Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington

Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, University of Washington
Seattle, WA

LEXIE EVANS

Interviewed by
Simona Liao

April 23rd, 2021
Record online over Zoom

Narrator
Lexie Evans, born on August 7, 1946 in Butte, Montana, is a feminist activist, educator and Women Studies alumni. Evans attended Seattle Central Community College, and was involved in women's health care reform in University YWCA, Seattle. She attended University of Washington in 1972 with a major in English Literature, and took multiple classes in the Women Studies program. After graduation, Evans went into the industry of restaurant management for 10 years. She organized the International Women's Studies Conference at University of Washington in 1985. Evans became the Director of the Women's Center at Seattle Central College, and then the Dean of Student Life. Lexie was also given the GWSS alumni award.

Interviewer
Simona Liao is an undergraduate student at University of Washington, with a major in Computer Science and a minor in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies. She completed this oral history in Spring Quarter 2021 of her second year of university under the mentorship of Prof. Priti Ramamurthy in GWSS 490. Simona explored the field of GWSS since her freshman year and she expects to become a feminist scholar and activist in the future.

GWSS 490 was a class focused on the research methodology of oral history, instructed by Prof. Priti Ramamurthy. Due to the influence of global pandemics, GWSS 490 was taught online in Spring 2021. For the same reason, the interview was conducted online over zoom.

Abstract
In this oral history, Lexie Evans shared her personal background and upbring in Montana. She discussed the influence of important social events, such as the Vietnam War, on her community and how her mother's astute view of those events led her to care about political events. Evans mentioned her transition from Montana to Seattle, WA, which was a more diverse community and center of political agitation. She shared many women's movements in University YWCA, and the political activities and RAP group that she was involved in, which was one of the most emphasized topics in the interview. Evans also offered her reflections on those movements in the 70s and 80s, and her opinions on the current social movements. Then, Evans discussed her education at UW, the classes in Women Studies program, and how Women Studies classes influenced her lens of reading and thinking. Evans talked about her journey after graduating from UW, from restaurant management to the organizer of Women's Studies Conference at UW, from Director of the Women's Center to the Dean of Student Life at Seattle Central College. She shared how her experience in activism, management, and education in Women Studies shaped her role as an educator.

Interview recorded by Simona Liao using Zoom Cloud Recording.

Files
Audio: 31_Evans-Lexie_audio.m4a
Video: 31_Evans-Lexie_video.mp4

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[00:00:01.050]

[Video: 31_Evans-Lexie_video.mp4]

LIAO: Great. I just turned on the recording. I think Zoom might pop a notice for you to give me consent to do the recording.

EVANS: Well, it just says leave meeting or continue so I assume that continue is consent.

LIAO: Yeah, okay. Hi, Lexie. Thank you so much for agreeing to be on this interview. Today is April 23 2021 and it's a Friday afternoon. My name is Simona Liao. I will be interviewing Lexie Evans, who was a Women Studies alumni when GWSS department was still called Women Studies. Lexie was also one of the panelists in the GWSS 50th anniversary event. So we're really glad to have you here, Lexie.

EVANS: Well it's good to be here.

[00:00:46.500]

LIAO: So, first of all we'll get started with a set of questions about your personal history and background. So what do you call yourself, what name do you go by and what pronouns do you go by?

EVANS: I call myself Lexie Evans. And I use female pronouns.

[00:01:08.970]

LIAO: Okay. Thank you, and when and where were you born.

EVANS: I was born in the high mountains of Montana, in a town, a mining town, called Butte, Montana.

[00:01:23.010]

LIAO: And when were you born?

EVANS: Oh, August 7, 1946.

[00:01:29.790]

LIAO: Thank you for sharing and could you tell me a little bit more about your family, parents, what kind of work did they do?

EVANS: My parents had both grown up in this mining town. And they got married right after the Second World War, immediately when my father came home from the service, and I was their first child. But they eventually had nine children. I'm the oldest in a really big family. I have five brothers and three sisters. Actually two of them are no longer with us, I lost one sister and one brother.

LIAO: Sorry to hear that.

EVANS: It was long ago.

[00:02:23.520]

LIAO: I see, so what kind of work did your parents do?

EVANS: Oh well, my father was a salesman. He worked for office equipment companies and he sold and fixed office equipment. My mother stayed home with all those children. I mean it was a modest... We were just working class people. When I was 18, however, and of course at that time, I still had a little brother who was three. So my parents bought a little business and they started a little drive-in restaurant. By that time they had moved to another town in Montana called Kalispell, Montana. It was a lot of fun. Our whole family worked in the restaurant, made hamburgers and ice cream sundaes, and we worked together. It made a better life for me.

