womanspace, but then it was Alberta Status of Women Action Committee Lethbridge. Although they were three separate organizations we were clearly connected. One of the biggest projects that comes to mind is the Women in Poverty project. Anne McGrath was very involved with that and another woman, Evelyn Violini, who was in Lethbridge and last I heard was in Calgary. In fact I think that's when she started to get involved. She came out to that. What that project did, I was involved around the periphery as a board member helping out and attending a couple of sessions, but I'm pretty sure it was Anne McGrath who actually did the organizing for it.

So they had hearings. They were basically hearings in lots of these little communities. That was really important, going to these little communities. Going to small communities that were even smaller than the community I had come from, and seeing women come out of woodwork. Hundreds of women attend these sessions to talk about issues around poverty in their lives. Not surprisingly, the issue of violence came up a lot, issues around housing and daycare and those kinds of things. I just realized you asked me one question and I haven't shut up. That was eye-opening because it was all these things you're aware of and hear about in the news and you might hear a little bit of a story or get a hint here and there. But actually having women come forward and speak publicly, even if they were anonymous on some level, about what was going on in their lives, was really important for me in terms of understanding the range and breadth of the issues that women experience. It also made me realize how privileged I've been. Although I grew up in a small community absolutely convinced we were poor, because my parents were immigrants and because we grew up through the Depression and the Second World War. You never threw anything away unless it was totally and utterly broken. You cut the mold off food, that kind of thing. I always thought we were poor until you have more life experience and realize that we weren't poor at all. We didn't have a clue what real poverty was. That was really important in terms of really understanding, and also really important in terms of seeing women's incredible strength and resilience. That was the thing that really struck me and made me realize what an easy life I'd had. How women would recount the things they recount and then managed to get up the next day and go on and manage to keep moving on and find ways to manage their situations as best they could. It made me realize how important it is to be really skeptical about a lot of the criticism you hear of any group of people. Unless you really understand what it's like for them, that behaviour that from my very comfortable, safe, easy life looks completely irrational, you realize it's totally rational given the circumstances and given the resources people have. So that was really important in terms of learning that kind of thing. That's the biggest project I remember us working on, and it was quite a big project. When we were here in Lethbridge a lot of what we were doing then, 'cause I moved here in '89, so '89 into the early '90s: it was event based. We would organize the Take Back the Night march and we would organize the International Women's Day. We would use those as focal points for

bringing women together and doing things like writing letters to the editor. Trying to stage little protests here and there. It was hard here. When you don't have the mass to begin with, it was difficult. We got good numbers out for the Take Back the Night march and I think decent numbers out for the International Women's Day events. This frequently happens. It was a small group of women who kept doing this over and over again, trying to figure out, how do we get more women involved, are we doing something wrong? We had really limited resources both in terms of your skill set and anything financial in terms of actually making connections and reaching people. There wasn't the labour presence in terms of movement. In my experiences from Toronto, which had really been sort of fringe, but seeing and observing stuff, not really knowing exactly how it was. Cliff Pilkey came to be speaking, so no real clear sense of the behind-the-scenes work. I wasn't really sure how you do that kind of thing. I knew how to do public speeches. I'd been trained in that. That's kind of straightforward. But how you find those people to network, and network with them in constructive ways--there has to be some kind of critical mass of people. I don't remember there being a lot of frustration in some of those years. I remember one meeting where a couple of women came. One woman, I shouldn't say accused because I don't think she meant it as an accusation, I think she meant it as an observation, that we were elitist. I remember getting quite upset and thinking, but we don't want anybody to think of us as somehow separate from, we're just regular people and we really want other people to be involved. We're totally burnt out; we're three or four of us trying to do all kinds of work. Not surprisingly, she never came back to another meeting, because I was quite upset. But part of it too made me realize that even though those of us doing the work didn't really feel like we knew what we were doing all the time, frequently felt really inadequate, really felt like we were just barely doing stuff, to other women, like the woman I used to be when I was super timid, we looked totally on the ball like we were really smart and totally had it together and were practically professional activists, and they couldn't possibly contribute anything. I don't think we ever came up with some brilliant strategy of how to work through that, but it was another eye-opening thing in realizing how perceptions can be so different from what the reality feels like. I don't remember the year, but there were a couple of us who were involved with the Status of Women Action Committee who wanted to form a pro-choice

