

Elizabeth Berry, Track 2

Tape 1, Side B

JB: We're back on.

EB: Okay. They had a whole list of employment with a BA in Women Studies, employment with an MA, things that we'd picked up, other ideas of how women's jobs require knowledge of Women Studies topics, and we listed this as part of our—because we knew one of the questions asked would be, Well, what use is this? First of all, is it legitimate, and why do we need it, and what would anybody do with it anyway? And so, we tried to cover all those questions. And we went to the EPC with this really outstanding report, and it was, as I said, I still think it was one of the best ones I've ever seen, outline of what the program committee would do, outline of the courses, and so forth, and Margaret was sitting at the table, and we were around the edge, and I can remember that two people—and I didn't know any of these people—but they were two Associate Deans, and I think one was Len Glass, and I think one was John Lindsay, or there was somebody from Business. Anyway, there were people that we couldn't believe, after discussing this program at EPC and answering all these arguments, they came up in such staunch support of it.

JB: Really.

EB: And it was like, where did they come from? We didn't even know they were listening to it. And they spoke vehemently for this program.

JB: Do you think it made the difference in getting the program through?

EB: I think it helped a lot. Yeah, I do.

JB: And what were they convinced on the basis of? The report?

EB: It must have been.

JB: The arguments that went with it?

EB: Yeah, because they certainly—I mean, they hadn't talked to us, they'd probably read this, and they probably—and Margaret did a wonderful job of presenting it, it was very thorough, it was really hard to argue against this, unless you wanted to show you just thought it was silly and you didn't want this stuff on campus.

JB: Do you recall what the vote was in EPC?

EB: No, I don't, but we could probably look that up. Yeah, be interesting. I don't remember. In fact, I should have gotten those minutes out, we can look those up.

JB: That's easy enough to do.

EB: Yeah.

JB: Let's change our direction just a little bit, if I may. What were the origins of affirmative action, educational equity on our campus, at least insofar in your experienced and you saw them developing?

EB: Well, I'm not—I remember when I came here in '73, it was I think the first year that there were some guidelines on hiring. Because the chair of the department, who was then—let's see, when I went in to the tenure track, I think—yeah, they—I think it had just changed, and there was some discussion about whether or not I would have to go through that whole process of affirmative action, you know, search and all this. And the job that I was taking was really geared to particularly my expertise—I was in charge of the teacher supervision which, at that point, there were some, and teacher education programs. And I did a newsletter for high school teachers and speech, Frederick Mann had some good ideas about what should be done. And I taught some of the basic courses. And I remember there was some question of whether or not I had been hired, and so would just continue, or whether they had to be this national search, and there was no national search. There was not. And then as we proceeded, I think at the beginning of affirmative action, the guidelines were pretty loose, and I don't think people took them as stringent, as seriously. It was one of those things you had to do. It was compliance, not real, what I see now, is real affirmative action, where you're going out and you're trying to do some recruiting and think of creative ways to promote educational equity. At the time, it was a matter of compliance, and how to get along. How to get around some of these issues.

JB: So this has developed considerable momentum since that time.

EB: Ah, yeah.

JB: To what extent—and I'd like to break this into categories, just a bit, if I may—to what extent do you think we've met our equity goals for faculty, in terms of faculty hires?

[00:04:45]

EB: I'm not—we haven't. Practically all the minority faculty are in the two minority departments, those faculty not in the minority departments are very isolated. There's no cadre of minority faculty, I think it's abysmal. Women, it's not quite as bad. I think women—I think we're about twenty-three percent now, something like that. twenty-three or twenty-seven percent. Now, I don't know how that compares nationally with

the number of Ph.D.'s in men and women, how we are. But, nationally, I think that's about average for higher education. And of course, it's a heck of a lot better than UC, which has about 3% tenure track faculty. And then you have the pyramid, too. You know, all the—the lower the rank, the more women there are. That still exists too. The women on this—woman faculty members on this campus are—I think they've been more successful in reaching more—more of them in higher ranks than the minority faculties, and it's terrible.

JB: In terms of the differential and networking, you're saying that women network, at least to some extent, and minorities don't, at least outside their departments?

EB: Oh, no. I didn't say that. I think the mino—no, I said they are isolated in different departments, but they network, I know they network.

JB: Alright. They do collaborate. alright.

EB: Oh, yeah.

JB: So that wouldn't explain the differential.

EB: But there aren't too many of them, and they don't have a critical mass.

JB: Well, if the momentum, at least of spirit, to meet educational equity goals has built, how do you account for the failure? Why have we fallen so far short of what we say, at least, what we intend to do?

