Interview with Dr. Stephanie Brandt

Barnard class of 1972

Conducted by Paulina Pinsky

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**Can you state your name?**

Stephanie Brandt.

**Alright, my first question is where are you from originally?**

Brooklyn, New York.

**And what did your parents do?**

My father was a physician, and my mother was a psychologist.

**And how did you hear about Barnard?**

My mother went to Barnard.

**What year did she graduate?**

I always forget, but I think it was either ’43 or ’44, during the war. I think. Certainly within two years of those numbers.

**Was she the first woman in her family to go to Barnard?**

Yes. She was probably the first one to go to college.

**Was she also from Brooklyn?**

Yep.

**How did she hear about Barnard?**

You know, I don’t know. I think she went to Packer as a freshman in Brooklyn, then transferred to Barnard, if I remember correctly. But you know at the time, I guess that was where you wanted to go if you were a smart girl in New York. There was a lot of commuters then obviously, and I don’t really know that story.

**So was Barnard always your dream school?**

Was it my dream school? Not really until I— not during my whole child hood— certainly once I got there. There were many reasons I wanted to go there, one of which was that she went there— my whole family was here. I really wanted to come back to New York, because we moved out of New York. I grew up in Montreal. My family moved to Montreal when I was seven, and my extended family lived here. And I was old enough, at that age, to always want to come back here. I was American, not Canadian. You know, there was a lot of reasons I wanted to come back to New York. It was really where I felt I belonged.

**What did you major in?**

Well, I majored in Psychology, and I almost majored in Philosophy, which means now that would have been a minor. I don’t think they called it anything then.

**When you went to Barnard, did you live on campus?**

Oh yes.

**Where did you live?**

Reid, sixth floor [First year], I think. Yeah, you know I’m still in touch with all my roommates, and the people within that floor. Then where my daughter lived, Plimpton, which was newly built, and very snazzy then. Then I lived at 616, then 620.

**In our previous conversation you said you wanted to talk about feminism, and I was interested in what you relationship to feminism was before you came to campus, and how it changed when you were at Barnard. Was it a concept—**

It wasn’t even a concept.

**Betty Friedan was in 1963, so it was just—**

No it wasn’t even— I went to college when I was 16, and I came from Canada. This was the sophisticated place, not Canada. What was going on then was the Civil Rights movement, and the Anti-War movement. Nothing to do with women, at that time. It was certainly overshadowed by those other issues. So, it wasn’t a particularly brave or, you know, gender specific thing that I went to Barnard. I went there because I wanted to be in New York, and my mother went there, and that was a great opportunity. Plus, I really was very interested and involved in the Civil Rights movement and the Anti-War movement. Feminist issues came later, after the war ended and after some of that changed it. That was really towards the end of it. The fact that it was a women’s school, and a lot of the changes that had to do with political freedom and civil liberties kind of fueled all of that, so Barnard was a place that was very ready to accept the message about women. And they certainly were forerunners.

**Well, your freshman year was a huge year for Columbia.**

Yeah, it was huge.

**What was your experience that year?**

It was a huge transition year for the school, for the country really. My experience was I ended up there, this little kid, I was terrified actually, coming from Montreal and landing in the middle of the strike and everything else. ’68 was, you know, SDS and all was the spring before, I wasn’t there for that, I was there immediately after as a freshman. And there was still a whole lot of activity, and a whole lot of more radical activity. Like people in the Weather Underground, like people in the Black Panthers, like a lot of stuff was brewing then that was extremely intense and sometimes frightening and sometimes really consciousness raising—radicalizing. It was an amazing time, very formative for me. In terms of my politics, my values, my values as a woman, my values changing, and Barnard was really the place for me. Being at a women’s school was good too. Also, I must say, it was scary a lot of the time. Cause you could be surrounded by some pretty strange, out of control people. And although that was the year that Barnard got rid of the curfews and all the other stuff, that year that ended. It’s hard to imagine that that even occurred, but that was when that all changed. But it was still a little bit more of a protected environment than when you went across the street or anywhere else, you still felt like you could kind of recede if you needed to hide from some of that. And sometimes you really needed to. Cause because not everyone went on strike and didn’t go to class. I mean most people were pretty serious about their education actually.

