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Interviewee: **Roma Baran**

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Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

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ACT UP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of Roma Baran

November 5, 2003

SARAH SCHULMAN: Let's start, if you could say your name, your age, where we are and what date it is today.

ROMA BARAN: Do you want interview eye focus?

SS: Look at me.

RB: Alright. My name is Roma Baran. I actually don't want to say my whole address, just because of what I do for a living.

SS: Just say what fabulous neighborhood we're in and what great city.

RB: Tell me, again. Name, what?

SS: Name, where we are, today's date and your age.

RB: Take five. My name is Roma Baran. We're in scenic downtown TriBeCa. I'm – gasp – 56 years old, and this is the 5th of November 2003.

SS: Where did you grow up?

RB: I was born in Poland, and I spent the first couple of years in Southern Poland in the mountains, the coal-mining district. And then we spent about three years traveling around Europe, waiting for an American visa and never got it. And so, we moved to Montreal. And I grew up in Montreal from about five to 16 or 17.

SS: So, you were born right after the war?

RB: Yes, born in '47.

SS: And do you speak Polish?

RB: I speak pidgin Polish.

SS: Are you Jewish?

RB: No. I'm not. It's not clear what I am, actually, but I think my parents – a lot of their family was killed during the war. A lot of my father's family died in camps and I think we're sort of pinko, intellectual, atheist type. I have some friends who think, you're Jewish.

SS: So, what was their sense about fighting back, standing up to authority? How did they feel with those issues?

RB: I think they were afraid. Their war experiences were very formative. My father lost almost all his family. He was in the underground. My mother spent some time in a work camp. She was engaged to – Let's unplug the fridge. Just pull the plug right here.

SS: You look so Jewish. I know people have told you that all your life.

RB: It's Central Europe. My father lost a sister at Treblinka and one at Bergen-Belsen, and he kept a little tin box with – he went to some camps after the war and he had a little piece of brick from Auschwitz, and pictures of the razed ruins of a couple of camps. It's interesting – that was the only thing I wanted. The only possession of his I wanted was this tin box, with that stuff in it. And of course, it got lost somewhere in the dark recesses of my parents' closets. And so, I never got the box.

SS: So you have this legacy of exterminated ancestors, refugee camp, being at the mercy of governments and resettling in Montreal.

00:05:00 RB: And resettling in Montreal. And my parents were fearful of the type of sudden, life-altering, devastating event that can take place in a moment, when you're not prepared for it. So they were fearful. For instance, my father left Poland under – he was under arrest. He was black-marketing. His family had a civil engineering company, and

he continued to run it privately after it was nationalized. And because he was on an arrest list, I was never allowed to go behind the Iron Curtain, because there had been some well publicized story in Canada about somebody who went to wherever – East Berlin – and got caught smoking marijuana or something. And then that person was held in trade for a parent or a family member back in the US or Canada, who was still on some kind of list. It was so unlikely, but that was a fear. They didn't want me to go there. And then there were some really irrational things. We went to see the Red Army Chorus perform in Montreal and I was walking around the house whistling the Russian National Anthem, which is very pretty – a very beautiful melody – and my father said, "Don't do that absentmindedly, because someone could hear you doing that, if you're just singing it absentmindedly!" So, there's definitely that fear.

SS: Again, that fear.

RB: Still, again.

SS: And was there that kind of anti-communist sentiment in Canada at the same time?

RB: Absolutely. But I don't think it was as –none of that kind of sentiment is as vicious in Canada, whether it's racism or whatever it is. It's all kind of mellowed out by the long winters in Canada. So I didn't experience that stuff politically around me as intensely as it happens down here.

SS: Did you get this double message of, "Be afraid, don't fight back" – and at the same time, this is a generally socialist perspective on how human beings should relate to each other.

RB: Yes, definitely a double message. The message was always, “Fit in, don’t make waves, but secretly believe this.” For instance, one of the things that I – I’m sure it will come up again, when we start talking about more specifically about ACT UP – but one of the things I’m very grateful to my parents for – even though they were a big pain in the ass, for the most part – is that they were pretty viciously not just atheist, but anti-religious, and they communicated that really clearly. I came home from public school – the first time I sort of understood that I was singing some little song about things I didn’t know anything about, like Christ doing this – “Onward Christian Soldiers” – and I said, what the fuck is that about? And my father sat me down – in the same way you might sit a kid down who just came home with a story about how are babies born – and he said, “People are weak and frightened, and particularly they’re afraid of dying and there being nothing after they’re dead, and so they believe this stuff. And when they’re poor here, they think they’re going to be rich after they die. And they need to believe that because they’re weak.” And I said well, “What does happen when you die?” And he said, “You rot.” And I said, “Well what should I do?” I later learned that was Bertrand Russell, and not my father who said that. I said, “What should I do?” He said, “What do you mean? You should sing the songs and keep your mouth shut.” So it was definitely get along, play along and work the system. My father was a big system-worker. He bribed everybody. His idea of life was smooth things out by paying for everybody, and have great disdain for all of them and all of the systems and all of the structures and the government and just kind of pay the gas station, pay the doctor’s secretary, pay the *maitre d’*.

SS: So, you responded on three different levels – your sexuality, your pursuit of a profession and your participation in social change. So which came first?

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RB: Well, I think the rejection of authority probably proceeds everything. There's nothing like being uprooted and transplanted to give anybody a sense of how random and arbitrary sets of rules are. If you grow up in a little suburb and you're Archie and Veronica and that's how life is – and there's a certain expectation for how it's going to be, then it's harder to know in a visceral sense that all of those expectations and rules and norms are arbitrary. So, just from the different transplants, and from being an outsider, I understood that before I could really understand what I was understanding. So I think that sense of being an outsider and understanding that the rules were there for somebody else's benefit. And that to the extent that they benefited me, I could live with them. And to the extent they didn't, I needed to figure out a way to get around them. So I think that came first. And very early I think, my parents became part of that authority package. They were – especially my father – very authoritarian, real kind of Polish, children should be seen and not heard. They were miserable and psychotically depressed and, very quickly, I wanted to have nothing to do with them and would try to piss them off. And I was an only child, so I had nobody to go out into the yard with, who would say, "Never mind them, they're just nuts." So they quickly – even though I learned those things from them, in a way – became part of the evil-doers. The sexuality thing came pretty early. By the time I was 15, I had slept with both a man and a woman, and I was probably 13 when I first was really interested in hanging around on little girls' beds,

doing homework together. And I always had a crush on somebody, all the way through public school.