organization. This was in the early '90s. So this is after the law had been changed. But in Lethbridge it's always been extremely difficult to get an abortion. There were a couple of doctors back then who, in certain circumstances or with their own patients or if it was like a 14 year old girl, they were willing. We thought, we need to do a little activism, a little education around this. So four of us formed Pro Choice ?. I thought, I'm going to try to use that idea of reaching out and calling specific people. Not just calling a meeting and see who shows up, but trying to invite people. That was again very eye-opening because I'd call a couple of people and they'd say, oh no I couldn't participate in a group like that because if my boss found out or if my family found out. I'd say, this is not a big formal group, we're going to meet in my basement. We're probably not even going to keep notes. I was very bad at keeping notes and records. We're just going to talk about different ideas and strategies and things. There was absolutely no way they would do that. So I realized once again how privileged I was to actually be an outsider, that it didn't matter what anybody thought. It was also good not to have a conventional job. I worked for the AIDS organization. That's an important piece in there too. That's basically activism as well, even though I technically got paid, no benefits--you don't get paid much. In March of 1990 I started working with the Lethbridge AIDS Connection, it was called then. It's now Lethbridge HIV Connection. Having that kind of job, being involved in abortion wasn't a big deal. It's not going to be an issue. So the four of us formed this group. We had a phone line for quite a while. I think I got one obscene call once. Got a few calls from people wondering how to gain access to abortion. We got some donations carefully. We did a garage sale, very typical way to raise some money. We probably went through a couple hundred dollars all together in the year or so. We tried to hold a rally once. It was in response to something particular. I can't remember what now. Nobody showed up. One of our organizers was not able to make it. We knew that in advance. So three of us showed up, and the media. It was a challenge to put some kind of a positive spin on that. So we talked about women being frustrated that the government doesn't listen to them, so they're protesting by not coming to the protest. We were trying to think of something to say. The other two women I admire greatly, because I realize I was very lucky because I had the sort of job where it wasn't a problem. My family wasn't here anyway and my family, not that my mother was pro-choice, but they wouldn't have said anything to me. I

wouldn't have worried about that. But the other two women did live here. One was born and raised here and the other one I'm not sure how long she'd lived here. So I was very impressed that they were also activists. One of them, Rita Colepack, had worked in the resource center as well, in what was the Status of Women Action Committee here. So we had this organization for a year or something like that. Got some phone calls, helped people mostly with information on how to get up to Calgary, because that was the only place. And one woman we helped get up to Edmonton once for an abortion. Then we kind of gave up. You can probably count on one hand the number of abortions that have been done in Lethbridge in the last decade. That would be my guess but I don't know anymore. The other thing I did was working at the AIDS Connection, which was also very much activist type work. That's how I viewed it, because at that point, in the early '90s, I was there from '90 to '98. I was away for one year when my partner had sabbatical. Especially from '90 to '95, the major group of people who were getting infected were men that were having sex with men. So a lot of what we worried about was homophobia. For a lot of people who had HIV, they had this double and triple stigma because it was hard to come forward, because coming forward meant you're acknowledging that you had this very serious disease, and that in all likelihood you were gay. In a town like this it was extremely difficult. Even just working toward trying to create a safe environment, a place where people felt they could contact us or come and hang out and get support and services, that was a big focus of what we did, while still trying to acknowledge that obviously it wasn't only men who had sex with men who were getting HIV. But in this area at that time, that was the largest group at that time. That was a real challenge. We're talking about an organization of two people, sometimes three, and not even full-time for the first few years. So trying to work to create a positive environment within the organization, which everybody who worked for the organization was very positive, homophobia was not an issue within the organization. But then also recognizing that if people came through who were not gay, you had to also be equally welcoming to them, and there were a few women so you'd need to be open and welcoming to them. Of course the other group we were anticipating working with was Aboriginal people, because of issues around poverty and racism and drug issues. For me, I could not imagine that you could in any way think, especially at that time, about HIV and AIDS except in a political