**So, obviously all of this political action was influential to you as a person, were you involved in any of the activity on campus?**

Yeah, a lot of it. On campus meant Columbia, it didn’t mean Barnard at that time. Yeah, lots of demonstrations, yes. Not just on campus, you know there were things all over the city too. It was a very big part of everybody’s lives who cared about it. You know, the Anti-War rallies happened a lot on campus, and things like that. It was largely about the war at that point.

**And so, I am interested in were professor’s encouraging of it, or was it something that you had to carry on [on your own]?**

My friend group was not particularly conservative. I don’t think that anyone felt like anyone at the school was in that way. I don’t really recall what support they gave, politically or not, but they certainly didn’t stop anybody. I never felt like that was a problem. I didn’t join the Weather Underground, so maybe the people who did might have had a problem.

**Were you involved with specific groups on campus, or was it just your friend group?**

Probably I was. I honestly don’t remember, there was a lot of them. I remember going to various things, and at times thinking it was great, and at other times thinking “These people are really out of control, I’m going to sit in the back because something bad might happen.” It was a vary edgy kind of time. But I don’t remember the names of various groups. Not SDS, that was before.

**Do you remember a specific time, like a memory, when it was going well, and you felt moved by it, and where it was?**

Yeah, I have a very specific memory of standing on, what’s it called, you know where the Sun Dial is?

**College walk?**

Yeah, it’s called something else. Anyways, I remember specifically standing somewhere and people were, it was a huge Anti-War rally. And everybody, it was completely a mob scene. And it was a strike. I don’t remember [Laughs] which one though, there were quite a lot. I remember it was very up lifting. Very, you felt how powerful your voice was in that situation, in a way that is a very real experience, you know, that I haven’t seen since, until the Eric Garner protests last year, it really reminded me of that. Because you felt that you really did have a voice in stopping a war. There were so many people, and it was a really important time for that generation, for me as a person. Growing up you didn’t feel like you didn’t matter. Politically, which was kind of amazing. So I remember standing there, and people hanging from the windows, what you would expect, a lot of speeches, and it was great.

**And how about a time when it got out of hand?**

One of my roommates joined the Weather Underground at one point, or someone on my floor, we were all in a mush, actually [Laughs]. Who was in what room. One of my friends was already a very radical, politically radical girl. She joined the Weather Underground and then she dropped out of school, at some point. And the rest of us always talk about what the hell happened to her, where is she. That was scary. There isn’t a particular moment, but there was that feeling that certain people went too far, and were okay with a lot of violent things, and that was scary. That had to do with political protests, that had to do with emerging Civil Rights movements— Black Panthers, Malcolm X— things that began to divide people. You know, into are you a part of the solution, or are you a part of the problem kind of thing.

**Most of this is your freshman year?**

That was probably after my freshman year [Her friend dropping out], I don’t really remember. I think the scary stuff was after my freshman year because the war issues subsided, and then the Civil Rights stuff came around, and that was scary.

**How so?**

Well because there was a lot of racial division. There was a lot of anger, and you know people were very angry. And some people made it their lives to overthrow things. So some people got into some very scary thinking. Most people pull back from that eventually. There was a time when we didn’t know if it was going to go over the edge, because it was illegal. There are people who have been on the run since. That kind of thing, that was a kind of known quantity at the time. That was a little scary.

**Well because at the time BOSS was coming around, and the Afro-American Society—**

Well i wasn’t a part of that. If you mention names, I might remember.

**Could you feel tension every day on campus?**

I don’t know, maybe? I don’t remember it as every day and on campus. My friends, there was no arguments among us. We were all involved in the movement. The only concern was someone was going to connect with some group that was going to start *bombing* something. That was just too much, you know? But I don’t remember feeling tension all the time. I do remember the tension. But that might have been because I hung around with my friends. I do remember a lot of girls on campus who were scared, who were very uptight. The more conservative, the more protected, but they weren’t my friends [laughs].