EB: Well, it's complicated, I think, there's no one answer. I do think that if a campus gets a reputation of being really committed, not just complying, to educational equity, makes real efforts to get at people, to keep them—we've lost, we've lost educational equity people. For some really unnecessary ways. I know—I can think of one tragic case which was really a shunting out of a person who was treated terribly. He wanted to stay. Was a minority person in a non-minority department. I think, one person has described somebody I know has been here only briefly, and—or not briefly, but has been on this campus long enough to make this comment: This place isn't chilly, it's frigid for women and minorities, now I—

JB: Both.

EB: —particularly for minorities. I think there—until we get a critical mass of people who are Blacks and Chicanos, who—and Asians, too, in terms of faculty, who can exert influence and power, and make this place comfortable for more minorities to come, it's not gonna happen.

JB: What explains the discomfort, now? Why is it frigid?

EB: Well, I think there's resentment. This place has—I think this is—and I think this is gonna go—goes on in other campuses, too. You have a group of older people who have been here a while, who feel pressure to hire people who are not like them, who get special perks that they never got, who really are very traditional in their viewpoint about what makes up academic excellence, and who have a very narrow point of view. I think there's a real lack of civility and kindness among all of us, to each other.

JB: Just generally.

EB: In general.

JB: So that it's a frigid institution.

EB: Yeah.

JB: To what extent do you think the setting of the San Fernando Valley, which is still largely a white enclave affects—

EB: I think that—yeah, that affects it too. And our student body, too. I just looked at the latest figures on minorities in the system, and minority students—CAL State LA and Dominguez are two now that have over 50% minorities. So, we don't, and we're quite down in the middle, even lower than the middle, in terms of the number of minority students in the whole system. So, we don't have—I mean, it takes a while, we gotta keep building, but until you get—if you have Black faculty, they can recruit Black faculty, and you get more Black faculty. And you get Black students. And you can get this group of people saying this is a good place. Come here, you'll be welcome. You'll be treated well. We don't have that.

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JB: Not for the students either, you're saying.

EB: I'm not so sure, I guess the students have some problems, too.

JB: To what extent have we met our equity goals for students are concerned?

EB: We're doing a terrible job. We're bringing them in, but they're not—we're losing them.

JB: You're an associate vice-president. To what extent are we meeting our equity goals, or have we met our equity goals, in administration?

EB: I think we've done pretty well.

JB: So, *there* we're making more progress.

EB: You look at the third floor, you look at what Dr. Suzuki has hired, when I came on as associate vice-president five years ago, the Dean's Council was very different than it is now. We now have, what was it, Blacks? We have no Hispanics, that's true. That's missing. But, it's a lot different.

JB: Has the administration been more welcoming for minority and women hires?

EB: I think they've made—they're real committed, and they're, least, Academic Affairs area's very committed and _____ (??), yeah, it's made real efforts.

JB: Is that an eternal phenomenon? Is it a matter of campus principle and determination, or are there pressures coming systemwide for that that we're responding to? Where does the—where does the basis of the impetus come from, for affirmative action within our institution?

EB: I think it comes from outside. I think it comes from the Chancellor's Office, and I think—I think she's—the Chancellor's Office, and the chancellor is finally really starting to move on this. I don't think she has this much in the past, given us lip service. I think she's pushing much more on this. But, I think the—I think the Vice-President of Academic Affairs is certainly, absolutely, dedicated to this principle. He lives it, he breathes it, he—and he makes a difference.

JB: What is it like for you today, being a female administrator on the campus?

EB: Well, I think it's different, a female feminist administrator. I think that's the difference. I think the female administrators have to be careful, I think all female administrators have to be careful, I think they are subtly judged differently, they are watched differently, my observation is they're—most of them, I know several female administrators who I believe are real feminists, but are not—a lot of people don't know they are. In my case, I'm known as a feminist, I'm—it becomes difficult, because, one point they'll say, Well, Elizabeth, what do you think of this? Or, Elizabeth will be happy about that—I mean, they stress that, or I'll get calls even from the President's Office or somewhere else. This is a women's issue, Elizabeth, take—you know, will be interested in this. And then, on the other hand, I'm only interested in feminist issues.

JB: And you really can't have it both ways.

EB: It's pretty difficult. And I think that, I know fem—I know women administrators, I think they're different kinds of women—I think there's a—they're female administrators who are administrators, and not feminists, and I think they're treated fine if they do the administrative tasks they're supposed to do, and they're not identified as females or males. I think, if they're good, they're probably judged fine. Then there are female

administrators who are feminist who keep it quiet. And maybe in their own way, they have some influence. And they're very sympathetic to feminists, shall we say.

[00:15:04]

JB: Keep it quiet, why?