context. There's just no way to think of it except as a political issue, which not everybody always agreed with. A lot of times people wanted to see it as a help issue and you just needed to have compassion for people who are sick. I certainly didn't see it that way. It's tricky because the funding at the time was actually quite forward-looking. Alberta was really early in providing funding for AIDS organizations, and of course we had Health Canada Funding. In those early times they were quite open to addressing issues around homophobia. There was an acknowledgement that that was an issue, and that made it difficult for people who had HIV. It also made it difficult to get the message out around prevention. There was some recognition, I'm sure the people who worked in the funding area of the provincial government had to straddle some lines around what money was used for doing safer sex parties and stuff like that with provincial and federal funding. You're handing out condoms left, right, and centre and trying to do safer sex workshops that are encouraging and factual and stress how important it is, while at the same time, not having any kind of punitive approach. Being very open and accepting and fun. You're trying to do a lot of things within that context. I was also involved, attended meetings of the national organization. In that organization, not surprisingly, the Canadian AIDS Society, there's a real clear recognition of the political nature of HIV and AIDS. That's another area where, not always successfully, but there was real recognition of the need to figure out ways to work across differences. Often not successful at all, but a recognition that there had to be ways of finding common ground, which is extremely crucial within feminism, is recognizing that you can't think of a simple category of woman as if all women are the same. But by the same token you have to look for commonalities to work together. It's back to the coalition-building between the labour movement and the feminist movement in the '70s and '80s when I was involved with OCAC. That's not a new issue. It's been there all along, recognized better and worked on sometimes better than other times. I saw that to a certain degree in the AIDS movement as well. There was a certain amount of, from some of the gay men activists, that they were special and that they were more hard done by and more discriminated against than lots of other groups, which in some respects was true and in other respects wasn't true at all. An awful lot of them were white, middle-class males. Not all of them, but a lot of them were white, middle-class males. That group also struggled with recognizing that the group with HIV

had this thing in common but also had a multitude of differences, and trying to figure out a way to work collectively across all of those differences was something that was really hard to struggle with. Like the women's movement, you had this one group at that time, one group that was dominant in terms of numbers and skills and resources, the white, middle-class gay men, but you had lots of other groups of people who were learning to make demands and say, look you have to remember that we're here too. There's that real effort to find those ways to work across those differences. That's something I was impressed with the Canadian AIDS Society. We were trying to find a way to not slide into tokenism but recognize that you need representation from lots of different places. Committees had to make sure they had people from small communities as well as the big centres. You had to make sure the big centres didn't dominate. You'd have men and women; you'd have to have a few hats on there, a few straight people as well as the gays and lesbians. You had to make sure you had some black people and some Aboriginal representation. It got to be difficult sometimes but recognition across the board that it was important to try to figure out. One of the most profound things a woman said to me one time. I was on the education committee as the rural representation, the National Education Committee. I remember one woman, Camile, a black woman from Toronto. She said, it's really good that we strive to make sure there's representation from different groups and that our groups look mixed. She said, but at the same time we have responsibility for paying attention to the other issue. You can't think, okay if the black person's not at that meeting no issues that might be pertinent to black youth or black women don't get raised. It's not like because we have the representation that means nobody else has any responsibility for thinking about these issues. That concept of responsibility for each other. Not only the group you're there to represent, but that you also have a responsibility to pay attention to and be thinking about the issues for all the groups. That connects up with, when I left the AIDS Connection I'd already started teaching at the university. So it overlapped a bit. The first course I taught was on women in HIV in the Women's Studies Department. Not surprisingly, Women's Studies is basically political. Then I also taught one course in contemporary health issues in the Kinesiology Department, which was a really interesting experience. I have a Masters degree in Health Science; so that part definitely made sense. When I got that course it

was a how to stay health course, and I shifted it over to talking about social determinants of health and talking about effects of poverty and racism and about the pharmaceutical industry. So I made it a political course, though I would never talk about it that way. In Women's Studies, women in HIV, I taught the introductory course in Women's Studies quite a number of times, and I taught a course on women and sexuality and women and health. Those are all obviously political. One of the best courses I taught was on activism and advocacy last spring, spring of 2007. That was a fabulous fun course to teach. I got to use Judy Rebick's book, *Ten Thousand Roses*. I felt like I'd come full circle because I'd come back to Judy Rebick. That part was really neat. It's been interesting seeing the kinds of changes over the years. Coming from Toronto where you're out on the street being a feminist activist and talking about living personally and politically as a feminist, and then coming here where we barely use the word and people didn't want to join, however anonymously, the pro-choice organization. Being at the AIDS Connection and having to be careful for people. Yet still we did form a pro-choice group and there were three people, me, the outsider who'd only lived here a short time, and three women who were from here. Three women who were courageous enough to come forward and let it be known. The same thing at the AIDS Connection, it was hard sometimes getting board members, and people wanted to be quiet about it. But there were people who would speak. There was one guy named LeRoy who would speak publicly about having HIV and about being a gay man with HIV in this community. It wasn't easy at first but he gradually came to do it. Then there was another student who was working with us, Colin, who talked about being gay. He wasn't HIV-positive but was talking about being gay. So there were a few here and there. Part of what happened was nothing happened. There were no repercussions. They didn't get obscene phone calls or get stoned. Awful things did not happen to them. That was really important. I have a sense though that on one hand there was an acceptance. For example, the AIDS organization is still here, it's a big organization; it's much less politically oriented, much more service-oriented. It has also done a lot of good work with Aboriginal communities, which I had actually started when I was hired in the early '90s. They've gone on to do some other coalition-building, some work with the churches, which was not my bag at all but somebody else, Phil Wok, was very good at that kind of thing. Working more with women, because there have been