**Were they on your hall?**

No, no. My hall was really crazy as freshman. Like really crazy. A lot of drugs, a lot of everything that was allowed all of a sudden. A lot of drugs, a lot of sex, a lot of radical politics. If there was anybody on the floor who wasn’t into it, we didn’t notice them. And I always lived with those people. There may have been a majority of people who were not like that at Barnard, but they weren’t my friends.

**I didn’t know that that was the first year that they didn’t have the curfew, I didn’t even know that the curfew stayed for that long.**

Yeah. It was that year. That year, that semester. I didn’t have the curfew ever, so I think it probably changed over that summer. I do remember some kind of panty raid thing that went down once? I was thinking that was so ridiculous. It was you know, a very old school kind of thing to do.

**So they went through and—**

I don’t even remember what it was, but it was [laughs] outdated.

**That’s so weird to me.**

Isn’t it? It was like a finishing school before that. In the sense of there were a lot of things about Barnard that was very finishing school. There was always tea in those parlors in the old dorms, that didn’t look so old then. Tea at a certain time. It was very, a lot of formal things like that that were still a part of tradition. And although everyone made fun of them, it was grounding. It was part of what I mean about that you could come back to a place when you needed to. Those traditions remained, I don’t think they still have those teas, but some of the rooms still look that way. The parlors. The afternoon tea. I don’t know, there were other events that were very 1950’s [laughs]. And the curfew. It’s amazing.

**Well it’s funny to me because I always think of the late 60’s and the early 70’s as all of a sudden feminism hit and everybody knew about it.**

It’s really early 70’s. This is earlier.

**In your college experience, you wouldn’t name what was happening [as feminism]?**

It wasn’t even a name, no. That was, when did that happen? Gloria Steinem— early seventies. What happened was the Roe v. Wade problem. Feminism then became at the foreground, and especially at Barnard. So in my life, what I recall the serious radicalizing moment had to do with when people got pregnant and had to have abortions before that law. Because it happened a lot. A lot, a lot. And getting birth control pills, and Planned Parenthood, all those things that would impact the lives of young women at the time, so I remember, you know, the botched abortion that somebody in the dorm had, and that was very radicalizing for me. And you started thinking about, I don’t know, the ways in which women weren’t equal. Or didn’t have rights that men had. You know it started to become a conversation that we had in consciousness raising groups, and that was the second half of college for me. So Roe v. Wade was after I graduated, ’73 maybe? But you know there were years that led up to that so people became very aware of the lack of gender equality through, at least in my time [and] very personal experiences with other people. And you know Barnard was always fierce, it always was very supportive of strong women, in one way or another, whatever they did. And at the time the issue of becoming a professional became much more possible. That was a part of a lot of the feminist conversation that was going on. So a lot of women in my age group who really came to school with not much ambition left with a lot of ambition, left with a lot of ambition because they hadn’t thought they could, and left thinking that way. And that was huge. It wasn’t because it was a lecture that someone gave, it was the times were changing, and Barnard was at the forefront.

**So were you one of those people who went into college not thinking you could be a professional?**

Yeah, I was one of those people. And there were a lot of people in my year who went to medical school who probably wouldn’t have if they had gone five years before, or law school, you know things that you had to be competitive and aggressive to do. Cause that was just who we were. And you couldn’t get in. I’m sure there were quotas. It just didn’t happen as often. Also, there was a way in which you were choosing between being female or professional. Before that change, you had to choose between being a woman and being a professional. It was very de-sexualizing. People thought of lady doctors as being kind of, well you’re never going to get married, you’re never gonna have a family. You know, you were choosing paths at the time, but that changed then. When I got into medical school, my mother was really upset even though it was a good thing. My father was a doctor, my brother was becoming like everybody in my family, a doctor. I don’t remember a particular person at Barnard who said that to me, but I do remember all of the Philosophy department was all women, and very eccentric women [laughs]. Course, everything having to do with gay or not was not even a discussion then, but everyone knew that these were people who didn’t care about the norm in quite the way that all of our mothers did. We were very influenced by their ability to be independent thinkers. You did see that in the professors who taught you in certain departments, like philosophy.