EB: Because, they're smart. They want to pursue—they wanna get, they want to progress. They want to be—they know if they let that be known, it's like—the example, I think—or, an analogy is, when you're—and this is a problem for young faculty members who want to get tenure. Should they identify themselves as feminist? Should they write in feminist journals? Or, should they take the advice of what many people is say write in your disciplines, and then when you get tenure, you can write down this stuff, but not until then. And I get the sense that there are certain women who have certain kinds of goals and ambitions, and they know that if they become too outspoken feminist, that it won't help them, and that's true. And so, I find for myself, I think I'm judged differently because of my well-known and outspoken feminism, and that people—some people think I'm too much, too pro-women, too pro-feminist, and therefore that colors and distorts my view, and I can't be objective. I don't know. But I—I'm different from the other women in administration to that regard, I think.

JB: Are they more objective than you are?

EB: No, I don't think so.

JB: So, these critics are wrong.

EB: Well, I think—maybe they are more objective, maybe I am. I mean, I will admit that my feminism is so strong and such a part of me that I do make decisions, I'm sure, that are colored by my ideology. I try to be fair, and I try to be rational, and it doesn't color everything, I mean it doesn't color budget, necessarily, or it doesn't color budget decisions, or that kind of thing, but where I get my—where, if I can help, or develop a project that I think would promote women, I'll do it.

JB: And that would be seen by some as ideological as reflecting bias.

EB: Mm-hm.

JB: I asked the question what is it like being a female administrator, are there any other reflections you have growing out of that question?

EB: I think it's gotten—I think it's better than it was a few years ago. I do think that, at the beginning, because there are more of us now, I mean the women's rooms are more crowded in the administration building, it's one of the differences.

JB: There are drawbacks of this arbitra—

EB: I mean, it's really interesting to go to the women's room on the third floor now, and have a lot of women administrators there. And we had the woman faculty president for six years, too. So, I think it's a lot better than it was. I don't think—I feel very strong sense of support and—and concern by the women administrators in general, with a few exceptions. And the men have always had that, I think. Men, you know, the famous joke around here, is they all golfed. And that's where a lot of the administrative decisions or discussion or gossip or whatever took place, on the golf course. And if a woman wasn't a golfer—even if she were a golfer, I guess she wouldn't have been invited, that was, she was out of that. I think, as I said, the Dean's Council's changed, the administrators have changed, so you don't get this same sense that there's this group that always goes off and does everything important on the golf course. I don't get that sense. In general, I think there's a very supportive conduit for women administrators. And part of that is because there's this mix of people now, it's not like it used to be.

JB: When did the golf course motif change?

EB: About four years ago. Four or five years ago. Yeah, about four years ago, I think.

JB: Would you say it's accurate to state that there was an old boys' network that largely controlled policymaking on the campus?

[00:20:02]

EB: That's my perception.

JB: That's not an unfair assertion.

EB: That's what I think.

JB: Now there's a complaint that there's an old girls' network. That there's a feminist bloc, or a bloc of women, which is—

EB: Of course! (laughs)

JB: —a really different way of putting it. (laughs) Is there?

EB: No, but of course there's an assertion!

JB: Oh, so it's an assertion that's not reality.

EB: Well, I think there's a feminist network. And I don't think it's a bloc, but there is a good feminist network. I think it's perceived as being a lot more powerful and influential than it is, because any time women get together, it's more threatening than when a group of men get together. I mean, three women is a conspiracy. So, you know, it's like any outgroup. It's not just women, but any outgroup, if there's more than three or four of them, their influence is exaggerated, and I think that's probably true. I do think that we have a wonderful group of women on this campus who are connected, who can call on each other for help and advice, who will help the young women, who are really interested in promoting women and women's issues, and I think we have an excellent group of people.

JB: Within that group, wouldn't you say that—you mentioned a feminist group—are the members of that group feminists?

EB: I think the women are—I think they're—yeah, I think again. I think on campus, probably again, just like—there's probably three groups. There's a group of very committed feminists, most of them are associated with Women Studies in some way, either to teach Women Studies courses, or are doing research on women. I think there's that group. Then there's the group that probably are very pro-female, and maybe don't teach in Women Studies, maybe aren't bona fide—maybe they don't even know they're feminists, but they know that they support women, and they get very upset when things happen in their department, they're the kind of women that come up and tell me things that they know I'd be interested in knowing and that are—maybe not themselves, maybe they're just kind of—they haven't really formed any kind of ideology or philosophy about feminism, but they're probably a latent feminist. And then, there's a group that is definitely anti. Now, I don't know them, (both laugh) but I know they're there.

JB: These are women.

EB: Yeah. And a lot of them would be, I—I think. I like to think a lot of them are older women, more traditional women, that made it the hard way, I think it depends also on the school. I think in certain schools, where women have been—for example, I think in some of the, like, engineering, perhaps, or in science and math, those women have had to make it to survive, they've had to buy into the system, to the traditional male system. And boy, that's a lot of years to be socialized. And so, I think a lot of them, I think they're women, particularly in some of those areas that are—they're not hostile, but they can't risk the opening up themselves to thinking about feminism and its implications, would be very painful.