SS: When was the first time that you found any kind of gay community or lesbian community?

RB: In Montreal really, not. I left Montreal when I was about 17, and went to college – in a small, residential college, 100 miles outside of Montreal, but still in Canada – and there was nothing there at all. First of all, Canada is a good 10 years behind the U.S. But also, we're talking about 1960 or so. Politically what was going on during that period was the Vietnam War during the sixties, and we were kind of involved in the early stages of helping people come to Canada – especially musicians, because I was involved in a music scene. So, we did that. And also, Quebec is very Catholic, and so the whole abortion issue was a very serious problem there – trying to get an abortion. I was one of the first people with a car, and so there was this abortionist on the outskirts. His name was Morgenthaler, and so my car was called the Morgenthaler Express, and I'd drive people and wait for them to come back. But in terms of lesbian and gay politics – nothing. I would sit home and read those stupid books we all read – Freud.

SS: But you were in a music scene, you said. And you were involved in some kind of – I don't know if you thought of it as feminist organizing at the time –

RB: Definitely not. Absolutely not.

SS: But it was, nonetheless – getting people abortions.

RB: It just was a sense of necessity and injustice. It wasn't a movement.

SS: So, you were creating counter culture and breaking the law – from the beginning.

00:15:00 RB: Yes absolutely, no question about it – as often as possible. At the same time, I had a lover who was a singer and she had a band, and I would have died to be able to play in it. I was just teaching myself to play. And as soon as her guitarist sort of fell off the edge, I stepped in and was in that band. But even though all of our friends knew we were lovers, we never talked about it. And we were certainly accepted. But it was just one of those things I think we all go through, where it's fine and it's cool, but nobody ever says anything.

SS: Did you live together?

RB: We did.

SS: And did you have any other gay friends?

RB: No.

SS: How did you feel when you ever saw gay people?

RB: I just didn't really hang around with them. We didn't go to bars. In Quebec at that time, it was more traditionally a French-Canadian scene in the bars. And so we weren't really involved in that culture, either. And then I went away to college – and that was not happening at the little college I was at. It wasn't really until I came to New York for the first time.

SS: And when was that?

RB: The first time, it would be – I had been here performing, but the first time I actually came and stayed – it would be '67.

SS: Because you came to make it in New York?

RB: I came to New York off and on to do music things, and just thought it was terribly hip. And when one of the bands I was in fell apart, I just kind of came down here and stayed.

SS: **Okay – so '67, it's the height of everything.**

RB: I'm in Washington Heights.

SS: **Were you involved in – I'm sure you were, but –**

RB: Well, I wasn't thinking about it so much as a political movement then. I was thinking about how cool I was and maybe I could get laid. And so I remember the first thing I did is, I went to a DOB dance –

SS: **Daughters of Bilitis.**

RB: And, I ended up getting taken home by some woman who gave me some acid and she lived in the deep East Village and her whole wall was wallpapered with empty Marlboro packs, like bricks. And she wouldn't take off her clothes. She was 10 or 15 years older than I was. It was one of those beautiful snow nights – big flakes and walking around the East Village – I just thought I was much too cool. So then I went to some of their events. And, I also went to some of the early women's group events, and it was at a time where – especially in the gay community – there was that big split between men and women. So, the first couple of events I went to I just watched the sparks fly about the women taking the position that they felt closer to straight women than to gay men.

SS: **Right. Was this GAA [Gay Activists Alliance] or GLF [Gay Liberation Front] or something like that?**

RB: I think it was right around the formation of those. I'm not positive of the dates. And I was not central to the political activity. I just kind of watched it and I thought yeah, that seems right.

SS: Did you have a consciousness-raising group?

RB: No. These were action groups, with big fights about who was going to – it was pretty harsh, those meetings. And I think it was right around the time that there was a big split and women went out on their own.

SS: So, is this the founding of Lesbian Feminist Liberation?

RB: I think so – although, I was pretty fringe-y then. I was in this whole music scene, and I just kind of thought it was just cool to do this other shit, and I always liked the seamy stuff. That's what it felt like to me, then. And then I moved to San Francisco right after that, so there was no thread through that. And I lived in San Francisco for a couple of years – '68 to '70 – something like that.

SS: And you were still working as a musician? Or were you moving into producing?

RB: I was working as a musician and I went to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and I was with a lover there and that was a gay scene, a gay sub-culture. How could it not be, in San Francisco? But not a political one, at all. There were politics that people were involved in, but they were stuff like busing politics. We were active in an anti-busing campaign, and a friend of ours had set up a little special school in the neighborhood.

SS: You were against busing?

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RB: We were against busing people out of their own neighborhood. We didn't want – there's two ways to look at it –

SS: The left critique of busing.

RB: Exactly, that's right – it's the left critique of busing. And, in San Francisco – because it was all pretty left, and they were busing people out of the neighborhoods and against parents' wishes – we thought that there were more subtle issues – exactly, the left critique of busing. We set up this – we – I wasn't very active, but I helped. A friend of mine set up this little private Chinese school right in the middle of Chinatown.

SS: So, prior to ACT UP – in this interim period – when did you come back to New York?

RB: That was 1970. Then I went to New Hampshire, and I went to graduate school at the University of New Hampshire. I was there from '71 until '74 – something like that.

SS: Is that where you knew Ann Philbin?

RB: Yup. And, that's really the first place where I got involved in gay politics – whatever you want to call it. The University of New Hampshire was a hotbed then. One of the most famous cases that went to the Second Circuit – was initiated there. First, there was the first Women's Center there. And we were involved in setting that up. And I remember, we sat around in the Women's Center at one point and people held their hands up – whether they were gay, straight or bi-sexual. It was a big revelation. And then several of us decided to start a Gay and Lesbian Students Association. And it was me and Larry and Gary and Billy and Jamie. There were eight of us or something, and

we got \$50 from the Student Council I guess, and we had a noon sock-hop as an introduction. We had 45s and hung pink shit up in the hall, and the governor – Meldrim Thompson then – said we couldn't be a legitimate students organization, we were mentally ill, and we had to give back the \$50, and if they let us do the next thing – we were going to put on a play or something. And there were all kinds of threats and the governor threatened to withdraw funding from the University, if the University supported us. And we went and told our story to the ACLU in Concord and they took our case, and they took it through the local district courts and all the way to the Second Circuit. And it was a very wonderful moment, because it was the year that the AMA revised the DSM [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*] and took it out of the DSM as being mental aberration. But their lawyers were still arguing that. And, I remember sitting in court and there was me and Annie and Gary and Billy and there were these old fart lawyers talking about mental illness. And I remember sitting there thinking, he's talking about me. Anyway, we won.