**So, like you just said, there was no discussion of gay rights or queer, anything.**

Not even a though. It’s incredible to me now. One of my favorite cousins was gay, and he had to pretend that his boyfriend was his roommate. He was a grown man, it was just so unacceptable. So not even stated. So not even recognized that he was in the closet, not even an issue. You can’t probably even imagine.

**I can’t. So even on campus, did you know of anybody who was close to who was closeted, or people who discussed it at all?**

You know, nobody discussed it. But nobody cared either, which is one of the things about Barnard that was also okay. You didn’t think about it. I knew which one of my Philosophy Professor’s was gay, but I didn't really have a word for it, I didn't think about it. You just didn't think about it, but you also didn't care. You knew, but it’s not relevant. You just didn’t care. Whereas those are people who would have had a helluva hard time on another campus. It was very tolerant place in that way. You didn't feel like you had to be the same as everyone else there, or at least I didn’t feel that way. There were no fraternities then, and if there were, you didn’t admit it. There was no, everything was about being tolerant to difference. It was good.

**I’m interested more, now, in what happened when you left Barnard, you went to medical school?**

Well, I had like five majors in the first two years. You know, the usual amount of floundering that some people have that Barnard allowed for, which is also a good thing. You don’t have to know what you have to do, even now I think. You know, so I majored in a lot of things. I saw a lot of things, and one of my favorite courses was McCaughey’s course, by the way, on whom I had a huge crush at the time. I think it was probably his first year teaching. I really, you know, when Hannah went there, and said, “Professor McCaughey,” I went, “Are you serious?” I remember this! It was a course on Teddy Roosevelt, I loved it. But probably because it was him. I don’t remember a thing about Teddy Roosevelt [laughs]. So you know, I did feel, and maybe partly because as a woman you didn’t feel driven until later on, I had a lot of great exposure to you know, religion department, art history, and that was great. So, really was not, maybe it had to do with being female, maybe it had to with the way the school is, or maybe it is, or was, just the times. I really didn’t decide to go to medical school until my Senior year. I wasn’t ready to decide, but you know I was younger than most people. I graduated when I was 20, so you know, So it was just this major, because it just what I had courses in eventually. I liked a lot of things. You know, your Senior year you realize you have to get it together. So I thought I would go to graduate school in Psychology. I was in no way passionate really about that, and I had a lot of fancy, very intelligent theories about this or that that I schlepped around to various graduate programs and clinical Psych, but for me, it was just unimaginable that I could go to medical school. That was really a gender thing. Mother’s a psychologist. Women didn’t really go to medical school then, not very often, and even then it was usually the brainiac science girls, which I wasn’t. And then in my Senior year I went to various clinical psych interviews, you know whatever, gotta do something, and because I had an interest in things that I was describing that were really actually psychiatric, medically, neurologically based, developmental things, they all told me I should go to medical school at my graduate school interviews [laughing]. I was just like “Oh my god.” I can’t, I was just afraid to. It was just not a thing you did. It was a choice to be basically an asexual person, and that’s when that changed. And so I realized that I could. And so that was actually what I wanted to do. But Barnard was very, you know you were allowed to change your mind about things, and they were very supportive of that. So what happened. I graduated, then I did what’s now called a post-bach. I went home and I did a zillion science courses in a year. I did general chemistry at Columbia that summer, and that was grueling. You know, one year of chemistry in one summer. And then I went to medical school. At that time there were about 20 women in my class of 200. Now it’s over half. But at the time it was still a little strange to do that.