[00:03:36.060]

LIAO: That sounds really interesting.

EVANS: Yeah it was interesting. And Kalispell, Montana at that time had about not quite 20,000 people. So it's almost like a village. So everybody came to the restaurant and my parents knew everybody and my friends were happy to know someone who sold hamburgers.

[00:04:00.300]

LIAO: Yeah, so it was a very connected community.

EVANS: Very connected Community, yeah.

[00:04:08.250]

LIAO: So what were some of the biggest social issues during your teenage years?

EVANS: Well, I went to high school from 1962 to 1964. And there were huge civil rights issues going on in the United States, but they were not reflected in a very active way in the community in which I lived because it was not a community that had a lot of diversity. However, also in the mid 60s, the war in Vietnam was causing a lot of concern and controversy and...(pause) My mother was very astute and fair minded. And she had a kind of an activist way of looking at the world, and she was very much against this war, as were other people. I mean that, unlike integration which did not have a huge representation in our town. The war affected everyone in the entire country. So people began to become politically active and interested in things and were aware of the larger world at that time, whether they were interested or not, you know, they were forced into that mode.

I think that I followed in my mother's footsteps more than I realized at the time and I became also concerned and interested in anti war activities, but as soon as you begin to look at contradictions and problems, you begin to become more aware of other contradictions and problems. Your eyes are kind of opened. I started going to school at that time at a little community college in our valley and I started to be kind of, mobilized, little bit mobilized.

[00:06:47.460]

LIAO: I see, so you mentioned your mother had a really activist point of view. So would you say your mother really influenced you a lot or get you started to care about the social issues?

EVANS: My mother grew up in a mining town, a union town. so she had been sensitized in her growing up to labor issues and issues around poverty and discrimination. so Yeah.

LIAO: I see. Thank you for sharing. That's awesome. I think it's nice to grow up in this kind of family when mother really care about those important things happening around us. So next, we'll move on to the questions about your experiences at University of Washington.

[00:07:42.630]

So when did you come to the University of Washington?

EVANS: Well, I think, as best I recall, I think I actually started classes in the fall of 1972. This is in my personal history kind of important. Prior to that, I had been taking classes at a community college, that's still there, in Seattle Central, was up on Capitol Hill, and it was a place of great political agitation at the time. And so I moved from living in this little quiet village in the mountains, where everybody thought pretty much the same, into a very vibrant and activist community with lots of different kinds of people. So that experience at Seattle Central catapulted me into a lot of community activities. I became actually kind of engaged in some groups, and in some movements.

I started going to meetings of various kinds, including meetings that were held at the University YWCA, which was on the ave at that time. I don't even know if it still exists. But it was an extremely engaged and busy place in the 70s and a center of lots of agitation. And a lot of services had been set up, just in this tiny upstairs space of an office, building on the ave. I just want to briefly tell you that so many things started in that space. They started a women's clinic called Aradia Women's Clinic, which is now a women's clinic on its own in Seattle. They started an organization called Mechanica, which their first thing was to teach women how to change the oil in their car. I didn't ever learn to do that. I didn't want to change the oil in my car.(laughing) But that organization became a large organization called ANEW, which helped women get into the trades. And it was an extremely active and extremely effective organization for 20 or 30 years. So, they started a Lesbian Resource Center at that time.

One of the things I was working on was abortion reform and they had a service there, where we would take people to the doctor and we interviewed doctors and found out, you know, who was sensitive. We had a big agenda around creating safe and non-traumatic opportunities for women to control their own bodies. So I think most of that work now goes to planned parenthood, but it was a large and important organization of the time. So I was involved in that, and then I also went to this meeting, which was called a RAP group [Note: conscious-raising group], where women just got together and talked about their frustration, their goals. They talked about feminism. And really these were happening all over the country where women were trying to define what they wanted to do. And many, many women who are brilliant and willing to work very hard were really fed up with the activists like SPS. I'm not to take anything away from the work they did. But, you know, it was run by men who are very domineering and egotistical. And what they really thought women should do is the menial work and women were kind of leaving, (laughing), saying, "surely, there are some other work for us to do."

So, it was in those rap groups that I began to meet and talk to women who were talking about how they wanted to have Women Studies at the University of Washington. So, then I decided to go to the University of Washington. So that's a very long lead-in but it's kind of important because that's just a little tiny microscopic look at what was going on in the women's movement at that time. There were just all kinds of things popping up. Women were identifying needs and trying to find ways to meet them.