Many, many years later, I was at Rutgers in law school and I took a course from Evan Wolfson, and it was on sexuality and the law. And we were all distributed these cases and, there it was. I had forgotten about it. It was a seminal case. I was a plaintiff in this case. That case radicalized everybody who was working on it and we did some pretty far out stuff then. A good friend of mine who's a student there – Chris Arguedas, who is now a very well known criminal defense lawyer in the Bay Area. She's the one who prepped O.J. [Simpson] for what turned out to be not his testimony, during the criminal trial. But, she went in and tried to prep him for that. She and I would go to dorms and give little chats and talks. And people would ask questions like, "You mean, I

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can wake up tomorrow morning and be a lesbian?” And we did a little thing on the school radio. That was great. It was my first sense of being – talking about it to people, other than people I already knew – the feeling that you get, when you’re talking to strangers about it and confronting the rather mixed set of responses you get, when you do that.

SS: So working in the music business – where politics is not as articulate – did you have a conflict with people? Or, did you just not talk about that type of thing?

RB: I didn’t talk about it. It was not something the music business was interested in. But remember, I’m also on the fringes of the music business. I’m not down the middle of the pop scene, and so on the fringes, downtown – working with Laurie Anderson. It was never an issue. So I was not in the closet at all. But also, the political aspects of the work were about larger themes – identity politics, and that was good and bad.

SS: What do you mean by larger themes?

RB: Well, if you think about – to the extent that Laurie Anderson’s work is political – the themes of alienation and the power of the government to do whatever it wants. It’s about class. And in fact, if I had to describe the kind of political thinking that moves me most, it is much more about class than identity. I represent poor people, and they’re facing prison terms – the most profound consequences of the society versus the poor. And the people who fall into that class are generally very different from me. Some of them are women, but most of them are not. Some of them are gay, but most of them are not. Very few of them are white. And a lot of them are not nice. They’re not well-

socialized, they're not pleasant to speak to. So in terms of identifying with them, there's very little for me to identify with, except that powerlessness that one experiences in the face of organized greater power. That's the distinction I'm making – between identity politics because I'm a woman or I'm gay or I'm in this little group or that little group. And that's kind of been a much more motivating force for me than doing work specifically. For instance, the gay and the lesbian issue has been a thorny one for me because when I went to Rutgers to go to law school –

SS: Was that after ACT UP or before?

RB: It was well after – by after, I mean I was still going, but it was well after I had started going to ACT UP. When I went to Rutgers – because I had been in ACT UP, I was much more vocal and wanting to be flagrantly out. So at the first day – when you come in and you sign things and you mill around, I wore a pink triangle, because I just didn't want to have 400 conversations – let's get this over with. And, it was great. And immediately – I think the second year, I was the co-whatever of the Rutgers Lesbian and Gay blah, blah, blah. Then, there was a court case that I was peripherally involved in that made me really think about some of the issues – and that was Steel vs. Young. I don't know if you remember that case. Two lesbians who had two kids with two different donors – I was good friends with one of the donors – and the kid was about nine and they had a falling out and the donor wanted to have continued visitation – not custody. And the mothers by now loathed him and opposed it, and it went all the way through the court system in New York. And the woman I'm still with now, Emily Olshansky – we've been together almost 12 years – represented the donor father. And the entire lesbian and gay – not just New York, but national – culture supported the mothers. And this was a donor –

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by the time there was litigation, he had full-blown AIDS. He's been dead now for six years. He didn't have a lot left to his life, and yeah, they had a pretty serious fight. You could argue about who was right and who was wrong. All he wanted to do was buy them gifts and visit them. This is one of those things that just absolutely polarized the community.

SS: But, also for you – because you had made such a commitment to people with AIDS.

RB: That's right. And, there are people who – various visible lesbian leaders – who still cross the street, as they won't talk to us after that case because we could support the father. It was just for me a moment when I had to re-think, what was I doing and why was I doing it – given, if push came to shove, who was I really? That was a tough moment for me. And I think after that, I participated very little in lesbian, gay political culture events.

SS: It also changed dramatically right around that time. The whole issue of marriage and children – that's the beginning of a whole new phase that many of us are alienated by.

RB: That's the other thing – I've always been really clearly anti-assimilationist, and so when the culture moved to – it was the early Clinton years, when suddenly we were on the covers of things and people who were hired to run our organizations were fundraiser people who had built big buildings. And that was their résumé. It was the army and marriage. And I thought great, fine. I don't need to do that.

SS: I didn't realize that you became a lawyer partially because of ACT UP.

RB: I'd say partially, yeah, in a few ways, sort of complicated ways.

SS: What was your job exactly? What were doing in the music business right before ACT UP?

RB: I was an independent producer and engineer and I worked initially on – I was engineering, I worked on radio shows. It was the golden years of NYSCA [New York State Council in the Arts] and the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts], and we had grants to do all kinds of cool things – walk around the swamp recording frogs, and recording a piano wire stretched between trees. And a lot of people came through our program – Bill Viola and Philip Glass.

SS: What was the name of your program?

RB: It was a studio in upstate New York. It was called ZBS, and we had a program that offered then state-of-the-art, multi-track recording facility and staff – engineers and producers – to people who had non-commercial audio and overlap video projects. So it would be a score for a dance piece, or a score for a video. And pretty much everybody went through there – Phil Glass, Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson – the list from then. It was great. Working there was great. I was on staff and I would go up there two weeks a month, and then two weeks a month I lived down here and did my own projects. And I started working with Laurie in '79. We did "Oh, Superman" and I worked with her until I went to law school, and did videos and albums. What really moved me out of one career into another – how you tell your oral history and you tell it differently, depending on who you're telling it to. So there's the kind of glossy, public version, and then there's the version I tell for this reason or that reason, and it's hard to really know what the truth is I think, after you tell your oral history for years. Probably

00:35:00 the closest thing to the truth is I'm kind of a chronic depressive, and it comes and goes in ways that are more and less debilitating. Working freelance, where all I had was my own enthusiasm for my projects – to be able to pitch them, raise money for them, do them – when I couldn't get that up, it became very difficult. I'd been doing it for 15 years. I felt really burnt out. I just wasn't really sure what I was going to do next.