**How long is medical school?**

Four years. Internship is one year. And I went into medicine, not psychiatry. I had a medical internship, I was going to be a Hematologist, that’s what I thought I liked. And I changed my mind, and decided to go into Psychiatry, for a number of reasons at that time. So then that’s a three year residency. And then I had specialty training in child and adolescent, which is you know, some specialty, so that’s two years. Once you’re out of medical school you do get a horrible, it’s not horrible, you’re working insane hours. So yeah, that’s the path. You know, you have to really want it.

**All throughout medical school, I’m assuming that you confronted a lot of sexism.**

Yeah.

**Do you feel that you were put at a disadvantage because you were a woman, because it was built around men, kind of thing? Or were they more welcoming because the times were changing?**

Personally, a lot of sexism. Institutionally based, was quite the opposite. Cause you were special. Once you were a woman at medical school, you were like a feminine feather in their cap. You were a desirable person to have and to have promote if you were smart enough. And, I don’t know. On a personal level there were a lot of incidents where you felt that, especially in surgery. But I never felt that professors or the heads of departments were not backing, on the contrary, because it was a little bit like affirmative action. It was just when it changed. I was very lucky that I wasn’t five years older, you know? Or in fact, 20 years old. Then it got to the point where you weren’t special. And it got harder, in a way, to get in. Because there were more women. Of course, I did very well in school, I did very well in medical school. I would have been just on that basis would have succeeded. The sexism was very individualized. Like I went to medical school in Brooklyn, which was in the 70’s really pretty dangerous. I went over to King’s County Hospital, not safe. So my first work ship was in surgery, and they put me on the prison ward, which was really not safe, a little white girl in a white coat. So what do you think that reflected? I never thought about it at the time because honestly I was just geared to do it. You know, you just had to be [air quotes] be a man about it, so to speak. That was the attitude. And it was only later that I thought, “Why the hell did they put me on that?” First of all it was dangerous, all of these prisoners were shackled to the bed, there was a shoot out, I wasn’t there that day, but you know who sends a little white girl, my height, pretty, with a stethoscope, to go look at naked men in a prison [laughs]. Really? Did they have to do that? So what do you think, is that sexism? Somebody thought that was funny. But it went, you know, what is that. So there were [laughing] other assignments. I remember being int he OR [Operating Room], and as a medical student you stand there and you don’t know what’s going on, but you’re supposed to hold stuff, pretty much that’s all you do, holding something to put something aside, during that work ship you’re not allowed to touch anything. They picked me up, because I was little, picked me up and moved me to different places in the OR like a doll. Holding me, and they all thought it was hilarious, all guys. Probably not the most respectful thing that ever happened to me, but if you were going through that kind of training you had to have a kind of military attitude about it. I don’t remember personally feeling anything other than “Oh, that happened.” Cause you couldn’t really let those feelings in, otherwise you would go ballistic or quit. It was just the way it was. Nobody complained. [Laughing] That wouldn’t happen now, can you imagine?

**So would you say your feminism is, basically, to put it simplistically, that you can be both a professional and also a woman?**

Yeah. Which wasn’t possible before. It was unusual cultural expectation you were choosing. Sure there were exceptions, but that was the perception of my mother’s generation.

**And once you went to medical school, was your family more accepting?**

Well my dad was okay with it. I mean, they didn’t really have a choice [laughing]. One of the things that Barnard did for me is they made if very clear, and I’m not certain how they do that, that it was up to you and don’t let anyone push you around. Don’t let anyone tell you what you’re gonna do. So you know I really had a sense of conviction about it, it didn’t matter what my parents thought, and I knew I could do it so I did it. Eventually people had to get used to it. That fierce thing, it was always there [at Barnard]. I remember it that way. You were always supposed to be strong, whatever you did. You were supposed to do it well, and just stand up for yourself and others. It was a good ethic really.