LIAO: Thank you so much for sharing that. I believe that it's definitely a very important and also exciting moment at that time. It also nicely moves into some of my other questions. I think you mentioned a lot of important things like the YWCA and also the rap group you were in.

[00:13:35.400]

So, first, I want to learn a little bit more about the YWCA. You mentioned that there were many movements happened there, like the lesbians right, the abortion right. So normally who would go to that place? Was the demographics like mostly college students, like you were, or also involved other people?

EVANS: No it involved other people.The University YWCA had been established many years before to serve college students. But the YWCA has been an organization that has been in place for, I don't know when they started it but I'm going to say, about 100 years to provide safety and security and shelter, and in some cases, connections to work and things like that all over the country, as women were kind of moving off the farm, if you will, and into the city. YWCA created a shelter for them. The YWCA itself was known by all ages of women. So I think that there was a fairly broad age demographic being served certainly because it was a new district, and because it was basically run by students. The largest number of users were those people who frequented at the U-district. But it certainly wasn't only them.

[00:15:22.710]

LIAO: I see. Thank you, I think the panelists also discussed a lot about YWCA on the event, and I think you mentioned that YWCA used to be that place for all the progressive groups, but then it started to be bigger and more institutionalized. So could you share a little bit more about the change in YWCA.

EVANS: Well, what happened, among other things, was many of the services they were providing became standalone services. The women's clinic, which was the back room of this tiny organization, got their own space. It became a much larger clinic and a much larger organization. They started raising money for their own work. Mechanica, the little group of people saying women can fix things, eventually moved to a college, a community college setting, where they were helping women get into the programs that would get them into the trades. So one by one, the little tiny offices moved out of the YWCA and into their own spaces because they were growing, which is exactly what needed to happen. And something stayed.

One of the things that I was involved in was the abortion birth control referral service. And a good example of what happened there is that we identified as we were looking at what doctors were providing abortion and what their values were and why they were doing it. We discovered that there was, it doesn't even exist anymore, but there was a huge health care resource in Seattle, at the time called Group Health. And it was a health cooperative. Everyone that I knew belonged to Group Health. You joined and then all of your health care was provided to you for the cost of your monthly membership. Well, we discovered to our amazement and dismay that not only were they not going to do abortions, they were going to see abortions as a totally voluntary, you know, like plastic surgery. (laughing) It wasn't like you had to have your appendix out, it was like you decided to have an abortion. So they were not going to cover that. Not only were they not going to cover it in your dues, but they weren't going to do abortions there.

And so that led us to another reality which was everything, and this was a bunch of women talking right, so everything in our healthcare was completely covered, our medication, except birth control. So this was a group of women for their primary healthcare need, was birth control. And we were paying our dues at Group Health, but if we needed birth control, we had to pay additional for the birth control. Of course, birth control was pretty fresh at that time too. So, we started another, I was one of the founding members of another organization called the Group Health Women's Caucus. And when we started reaching out to the members of group health, now that encompass women of all ages. The primary Group Health center was up at the top of Capitol Hill. So, at that time it was an extremely diverse neighborhood. It was right on the edge of the black neighborhood. And so suddenly the Group Health women's Caucus was very diverse in many, many ways. All different kinds of people. All different ages of people.

And we changed all that. It was the kind of organization that came into being. It took us about three years to get. And we got all of the things that we were asking for. And then you know, there was probably still work to do at Group Health, but I had been moved on to something else that I was doing. And that group kind of faded away after it had finished its task but it united a very broad spectrum of women in that cause because they had all had identical common needs.

LIAO: Yeah I see. Well, that's really cool and exciting what is going on.

EVANS: It was very exciting, it was very exciting.

[00:21:07.980]

LIAO: So, you mentioned that it seems like different organizations that used to be in YWCA, they had their own locations.So do you think that actually made the connections between them weaker or did it influence anything?

EVANS: Well, I wouldn't have used that term "weaker", but I think it did put them in a position of… For instance, needing to raise their own funds and be really focused on their own projects. But, for me, I can only really at this point speak for myself, I think somebody should write a book about the YWCA actually. But I think all the groups that started there felt as I do now still connected to all those groups. I mean, I still feel extremely sentimental and kind of that they were heroic and that I knew them and I was there when they started. So I still support their enduring success and I doubt if I'm the exception. But the fact is that, just like, as soon as you start really doing your own work that takes up most of your time. Although it takes up most of your time, it doesn't mean that you're not still an ally in some way of the other groups that are doing the same thing.