SS: You were ready for a new life.

RB: I was ready for something different and, for better or worse, it's been difficult for me to let go of the desire to be cool. And so it's motivated me a lot, in ways that I can't separate from what's really attractive and interesting, and what's only attractive and interesting because in a mirror it looks cool, or it will look cool when I say what I do at parties.

SS: But, who's cooler than us, Roma?

RB: But that's what I mean. Why did we get this cool? Did we really need to be this cool? It's stressful to be cool.

SS: What do you mean by cool? Let's talk about this.

RB: I'll tell you what's cool. What's not cool is to live in Montreal and get married and work in a re-insurance company.

SS: But, is that fun?

RB: I don't know. Maybe. Are you having a lot of fun?

SS: I don't have fun, but I have to say that I am interested every single day of my life.

RB: Well I'm interested, too. I am interested. And that's why I say these things get – you know, the fabric of understanding your own motivation is complicated.

And there's a way in which, when I consider my options, it may have been better for me to do something a little less stressful at times, and less interesting, and found joy in that.

And push myself into –

SS: You don't think that changing the world and saving people's lives was a cool thing to do?

RB: I actually never thought of it for a moment that way.

SS: But now, looking back?

RB: No. I had never thought of it that way, and I still don't.

SS: But what do you mean by cool? Do you mean that in a pathologizing way, or do you really mean it?

RB: No, I mean it in the common language way. You know, living in TriBeCa is cooler – I think you can take all of life – what you do for a living, what clothes you have on, where you live, and we can all sit down in our culture and write a list from the least cool to the most cool. TriBeCa is cooler than the Upper West Side. Wearing black is – depending where – so whatever it is, whatever you do, however you spend your time, where you live. And the difference between wanting to be cool so it looks cool, and wanting to do something that's interesting because it actually is interesting – I think that's a little –

SS: All right. Let's argue this for a minute, because I'm interested. One of the things we've done, because – this is our thirty-fourth interview of ACT UP people, and you know, I'm telling you almost everybody is supremely talented – really special people. It comes across constantly. People who are special and singular are often not treated very nicely, and there's a huge effort by family,

society, everybody, to put it in a box because it makes other people feel inadequate. So if you decide that you really want to be yourself, and you're that type of person, you have to break away from certain things. And maybe the thing that you're calling cool, is really just reaching for the other people who've made that decision too, because you do pay a price for making that decision, as well.

RB: Yeah. I mean this is –

SS: I'm viewing it heroically.

RB: Yeah, and I'm viewing it more dispassionately, in a way that doesn't aggrandize it. Because the decisions made – that we all make – for what might be called good reasons – good being unselfish.

SS: I'm not saying that –

RB: Noble, heroic reasons and other reasons – this isn't a critique of my decisions, except to say that –

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SS: There's this idea – and it's a Marxist idea, but I believe it – the idea of critical mass. That you don't need everybody to change things – that there are vanguard personalities. There's a small group of people – maybe it's biological, it's coincidence, who knows? But they emerge, who are able to have a vision of a way that things can be different and actually take the actions that create that difference. Those are people who make change. Most people do not make change.

RB: Yeah. I think the distinction I was trying to make before – if we can just get away from the analysis of cool – is that I don't think I ever thought about changing the world, or fixing the world, or saving the world, or making the world better. What engaged me was the process, which is actually the only thing that engages me about

anything. And part of it is, I can't see very far. I felt that I'm kind of afloat in the moment. I don't know what I'm doing tonight. I don't know what I'm having for dinner. I can't remember what my schedule is tomorrow. And I can't say I'm very optimistic about how one can actually improve things on a large scale. I do see how one can improve one other person's life, because that does happen to me. I walk over and a guy who might be going –

SS: Given that it's 2003, everything's shit

RB: No kidding!

SS: And everything has gone to crap, and it's like 1956 over here and we're all dying emotionally and spiritually – given that – in a sense, you say, "I can help one person," which is true. But you have also participated in change that has transformed social paradigms, and hundreds of thousands of people are alive today because of what we did in ACT UP – perhaps millions.

RB: I don't disagree with that at all. I'm just saying that that was not my motivation.

SS: What was your motivation?

RB: I felt a tremendous kinship with the approach to political process I saw in my very first ACT UP meeting, because the point I first walked into a Center meeting – It probably would have been – it was before St. Patrick's. Was '87 St. Patrick's?

SS: What year was St. Patrick's?

JAMES WENTZY AND JIM HUBBARD: '89

RB: And I walked in in the middle of a meeting and a friend had said, come on. I'd heard about it, and I'd been thinking about going. And, by that time, I had been involved in all kinds of different organizations and in those organizations, the concept of activism often went like, "Why don't we write a letter?" Okay. "Let's form a letter writing sub-committee. How's Thursday?" "I can't make it Thursday." "Do we have a draft of the letter, for everybody to approve? Do you think there should be a comma here?" And it just drove me bananas. And I remember somebody stood up at that ACT UP meeting and said, "Why don't we write a letter?" And whoever was in front of the room said, "Why don't *you* write a letter? Are you willing to write a letter? And you mail it, okay? We don't need to look at it. Can you mail it by tomorrow?" Yeah. "Can you mail it to 50 places?" Yes. And that kind of – no bullshit, there's no time to waste, let's not get bogged down by process – even though of course, obviously ACT UP in some ways bogged itself down in process, quite a bit. But compared to what else was going on in the world, it was a form of engagement around a political cause that was so immediate and urgent and practical and iconoclastic and rule breaking. And, it wasn't just that they broke rules incidental to what they were doing, but the point was to break the rules. And their attitude towards the government and the Church was not just a platitudes, it was inherent in the functioning of the organization. And I just had a fabulous time – breaking blood bags on myself, lying on the ground in the rain – just the actions were just fantastic.

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SS: Did you have an affinity group?

RB: I moved around to different groups. I worked on the CDC stuff a lot.

SS: Let's talk about that, because we haven't talked about that in depth with anyone. Can you explain it in terms of what you remember, what the issues were around the CDC?