JB: Because they're so committed to the old system.

EB: Yeah.

JB: And because they've floated on the old system.

EB: Right. Right, yeah.

JB: Do these women, or any other women, ever undercut yet other women, particularly feminists, on our campus? One of the common complaints about women in position of power, today, as you know, is that they don't support other women on the way up. Do you see that here?

EB: In my experience, the women who have been in influential positions, and in administrative positions, or in faculty governance positions, have been extremely, extremely helpful and supportive of women. Never—fact, there are some women and there's some kind of unwritten law that we don't undercut women.

JB: That's understood.

EB: Even if we're angry with somebody about such-and-such—I've had a couple women come in and say to me, you know, "I'm only telling you this, because I have to get it off my system but so-and-so's doing this. But I'd never say that in public, because I'll never undercut her."

[00:25:12]

JB: These are personal issues. Did philosophical—had philosophical issues, ideological issues, divided women on this campus?

EB: Well, course, the famous anti-*Playboy* issue that came up few years ago was—was one that divided us. But we worked that out, so we presented a united front. And I think we've—we've really skirted around the issue of lesbianism. We've never—we're working very hard on trying to—right now, to—to do more than we've done to bring in the study of women and minorities into the curriculum. We've always said we did it, it's part of our original charge and goals, but as white women teaching the courses, it—it hasn't—we haven't done the kind of job that we should be doing. The minorities who teach the course in women's studies do a much better job of incorporating the minority perspective, and we're really trying to work on that. It's a difficult thing. I have an article I was just reading about white women teaching mino—teaching women's studies. How do you—I mean, do that? How do you integ—not just give recommended readings, but really incorporate so that you get the minority perspective as much as—it's just equal. So, I think the issues with minority women is one that we haven't—that we're struggling with. And I think the issue with lesbians, we haven't even struggled with.

JB: That is, it hasn't been addressed.

EB: Right.

JB: If it were addressed, would it be divisive?

EB: It could be, although I think that, women I know—this is a very frightening place for women who are homosexual, who are—they're not willing—it won't be addressed, because it's too risky. And again, this conservative approach is still pretty prevalent. I mean, we're a pretty conservative program. We haven't had any problems for—about our courses, like Long Beach, for example. But we're conservative, and were also not moving very far. We're not moving to a major—we're kind of status quo.

JB: Is there a substantial covert lesbian feminist side on our campus? You pointed out there was originally an association with the Women's Center. Does that continue? Does that not continue?

EB: Oh, actually, the Women's Center—I'm glad you brought that up. In the last four or five years, I'd say, we've made real good connections with the Women's Center. And I think as the Women Studies Program was established and they got more confident, and what—the other thing we did with Women Studies is we really wanted a group of full-time tenured professors teaching at the beginning so that it didn't become vulnerable to being cut. And that we had some kind of status. And then as the program got established, we got much more—we really did make connections with the Women's Center. And there was some changes in leadership in the Women's Center, and some really wonderful women were—the Chair, I mean the, whatever you call, the coordinator of the Women's Center, the director of the Women's Center, and that's a very good relationship, I think, now.

JB: You think it would be accurate to refer to a kind of, well the term that comes to my mind, is an academic subculture of women on this campus, or do you think there is anything like that? Anything you would designate as a sort of—or a true subculture of women scholars, women students, women administrators, or are women predominantly part of the general sweep of male dominated academe? This is a difficult question to pose, and hard to answer, I would imagine.

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EB: No—yeah, I think that women, as I said, I think there is a network of women that, as a core group, women who are feminist, involved in academic women's academic issues, and women's scholarship on women. But I think the women's group or the group of women that could be, you know, brought together is much bigger than that, but I wouldn't say it's a culture. I don't think so.

JB: I was using a term I think academic subculture, I think of it as a rather significantly different cohort within the general background.

EB: Well, we operate differently.

JB: How do you operate differently?

EB Well, one thing that we do, whenever anyone's in trouble, anyone's had a run-in with somebody or being treated unfairly, we did a couple things.

Usually, somebody sends somebody flowers, or a note. And it—I mean it's amazing, all the flowers in my office, and someone said, what's that—who are those flowers from? I said, just a friend, through the years. They just appear. We often, we will call a meeting of—we would just say we're going to have a party, we don't call it a meeting, we have a party, and we say there's some issues here, going on, maybe sexual harassment. Maybe there's a problem with somebody who's got some tenure problems, maybe somebody's whatever, and I—we could—we can get that group together, and we have a party.