**I want to know more about your experience on campus. For me, it’s a very foreign concept to think of Columbia as a boy’s school and Barnard as a women’s school.**

Yeah, it was totally different then. I’m still not used to it when I go there. When Hannah went there I was like, “What?” It’s this whole different definition of what Barnard is compared to Columbia College, and the women there. There was always a tension, actually, between Columbia and Barnard, because [mocking] we weren’t as smart as them, of course. That was sexist. But nobody, I mean, who was surprised. It’s just what it was. Nobody though that was okay, but there was a lot of not okay things going on. Sexism being one of many thing civil liberties issues that were not okay. Everybody knew that the guys thought they were smarter than us, but it was just natural, that was everywhere.

**So were all of your classes at Barnard, or did you also take classes at Columbia also?**

Well there was some combined departments, and some combined classes, but it wasn’t like now. Like, the philosophy department was combined, art history department was combined, I took a lot of classes at Columbia but not the way you guys do. That tension, that was the usual sexist attitude that if you were smart you weren’t sexy. And you weren’t as smart as them. Radical politics overshadowed a lot of this, there was a lot of sexism. Women were often kind of like groupies in these situations.

**One of the things we’ve been talking about is how women were kind of pushed back, and did clerical work in the SDS.**

Yes. That’s exactly what I mean. It was obvious. Yeah, everybody knew that, that you were second class. It wasn’t any different than any other part of society at the time.

**Since there wasn’t a curfew, how did that effect the relationship with Columbia guys?**

Well everybody had sex all the time, it was a free for all basically. Which I suppose didn’t happen before quite as openly. I know Columbia had more to do with the dorms or the classrooms, or the cafeteria. I was a sophomore maybe, and Yale, all of us got requests to apply to Yale, because you were in a women’s college and they wanted women.

**So Yale was literally trying to snatch—**

Yeah, I remember that. I was like, Yeah, well no. And if they asked me, they asked everyone. There was no reason to ask particularly me and not anybody else. Because they had to get not just an entering class, right?

**It’s so interesting that there was so much radical activity going on, but still Columbia was one of the last institutions to accept women. And there’s all this blatant, but not talked about, sexism, I mean it’s a cultural problem. It [Columbia] was simultaneously radical and conservative at the same time, is what it seems like.**

That’s Columbia, not Barnard. Barnard was never, Barnard was always really left. Yeah I guess, in the years after, since I live in New York I’ve always known people either going through Columbia, my own friends or whatever, I know that Columbia became very conservative. And probably that was just a return to, but at the time, I don’t know, I didn’t feel it, I didn’t care about it. What was going with Columbia. It was much more separate, much more than now. Nobody said, “I go to Barnard of Columbia University,” nobody said that. Eh, it was Barnard. Because there was Barnard, Radcliffe, Wellesley, you know? You felt proud of that. You didn’t have to be associated in the way that people feel that. Which I always find kind of sad about Barnard, in that way, you know? Everybody I know that’s gone to Barnard in the last 10 years, if they don’t know you went there,“I went to Barnard of Columbia University,” they always add the “Columbia” thing. They were the seven sister schools. I was glad and sad that Barnard didn’t combine with Columbia. Sad in that I knew that if there were going to be girls at Columbia, it would mean that Barnard was going to suffer from the comparison. It was gonna be harder to get into Columbia, it was gonna mean all of the usual things. And, you know the same sex school thing was not, people didn’t back that as much. I mean I sent my girls to same sex girl schools all the way through. Here, Brearly. So I mean, when my older daughter applied to Brearly, the people who interviewed, the reason I loved was it that half of the people were Barnard. It felt exactly the same to me. I was like, “Okay, good.” But there’s a certain kind of pride in that that you don’t have in quite the same now because because of the Columbia College. It’s not as special. Sometimes I think it was a mistake not to join, because this is what was gonna happen. On the other hand, maintaining that identity is important. I wonder if that could have happened while still being a part of Columbia. I don’t know what the issues of the time.