RB: It was the women's issues, at that point. We ran that big ad in the *New York Times* that said, "Dead but not diagnosed." And it was about changing the definition, and it was through that action that I really got involved with Terry McGovern and the HIV Law Project, and went on the Board subsequently, stayed on the Board for many years.

SS: What was the campaign? If you could just lay it out for people who don't know?

RB: It had two prongs – one was to change the definition of AIDS, to include manifestations in women. Women didn't get Kaposi's, women had a panoply of gynecological manifestations that were nowhere part of the definition. So, it was ground-level to change the definition of AIDS to encompass specifically women's symptomology. And second to that, to force the various the Social Security Administration, with regard to various disabilities and local organizations, government organizations – to force them to provide women with the services and entitlements that men were getting because they fit the definition. So through the HIV Law Project, we sued the Social Security Administration, and eventually won. It was a wonderful David and Goliath success story.

SS: How did ACT UP become aware of this as an issue?

RB: Through the women in ACT UP –

SS: Women with AIDS

RB: Women with AIDS and women without AIDS. ACT UP attracted a lot of women in the healthcare profession. There were people very visible in ACT UP who were nurses, doctors, who worked with patients in various functions and they had their particular expertise and slant. And it was a moment – actually, it was a great moment, because it was a moment where the awareness that it wasn't just a gay men's issue was mounting, and at the same time men were grateful for the support of all these women and were ready to return the favor by supporting specifically the women with AIDS aspects of the organization.

SS: One of the obstacles that we have is that almost all of the women with AIDS in ACT UP have died.

RB: Yes.

SS: So we obviously can't interview anybody. There's one surviving woman who doesn't want to be interviewed. If you could explain a little bit about who they were, how you all interacted around these issues – can you tell us a little bit about that?

RB: You know, I have a problem with remembering names. I've been through all these different life compartments, and so in terms of remembering individual people –

SS: Should I suggest some names?

RB: Well, Katrina Haslip is obviously the main one. Katrina Haslip epitomized what I saw happen to the women with AIDS who became involved – either directly through ACT UP or through the various sub-movements that ACT UP spawned.

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And there were some incredibly memorable moments – like getting a group of those women and busing them to Washington, D.C., and having them speak up at various white

men's health conferences. The most wonderful part of it is what it did to those women's lives. There's no question about how they changed the cultural awareness and certainly the law. But I think watching certain women say that getting AIDS was the best thing that ever happened to me, because I'd been using drugs, and I was just floating through my life and would have died of who knows what – and had never stopped for a minute to think who I really was, or that I could change anything, or that I could have any value or that I could focus my thoughts around something positive and do something positive for one person, many people. And to watch them go through that process and value themselves and their lives – for me, that was probably the most exciting aspect of that, aside from whatever happened generally, politically, medically. And Katrina Haslip was a person transformed in that way, to an incredibly articulate, focused leader. And I'm sure you have all the footage from Katrina's stuff. The HIV Law Project has as much Katrina Haslip footage as there is.

SS: Can you tell us a little bit about her? Do you know how she came to ACT UP? Anything about her life?

RB: You know, I can't really do it with any accuracy. I've forgotten.

SS: Because there was a group of women who came through Bedford Hills and were referred by Judy Clark to ACT UP. Do you remember who some of those people were?

RB: Well, that was probably the most interesting and important path – is ACE OUT [AIDS Counseling and Education (for women who had been released from prison)] and the movement to identify and approach and prepare women who were at Bedford Hills for what their options actually were on release, and to involve them before they

were released. And then immediately engage them in the activities on release. And that for them was a way of transitioning out of confinement. It's always the most difficult moment for anybody coming out of prison to move back into a culture and try to figure out how not to go back to using drugs, how not to whatever. But, exactly what the mechanics of that organization was – I just no longer recall it.

SS: Were you working every day on the CDC project with women who had been incarcerated?

RB: At the time, it was very engaging for me and I was working hard on the CDC project.

SS: So how did that mix work? Between the more privileged women and the women who had come into the group with HIV?

RB: Not always smoothly. The issues of who had the right to represent whom? And who had the right to speak for whom? Those were always very sticky issues. And what always worked best was when they just organized it themselves and did it and we paid for the bus. So when we went to the conferences and stood up on their behalf and said something, it didn't really work as well.

SS: Did you work with Mary Lucey or Marina Alvarez?

RB: Peripherally. [Coughs] That's a World Trade Center cough, by the way. Nice. Live here, work here, was here when it happened. I'm sorry I'm coughing.

SS: How long did it take to change the definition of AIDS?

RB: I don't know what the time frame of it was.

SS: You had a court case, so it must have been years.

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RB: The court case was against the Social Security Administration, so that was parallel to and separate from the changing of the definition. The changing of the definition was pressuring the CDC.

SS: So what was the strategy? Because I know there was a combination of policy proposals, legal suits and then street actions.

RB: You just outlined it. I mean, I think that was the beauty of the organization, is that they moved on all fronts – attracting press and involving the community and using the legal system, so there'd be a faction that went and had a boy's chat with the boys at NIH and then there'd be a faction that got into the news hanging banners over some highway. And then there'd be a faction that did all those parts. And I think that's what worked great about it. We understood how to move.

SS: Looking back, what do you think determined which faction a person would end up in?

RB: Probably the same things that motivate us to do anything. Some it is just because our friend is doing it, and some of it was, people were more risk-taking, and more attracted to the theatrical aspects. And some people had particular skills to offer – whether legal skills or organizing skills – people who taught people how to do passive resistance, people with administrative skills. So I think the organization did a really good job of marshaling the incredible variety of interests and skills that walked in here, because it really was all these facets going on at the same time.

SS: So, CDC was one of the big things that you worked on. What were some of the other projects that you worked on?

RB: Day of Desperation.

SS: Tell us about that. What was that?

RB: That was during the Gulf War. It was a wonderfully conceived, memorable action. And the central theme was Money for AIDS, Not for War. And the planning – it was like a military campaign to take over Grand Central Station, and stage various events, and follow it up with a march with arrests. I think there were over 200 arrests. I got arrested at that one. The grandiose imagination of the actions captivated me, it captivated the media.

SS: So people would stand up in a room and say, “We’re going to take over Grand Central.” And then we would go to Grand Central, and they wouldn’t have stopped it?

RB: You mean, what was the evolution?

SS: I mean, was it all planned openly?

RB: That particular action?

SS: Taking over Grand Central Station.

RB: I think that was planned pretty openly.