more women who've come forward with HIV. So, on the one hand, there is this acceptance. It almost feels a little bit more like a mainstream type organization, which although it is very good, it's definitely part of groups and coalitions, so that part's fabulous, has a certain kind of legitimacy. But I worry that in a way then there's almost an assumption that we're in a post-homophobia state. Nobody talks that way but I almost feel like that's a little bit of what it is, like we don't have to talk about that anymore kind of thing. I'm not convinced that's the case at all. In the same way the Women's Studies Department has really grown. They now have three full-time professors plus somebody who's working as coordinator and also teaches a course too. A nice breadth of courses. The activism and advocacy course, it's still clearly very much political. But lots of young women still don't want to call themselves feminists. In the activism and advocacy course you get a different group of women who are much more likely, but even then they're likely to be a bit on the quiet side about it. You still get that sort of, well we don't really have to talk about it now because it's not really a major issue. At a lot of universities, half the student body are women now. There are more and more professors being hired who are women now. That sort of post-feminist way of thinking. So that part I find a little disappointing, maybe not surprising. It maybe points to the fact that a lot of the issues seemed to be subtler. Violence against women isn't subtle; poverty isn't. But I don't know if there's a way in which we kind of fool ourselves into thinking things are pretty much okay now and there's a few loose ends that we still need to tidy up. Clearly that's not the way it is, especially, and this is where a lot of stuff came together for me when I was teaching the Women's Studies courses. Often you have to push students, not surprisingly, to really think about, my life might be good but when I step back and look at the situation of women the world over or gay people the world over or black people the world over, you realize that there's still massive amounts of work to be done, still a lot of change. As we saw from a recent report, the gender gap in Canada has increased in the last number of years. That part's kind of disappointing. I have to confess that my own activism has waned a little, not for any deep complicated reasons. I've been on the board of the YWCA off and on. The chapter here does call itself a feminist organization. The way they work, and because of funding they have the structure of a president, etc., and voted and when I was on it, up until 2002, there was more of a consensus type approach rather

than a Roberts Rules of Order kind of thing. The YWCA works very much in that kind of vein. They're political without being too overt about it. It's connected to the funding. Even the Calgary Birth Control Association, the director there, Pam, said they have to be careful. Yet when you go to their web page, up until about a year ago when I last looked, within the first one or two sentences of describing themselves, they talk about being a feminist organization with feminist principles and feminist ways of working. There's still clearly feminist ways of thinking and working. A lot of it is permeated and doesn't get called that, which I find rather ironic. You'll see people espousing feminist values, and if you talk about feminism they'll separate themselves from it. They'll say, no, I'm not feminist, but everything you say and the way you act is. In a very nice way a lot of the ideas and ways of thinking have permeated our culture and have come to be seen as just common sense, but we can't see them as feminist anymore. I think we do lose something there, because we in some ways lose some of the ability to continue to really clearly articulate the kinds of issues that still need to be challenged and worked on. One of the reasons I stopped on the board of the YW and the board of the AIDS Connection ... is I was a sessional instructor for six years and you don't make any money at all, and at a certain point I was teaching the same courses over and over again. So I thought, well I'm going to do this, I may as well get a PhD. So I'm actually working on a PhD in Social Justice at the University of Windsor in their Sociology Department. But it's too isolating, I haven't been enjoying it. So I have this job at the university. I've also been a bit off and on involved with Amnesty International. The job I'm doing now is I work at the University of Lethbridge in Arts and Science Faculty and Student Advising. It's advising students on how to get through their degree. It's making sure they fulfill all the degree requirements, helping them problem solve, figuring out ways to work around things and work with things. It's a very different job from what I've had. There's nothing remotely political about it. I try a little bit here and there to mention Women's Studies. Have you ever considered women's studies? It's an interesting course. It's very different in that regard. It's weird to have a job with benefits and regular hours and a pay sheet and pension. I like it for now; it's kind of nice. With trying to do that and the thesis, I'm not really much politically involved, except attending things and helping out and supporting other organizations, being on committees. But not in terms of frontline activism right

now. But if I give up or finish the PhD, whichever comes first, I'll get back involved for sure.