**\*Bathroom break\***

**This is just a follow up question, and it might be a redundant question, but you obviously support single sex education? You think it’s important?**

Yeah, I don’t think it’s important for everybody. Yes, yeah. You know, I didn’t choose Barnard nor did Hannah [her daughter] because it was single sex. And I think it’s nice to have single sex education, especially for women who didn’t have the before, but look, I mean it’s not like anyone in my family knew what feminism was anyway. To have the education for us was important. I think it must be incredible for girls who come from less sophisticated places to be suddenly so empowered, I think that must be amazing. That’s just never been my personal experience. I don’t know, did you have that experience at Barnard?

**Oh, absolutely. I also didn’t pick it because it was single sex. I think if anything I didn’t think about that.**

Well they also don’t sell it that way, anyway. Well it’s not really single sex, because you go to Columbia. It’s the back door, it’s really kind of sad in that way.

**Well it’s funny to me because I didn’t really realize that Barnard was a part of Columbia until orientation week. Cause they had us all seated on the steps and they showed us a video, and they were like, “Barnard is one of the undergraduate colleges of Columbia.” I literally in the middle of this video shouted, “What?!?”**

[Laughs] You had no idea!

**Everyone shot their head around, and I was like, “Yeah, I knew that!”**

[Laughs]

**Then I called my mom, and I was like, “I go to Columbia,” and she was like, “I know.” So it’s also astonishing to me. I remember my freshman year telling people I didn’t even know Barnard was a part of Columbia, and I remember people looking me dead in the eye and being like, “That’s why I chose this school.” It was so surprising to me because it’s so different. Like even now the identity of it still holds true. It’s it own place.**

It is. There is, in New York, a network. When you work there’s a network, it’s a good thing if you went to Barnard. If you stay in New York, there’s a Network of professional women who went to Barnard. It’s not uncommon, in my business, that you’re talking to someone with a similar history. And you’ve got friends too. I think it’s too bad. There was the unequal, sexist take on Columbia, between Columbia and Barnard when you were there. I mean the wider world you went to an Ivy League school like anyone else. The Seven Sister schools were Ivy League schools, so you had the same status having it on your CV or when you were applying to something. It wasn’t, you went to to Barnard and not Columbia College. Which is too bad. Really too bad. I don’t know what they could have done other than be absorbed. I understand wanting to keep your identity in that way, I’m glad they did. But, it suffers from a marketing problem.

**I think now the relationship is so confused. I think the institutions themselves still don’t know.**

Well, I guess it more at Columbia graduation. But you know, I’ve lived there since then. I’ve known a lot of people, and I’ve started knowing girls who went to Columbia College. Lots of them. I honestly don’t see any advantage, either educationally nor are they smarter. So it’s annoying to me, really. You know where my allegiances lie.

**I find that Barnard are smarter, I mean, smarter and more well-rounded.**

More self-assured. By the end of it. I think that Columbia women are not, certainly not as sophisticated about gender issues, that’s for sure. But, I don’t know. They’re not fierce [laugh], and why would they?

**Do you have a memory of, whether it’s a class or whatever it is, where it just moved you and changed you forever, and kind of sums up your Barnard experience? Or a few memories? I know it’s a broad question.**

Well, I took a religion course from Theodore Gaster, a theology professor. Wrote a lot of books on the all of the experience that makes a religion, what was the spiritual part of it, I don’t remember exactly. But I remember being in his class, which was in no way my wheel house. There was a certain intellectual understanding that , you know, the interface between culture and individual mental life was very inspiring to me. You know, obviously, I continued to think about those things for the rest of my life. An, although I was a psych major, I had all of these other influences. That was to some extent very intellectually inspiring to me as a systemic understanding of the way that people develop and think about their place in the world. So that was a great experience. What else. I remember my art history course with Barbara Novak, I guess it was pre-Renaissance. I took a number of courses with her. And I just loved it because it was just a smart of women talking about very esoteric things, like iconography in 1200, it was just really cool. You could just do that. I remember liking that. I don’t remember liking no particular Psych course even though that was my major [laugh]. But I remember a Professor who was named Sue Larson, is she still there? Over in Philosophy? [I didn’t know] I don’t remember what she taught, but probably some esoteric thing like Lichtenstein. You know, the really spacey stuff. I remember really liking that, and being allowed to explore that part of myself. Only to stimulate your critical thinking. Learned a lot of critical thinking at Barnard. It wasn’t easy, it’s not an easy school. When I went there, I didn’t know how to write an essay. I was 16, I almost flunked out of first semester [laugh] it was really scary. You know I ended up doing really well, they were not hands on nurturing, but still very nurturing terms of your agency as a women. I can’t think of any other classes.