SS: And then the police just let us do it?

RB: Well we walked in and we filled the place up. Before they knew it, there we all were. It’s not like – it’s a public place, they can’t stop people and see if they have an ACT UP card on them before we got in there. In they went, and I think – that was by then, it was an era at ACT UP where we actually did have some police cooperation, and there were people who knew that they were better off and could make things safer if they knew what we were going to do. And some people didn’t want to participate in that kind

of – they called it, selling out. But I think probably by – that would have been – was it '92?

JW: '91.

RB: '91 – by that time, I would have thought the police knew what we were doing and were pretty prepared for it.

SS: It's hard to imagine that today – the police would not allow that to happen.

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RB: Oh, no. Today, no – not possible. I think 9/11 changed so many things. Try to imagine some of the things – I mean, we were terrorists.

SS: So when we were saying Money for AIDS, Not for War, did you feel like most other people in New York were against the war? Or was it a minority view?

RB: I have no idea.

SS: You don't remember the feeling?

RB: The feeling in New York was, I think, New York was against the war. The urban, eastern urban culture was against the war. And yet there was certainly great national support for it. And the way it was carried out was portrayed by the media as a great victory. It was more about AIDS than it was about the war.

SS: I want to go back to this issue about the police. Why do you think the police were so soft on us? Compared to today, for example?

RB: Well, I think they were used to a culture of organized demonstrations that included all different kinds of marches and parades and Earth Day and the Gay Parade. Some people call it March, some people call it a Parade. I don't think police in some

ways clearly made those distinctions, and they were used to these events that took place, sponsored by fringe people that were not threatening. They were kind of annoying, but they got overtime pay and nothing really scary or dangerous happened, and it was just tolerated. People got permits and it was just part of the culture – just like shooting a film, or anything else that goes on in the streets.

SS: So are you suggesting that the Gay Pride Parade was somehow normalizing – so that when there was a whole crowd of gay people, it was something that people had already seen?

RB: Yeah, I think so.

SS: That's interesting.

RB: And I think the flavor of a lot of the actions – and the most successful ones – by successful, I mean – I use the word advisedly – but, I mean successful in that they attracted people's attention and support without ruffling too many feathers. So successful in the broader sense – were the ones that didn't feel threatening. They were clever. They were prank stunts.

SS: Like what?

RB: Getting in some place and hanging a banner out of some window, attracting some attention – as opposed to for instance St. Patrick's, which is still probably my favorite action. And that one was pretty far out there, in terms of the general, social acceptability.

SS: What did you do that day?

RB: I was out on the street. I didn't go in. I went to the trial.

SS: Oh you did? Tell us about that.

RB: The trial was fantastic. I didn't go to all of it, but my favorite thing was in the first day, Ann Northrop stood up and – behind every judge in every courtroom, it says, "In God We Trust" across the back. And she stood up and said, "Your honor, I'd like to move that for the length of these proceedings, we shroud the sign behind you." And the judge went around and everyone looked at the sign, and the obviousness of going to trial on this issue while the judge sat in front of "In God We Trust" – it just struck everybody in the courtroom. And she went on, "How could we possibly have a fair trial about the very issue that the court is conceding by sitting in front of a sign that says, 'In God We Trust?'" So there was an uproar. She brought it up several times.

SS: What was the outcome of that trial, actually?

RB: They all run together.

SS: Did you ever have a trial when you were in ACT UP?

RB: No, I never went to trial. When I became involved in the legal aspects of it, I went to a few of them. I went to the needle trial. But now it all completely runs together – whether Rod was acquitted in New Jersey, but convicted in New York, or whether Rod was –

SS: The late Rod Sorge. When you yourself were arrested, did you have a trial?

01:05:00

RB: When I was arrested, I didn't have a trial. We all took discons [disorderly conduct] – which of course now, from my vantage point as a lawyer, I'm very that sorry I did that.

SS: Why?

RB: Because first of all, there's no need to take a discon – discon is kind of serious. At the very least we should have had ACD [Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal]. But also it would have been a great trial.

SS: Let's talk about Rod Sorge. So, he was the one-man band for a while, right?

RB: He was. He was very articulate and very visible on the needle issues.

SS: And he had a position that abstinence, or getting off drugs, should not be a requirement for treatment.

RB: Right.

SS: And what was your feeling about that?

RB: I couldn't agree more.

SS: Was that debated at all? Was that controversial inside ACT UP?

RB: It wasn't that controversial. It was controversial in the community. It was controversial to the extent that there was a feeling in certain communities of color that we were speaking from our positions of privilege and subtly encouraging drug use even by the very act of needle exchange. So, I think that there was some of that kind of tension.

SS: But he died a drug addict.

RB: Yeah.

SS: What was your involvement with needle exchange?

RB: My involvement with needle exchange was primarily through Brian Weil. Brian was Ann Philbin's lover at the time, and Brian was very active in it, and I would go with Brian to sites, mostly. So I wasn't involved so much theoretically in the issue, as I went out with him to various sites.

SS: Was needle exchange controversial inside ACT UP?

RB: Not inside ACT UP. I never got that sense.

SS: Were most of the people who were in leadership former needle users themselves? Or current? Former or current?

RB: In needle exchange? Yes. Brian died of an overdose.

SS: And Richard Elovich was an openly former addict. Do you feel that drug use was discussed as openly inside the organization as unsafe sex for example?

RB: No, I don't think it was. It should have been more.

SS: Do you think there was more needle drug use inside the organization than was discussed?

RB: Yes. But I think that if the question is, why is that the fact? I think that it was because of the cultural slant of the organization – that it still was more about gay men who lived in the Village than it was –

SS: Right, but there's three different constituencies of needle users in ACT UP. There's the people who are on needle exchange. There are the women with AIDS. And then, there's the people who are secretly or not so secretly just drug users. So that's three different constituencies, and there was a huge organizational commitment to the issue. But do you think that that commitment was theoretical? Or was it grounded in some kind of real discussion inside the group about people's lived experience?

RB: I would have to say, a little of both, but probably more – perhaps a slightly critical way to look at it is there's a way in which needle use legitimized AIDS, because

if it's only about sex, then as much as people despise drug use and fear it and drug users and whatever they may get, I think they loathed homosexuals more.

SS: So you think that gay people were the weak link in the coalition?

RB: In terms of the powerful, cultural enemy I think so, yeah. I think the culture could sympathize with a drug user who got AIDS, more than a faggot who got AIDS.