Q: You said you were involved in electoral politics as a candidate.

JP: Oh that's right. In 1993 I ran for the NDP in the provincial elections. That was a time in Alberta when there'd been all those budget cuts because of the alleged downturn in the Alberta economy as well as everywhere else. People were really mad at the Conservatives. They were going to teach them. When we moved to Alberta, which we had thought of as very conservative and redneck, there were 17 MLAs who were from NDP. I thought, oh maybe it's not so bad here. Now we realize 16 of them were from Edmonton. [Ed. note: in both the 1986 and 1989 elections, 16 MLAs were elected, 12 from Edmonton, 2 from Calgary and 2 from other areas of the province] People were just furious with the Conservatives. I ran in provincial politics and it was slightly disappointing. My idea was to just go out and be my political self. Some people told me right away, no you have to act as though you seriously plan to win, which I thought was a bit silly in southern Alberta, or nobody will support you or donate. I realized I couldn't really do this by myself because I didn't actually know what I was doing. But I tried as much as I could to push things a bit. Something like 900 people voted for me. I certainly didn't know that many people. It was the election when everybody was mad and they were going to show the Conservatives. The Conservatives were elected by a margin of 5,000 votes instead of 10,000; that part was disappointing. I used that as an example when I applied to the PhD program in Social Justice. One of the things you had to do was talk about your activism. I talked about OCAC and stuff like that, but I also talked about running for political office, which we might not think of as socialist political activism type of activity, except in southern Alberta it definitely is. If you're with the NDP you're pretty darn close to socialist. Now I want to go back to the beginning and realize how fortunate I was to grow up in the family I grew up in, which you can't do anything about. That was just pure dumb luck that I chose to be born into that family. I recognize how special my parents were. When you're growing up you just think, they're just your parents, those annoying people. Realizing afterwards my father was very intellectual and

really thought about things. He was sexist, he was born in 1918, he certainly had the set ideas. My sister made friends with a black guy from Detroit and my parents thought it was great. We never heard anything negative from them. But also their relationship. You don't realize it at the time but my father was a very gentle and respectful man. I remember in my first Women's Studies course in our tutorial session, they're talking about fathers and husbands and leaving all their clothes lying on the floor for the wives to pick up. I was just flabbergasted. I couldn't imagine that happening. It just never crossed my mind that other households were completely different from my own household. It was beyond my comprehension that a man, on a personal level, nasty things happened, but that a husband or father would treat the women in their lives that badly. I realized I didn't really have that kind of personal experience, which in my case set me up for there was no way I was going to accept anything other than the same kind of respect. I never had appreciated until much later how amazing my mother is. I've never told her, but however hard my father worked she worked a lot harder, because she worked in the fields and she baked and cooked and sewed and canned. She was a fairly strong independent woman. By the time I became conscious of this, I'm sure when they were young she followed him to Canada even if she didn't want to. I remember once when she was 60 or something she was going out to play cards. She's a very social person who plays cards. My dad said, it was like a Wednesday and she'd already played cards on Tuesday, and my dad said, what, you're going out to play cards again? My mother just said, I'm 62 years old, if I want to play cards every day I damn will play cards every day. I thought, oh ya, that's a really good thing to keep in mind, to him. He didn't mind but it was just sort of like, what, you're doing that again? So recognizing, and I don't say that that's everything, but having that kind of privileged upbringing. I was talking to one of my sisters about that, about various weird things around eating and control, some weird things, and my sister saying something about dysfunctional. I said, whatever weird things we had in our family, there were two extremely important things. We had stability and we always knew we were loved. My parents never said it to us, but we always knew we were loved. That is such an amazing privilege that you don't recognize at the time. That was part of what, in the limited kind of way I've tried to participate in things, I've felt a certain kind of obligation, because I've been so lucky. I had this privilege. Not financial privilege by any means; we

all worked very hard. But I had that kind of privilege that I feel like I owe it. That sounds kind of patronizing, matronizing, but I can do it; so I should.

[END]