**Did you guys have a strong support staff?**

None of it. Well if it was there I didn’t use it. I think there was some shrink for everybody who was coming off of some drug they shouldn’t have taken. But I don’t remember the health service having the prominence it does now. Now you hear about everything. Every female, physical or mental issue, you get a leaflet for. You know everything is very focused on reproductive rights and abortion rights, it’s much more around. Then it was barely talked about, only when someone had a problem. And nobody got raped, nobody talked about that. Of course someone did, but you didn’t even know. I never thought about that. That’s odd, isn't it? That must have happened all the time, but nobody talked about it. And directed at Barnard women, it must have been, of course. It’s a question you should think about. Course everyone was sexually active. It was before HIV Aids, when people were not particularly careful. There must have been a lot of abortions as a consequence. But it was a time when probably even women didn't even think about that as being rape. If you knew the guy, I bet it wasn’t a word. Right? Because that’s how that works. It’s not a stranger. I wonder if anyone knows about that, because there’s certainly no records or numbers. Certainly there’s a health service record from then, and see how many people got abortions, or referrals to Planned Parenthood or something. If there’s even some record of that.

**Would they go to health services?**

I don’t even know. I know they went to Planned Parenthood for the pills, and their abortions eventually. I think you could call for more information. It would be good to know that, because it was just before Roe v. Wade, it was a huge problem. I remember someone get really sick by what was done. It was scary. You know, it was before safe sex was a thing. There was no HIV, there was no knowledge about STD’s, no HPV. Nobody knew a thing. You only used protection to not get pregnant, that was the only reason. There must have been a lot of pregnant women. Find out.

**Is there anything else? Weird question to ask, but closing thoughts on Barnard?**

I think if I hadn’t gone there, I’d be a feminist, but I wouldn’t really have the grounding or the understanding that I do because of how I’ve been radicalized, sensitized to those issues, and that’s because I went there. Everyone’s a feminist now. But for me, because of my experience there, that became who I am and what I do. I would imagine that Barnard has a higher percentage of women who’ve gone to do something that you wouldn’t think as feminist, like something that I do, but there are aspects of what I do that are very much advocacy in that area. I do think that if I hadn’t gone there, it wouldn’t have been as important in my life.

**On protesting:**

It was not a fun thing. I mean, it was exciting, but it wasn’t a party. But that’s why the Eric Garner thing, which went up my block and I saw it too, was amazing. The people I saw in that particular crowd was serious. It wasn’t a party, they were serious. I was impressed.

**Would you say that the spirit of those protests were similar to what you experienced when you were at Barnard?**

Not as good, but it was similar. Because it was a certain amount of moral consciousness raising. My husband’s black, so I’m more aware of racial issues, maybe more than most white women of my generation. But I think that opened a lot of eyes of white people to really believe that bad shit happened to adolescent boys who went to school with their kids, just on the basis of race. I think it’s hard for people to believe that it’s hard to get a cab if you’re black man. In that sense it was similar because it was educational for a lot of people, that they have privilege, a word that we have now, so now you can know there is institutional racism. You have to be quite prejudiced to not quite understand that. I knew a lot of people who could not believe it was not quite that bad. That stop and frisk was quite that bad. They didn’t see it, how could it be true. There isn’t the solidarity between people that you felt there. With the people I went to college with, we feel like sisters. We don’t talk to each other for years. That isn’t just the college freshman thing. I think that maybe at Barnard they still have that, but it was a wider movement and you felt more connected. Because it’s all Facebook. You guys aren’t quite as connected anyways because of Facebook.