SS: That's interesting. I've never heard anyone say that before, but now that you're saying that, one thing that I do see in support of your argument is that ACT UP – which was essentially a gay organization, although there were many people in it who are not gay – made this huge commitment to needle exchange, but other, officially not gay AIDS groups never were able to make the same commitment to gay people. So in a sense, I do see evidence for your argument, even though there's a class and race factor there that would give ACT UP more privilege than the drug user, so it gets more complex.

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RB: That's right

SS: That's interesting. And when you were working with women on the CDC, did you ever talk to them about their drug use?

RB: I talked to them about their drug use, but I can't say it was a focus for me.

SS: Let me ask you a bigger question. Did people with AIDS, who you knew in the organization – because to be in the organization implied a certain level of consciousness – were they focused on when they got infected and how they got infected? Was that a topic of conversation?

RB: Absolutely.

SS: So people would say, “I know it was this guy,” or I know –

RB: Yes, absolutely.

SS: So for people who were infected through drugs, who you had more exposure to than a lot of other people in ACT UP, was it the same paradigm?

RB: No, I don’t think so. I think for people who use drugs – it’s not so clear, either. If you were using drugs daily and you’re sharing needles daily, in a practical sense it’s much harder to pinpoint, I think.

SS: Okay. I just want to ask you –

RB: Ask me stuff about Tom Cunningham, too.

SS: Oh, I just remembered him when you said his name. Did you work on the Holland Tunnel action?

RB: I think I was on the legal team of the Holland Tunnel action. What year was the Holland Tunnel action?

SS: Late ’91.

RB: I think I was on the legal team, because I don’t remember much about the whole thing, actually.

SS: It was a lot of women. It was done with WHAM [Women’s Health Action and Mobilization]. I think it’s the only time that we did something primarily with a women’s organization. And I know that later you were involved with WAC [Women’s Action Coalition], right?

RB: Right.

SS: And I think it was some of those people, early on. But you don’t remember how that all came to be?

RB: You know, I don't remember, and it's just really because so many things happened. I do remember that – because I live at the mouth of the Holland Tunnel – I remember that a whole bunch of people came here, straight from the precinct. So, people were kind of coming up here at two or three in the morning – crashing out, making calls and getting rides and stuff. I remember that part of it, but the organizational part escapes me now.

SS: Okay. So tell me about Tom Cunningham.

RB: When I first stepped into the room, Tom was the Administrator, I think – even though that meant very little. ACT UP was pretty anarchic. Tom and I got to be really close friends, and Tom died December 9, 1992, which was sort of shocking in that it's over 10 years. And Tom – besides the fact that he sort of shepherded me through the initiation into the finer, political underbelly of ACT UP and its power factions – we would go out after meetings with the group. We always went somewhere after meetings. And because we got to be really good friends we spent a lot of time together. And it was a time for me when I was about to change careers, and I had also broken up with a long term lover, and I had the kind of free time that you have when you're in college – where Tom and I could just walk around and walk into an afternoon movie. And Tom sort of – in a lot of ways, I think was the brother that I never had, and he was – really, of all my friends I have ever had in my whole life – he was the most uncritically, totally supportive of everything I did. And he very much supported the idea of me going to law school. And then when he was quite sick, I would go to his house in Brooklyn and bring my law books and study while he watched television. And one of the things – you're talking about all the women being dead – one of the things that makes ACT UP different from

01:15:00 other kinds of political organizations is dealing with the issue of death. Dealing with the issue of the leaders of the organization dying off, and dealing with the very personal sense of immediacy – dealing with people who didn't have much longer to live. And, my whole attitude towards death was changed – not so much by the organization, but by my very personal interaction with Tom. And I think a lot of people have had similar experiences as a result of the friends they made in ACT UP.

Tom would come out to my place in Long Island and spend time there. And I think one of the last times he was there, we had an incredibly intense conversation. Tom was amazing because he didn't want to pretty it up. When he was in the hospital dying and someone would come in and say, "What a nice day, the Franklins put new roses in, in front of their house," he would say, "But what do you think about the fact that I'm dying?" And he couldn't deal with people who couldn't deal with it – on that issue. And I watched him go through the process of getting ready to die and making the decision to die, and dying. And it was so different from my experience of anyone else's death in a family of older people. The conversation we had out on Long Island was – I suddenly felt guilty because I felt ghoulish befriending him and becoming so close to him, that I was somehow a voyeur in this intense process and that I was getting – sapping this intense experience, that had a ghoulish element for me, because I wanted to participate in the discussion of the detail of how it was going and how he felt about it. And so, I made this confession. I felt really uncomfortable about making it. And he said the most amazing thing that completely spun me around. He said that it was precisely my interest in his process of dying that made my friendship with him so invaluable, because most people wanted to push that away and emphasize everything else that was still happening.

And the fact that that was the most important thing happening to him and that's what I wanted to focus on. And even more, that I wanted that and he could give it to me. As he was less and less able to give things to people that they wanted – whether it was to have the energy to go to a movie, or even the energy to have a conversation, that he could give me what I wanted, which was to watch him go through dying. That he could give that to me he said was absolutely invaluable. And it spun me around, because I think for a lot of us – certainly for me – the fear of dying is about the fear of being alone, and the fear of having to hide your fear; the fear of having to be alone in the process of being afraid of it. And I watched Tom be completely – right till the end – be completely open, engaged, straightforward, in the moment and himself through the process. And it gave me the sense that it was possible to die that way. So I just wanted to say that, to talk about Tom.

SS: But you know, it's also consistent with how you've looked at other things in your life, because there are people who really want to get away from people who are in trouble. And then there are people who really can be with people who are in trouble – very few. And just as now, you're making your stance with people who are really in a lot of trouble – you're spending every day with them. That's consistent with that choice, with your friend.

RB: And for me, the thing that makes me feel worst is to feel like there's something else going on than what's going on in my head – to be with someone – to be engaged on some level, and then to be in some other place in my head, thinking about whatever it is – the loneliness of that. That's what my whole childhood was. And that's what ACT UP is not. It is actually happening – the engagement, working on a project together. I can't even go out to dinner with people. I can't stand sitting in a restaurant

filling you in on what I just did for three weeks, every three weeks. I can't stand doing it.

01:20:00 I don't do it. I would rather sit and put things in an envelope with you and lick the envelopes shut.

SS: Did you ever have someone in your life who was dying, who acted in a way that wasn't – what were some of your other experiences with dying people in ACT UP?

RB: There was nobody I was as close to as Tom – so, I think that makes a difference – even though there were plenty of people in ACT UP who did it the way Tom did it, and were very real – I might go see them in the hospital twice, or I might have been close to them before the last two or three months, and then their world shrank a little and didn't include me. Tom was the only person I did it with, absolutely intimately – including being there when he died.

SS: When Vito Russo died and Larry Kramer made that famous speech – “We killed Vito, can't you see that?” Or with David Feinberg coming in and saying, “I'm dying, so you failed.” I mean there is also that kind of thing.

RB: Absolutely.

SS: How did you feel when those things would happen?

RB: I thought it was great. I didn't hear it happen, but I was at that Chinese restaurant when Vito made that apocryphal gag when he opens his fortune cookie and makes up the fortune and he says, “You will go to a party and meet strange people and then you will die.” He was making it up. I think that the humor and overt anger and confrontation – those were all very different ways to approach death. So, I loved all that stuff.

SS: This is kind of a weird question, but did you ever feel that there was police infiltration into ACT UP?

RB: It was such an issue in the organization – the people who were sure there was, the people who thought the people who were sure there was were paranoid, the people who were accusing specific other people of being the FBI and so forth and so forth. I guess I assumed that on occasion, there would be somebody in the organization that was reporting to some other entity, but to tell you the truth I never thought about it much.

SS: So this idea – it’s a little on the COINTELPRO model, but it’s also on the “I was a Communist” model – that there’s someone who’s pretending to be someone that they’re not, and that they’re telling all your secrets to these bad people. So you don’t think there was anyone like that?

RB: Well I think it’s entirely possible and in fact, probably likely. But I thought that preoccupation with it was counter-productive.

SS: I’m not going to ask you to say anybody’s name, but do you have any sense that you think you know who those people were?

RB: Not at all. In fact, I think there was one person in particular who was suspected for a time – tales told about he did this, he showed up here. And my sense at the time was that that person was just –

SS: A jerk.

RB: kind of a jerk – that people thought they could explain his jerkiness by that. I had no idea who it might be and didn’t think any suggestions sounded any more

likely than anybody else – assumed it was happening, thought we couldn't do anything about it anyway, and that it was counter-productive to think about it or talk about it.

Unless there was some really specific thing that we felt like, it would be really important for nobody to know about X, except for these four people, and that would be discussed in private, which I think happened.

SS: You mean like putting a condom on Jesse Helm's house?

RB: Exactly. That's right. Important actions. Another one of my favorites.

SS: Did you ever try to bring people from the music industry into ACT UP?

RB: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

SS: What was your work in that regard?

RB: Just invite them to meetings, or ask them to put their names on things. I bothered Laurie a lot and she was great. She would always show up and say things at concerts. She was very supportive.

SS: What about for other people inside? Were there people who were afraid to be associated with something like this?

RB: No, not that I recall.

SS: Were you aware of people being – I'm not going to ask you to say anyone's name – were you aware of people being closeted or people secretly dying of AIDS in the music business at the time?

01:25:00

RB: I was not. But I didn't have very wide exposure. I was not down the middle of the music business. I had a little group of people that I worked with.

SS: I wanted to talk a little bit about the lesbian subculture inside of ACT UP. Did you ever go to the Women's Committee or any of that?

RB: I did.

SS: How was that?

RB: Kind of boring.

SS: Anything stand out in your mind as being particularly boring?

RB: I think everybody was bored and not that many people went and it sort of fell apart.

SS: Did you socialize with other lesbians inside the group or meet other lesbians or date them or party with them?

RB: A little bit. But I was a fair bit older than some of the more visibly active people and also I'm kind of a hermit, so I would say somewhat.

SS: Can you describe what that was? Because ACT UP is seen as a male organization, and of course we who were in it know that that's not true. And I think there was a kind of dynamic – prominently lesbian subculture inside of ACT UP, but I'm hoping you can characterize it in some way or describe some experiences that you had with it?

RB: I think, in a way, it suited me, because it was a way to make friends based on a shared activity, as opposed to having dinner catch-up experiences. And so I would say – for instance, Laurie Cotter, if you remember Laurie, and I have stayed friends. And Terry McGovern, and then there are people who I'm still somewhat in touch with, but don't do anything socially with – like, Marian Banzhaf and her girlfriend – I can't remember her name. Don't play this section where I don't remember people's names I'm

supposed to remember. Heidi [Dorow] was someone I hung out with. Heidi helped me paint most of this loft. We spent hours and hours on what do you call those platform things, scaffolding, painting. I liked Heidi a lot. But being a hermit, I didn't really hang out with groups of people anyway. I'm trying to think if I ever slept with any of the people I met just through ACT UP? I don't think so. I don't think I ever had that kind of relationship.

SS: You mentioned age. There were quite a few women your age in leadership in ACT UP.

RB: There were, but I was more interested in what the younger people were doing. They tended to be doing more interesting, more outrageous things, so I was more drawn to them and yet maybe they were less appropriate for having kind of run of the mill friendships. People like Heidi.

SS: So why did you leave the organization?

RB: Tom's death somewhat coincided with that period of time that that Steel vs. Young court case was going on. And I think that pushed me away from the lesbian and gay aspect of the movement. ACT UP was – there was always that element to it. And the organization itself was going through some transformation, and the factionalizing of the treatment people – the “What does housing have to do with AIDS?” people – I think it moved me away from the organization and the organization changed. But I think probably I changed more, and I think I became less active politically in the areas that ACT UP was mostly concerned with and more interested in broader class politics, and doing criminal defense work was my sense of the bottom line.

01:30:00

SS: What organization are you working with now?

RB: I'm in private practice. I worked at Legal Aid criminal defense division for some years, and now about 80% or so of my case load is assigned to me by the court. So it's all the cases where there's a conflict with Legal Aid because they already represent a co-defendant, and so it's pretty much the same clientele as Legal Aid, except I represent them privately and then bill the city for my time – at an astonishingly low rate.

SS: I think that's very cool. Thank you, Roma.

RB: Thank you, Sarah. It's really valuable for me to do this, because it makes me think about that time from a certain perspective and in a certain level of detail that I haven't done in years.

SS: Well it was really so wonderful, you told us so many important things.