[00:22:48.360]

LIAO: Yeah, I see. Since you mentioned being an ally, I am also wondering how race and class were brought up in the alliance of those different groups or movements at that time?

EVANS: Well, I will say this, that certainly, race and class were huge issues for organizations like Mechanica and ANEW which were trying to get jobs for women. Race and class were huge issues for Aradia which were trying to get abortions and health care. Safe, generous health care for women. Those are all issues that cut across all class definitions and which impact all women, so they were the perfect vehicle for helping people identify their common ground.

[00:23:54.360]

LIAO: I see. Since there were so many important movements going on at the moment, how did it feel like to be part of it?

EVANS: Oh, I was. I actually felt like I had just been born.(laughing) In some ways, it was really marvelous and we were infused with a sense of... We were furious, you know, about so many things, but we were and, I'll speak for myself but I think I'm correct about many people, we were having a lot of success. That we thought was going to be more powerful and changing society than it turned out to be. But we thought it would be, like we thought when Group Health changed those few rules and started giving more holistic health care to women and when there was a Lesbian Resource Center, discrimination against lesbians would end. When Women Studies became a program at the University of Washington, that life would never be the same again in the academy. So, every single time we accomplish something we've found something else that we needed to do. But we did have a sense and perhaps a slightly exaggerated sense that we were succeeding. That the goals that we had made sense. They were necessary. They were vital to the well being of humanity. So we felt empowered and energized really all the time.

Now I ended up working in education. And so you know, sadly, I have to face the fact that, despite all that work and despite all our hopes and it started 15 years ago, well, it started longer than that, but the period we're talking about started15 years ago, women are still making 70 cents on the dollar compared to men.

Women graduate in the top of their class with degrees in computer science and go to Google and get paid less than the men with the same degree. We still have a lot of work to do. But we didn't know, and we should have known because the same thing was true for the women who worked starting in 1848, who started working on women's rights and suffrage. Those women worked for 50 years and more and died before their sisters got the vote. So we should have known that it was going to be a long haul. And I do think that the world has changed in many, many positive ways. But it hasn't changed as much as we thought it would.

LIAO: Yeah that's true.

EVANS: Yeah, so we're depending on you. You know, old age, we were like. I was just with some friends the other night and we're saying we just have to turn it over to these young women.

[00:27:57.450]

LIAO: Yeah, that's great. That actually moves perfectly to my other question. What do you find most surprising about the social movements happening right now, such as the BLM and stop AAPI hate? For example, if 19 years old Lexie woke up and found herself in 2021, what would surprise her the most?

EVANS: I don't actually understand your question.

[00:28:21.030]

LIAO: Oh sorry, I can repeat it again. So what do you find surprising about the social movement happening right now, such as Black Lives Matter and stop Asian American hate?

EVANS: It doesn't surprise me. I have a feeling you're trying to get at something.(laughing) And I am not sure what it is. These are really the same issues. So it does not surprise me. I mean it breaks my heart that now today, they're still shooting these black people. And I don't know how our black sisters can bear it really. But it doesn't surprise [me]. It makes me sorrowful but it doesn't make me like "oh gosh,

what a..." Because the underlying assumptions about American power do not examine your mistakes. You know, just blunder forward, making sure that white men are in charge of everything getting exactly what they want all the time. I mean, nobody puts that into words, of course.

But I happen to be very touchy at the moment because my state where I live turned so red at this election. And we just have a bunch of boobs in running the state, who are against everything that promotes human dignity. Now they wouldn't, of course, use that sentence. They would just talk about business and how important it is that we get the economy back on track. But the assumptions that underlie that pro-business stand are sexist and racist. And they're the exact same assumptions that were underlying the Vietnam War and have been underlying segregation and white supremacy all along.

And of course it gets new. It gets new energy and it gets new slogans, but the selfish paternalistic assumptions are exactly the same, so I don't think that I would be surprised. But as I said a minute ago, we really thought that we were starting to make a dent in that. And not just women, you know, but the young men who were fighting for civil rights and fighting for peace thought the same thing.

LIAO: Thanks for sharing that. Sometimes I feel the same when I was learning the history of the movement and I was really excited to know how that stuff happened. And now, when I look at what is going on right now, you just see the same thing. The kind of same problem is still occurring in the current world. Thank you for sharing all of that, and then we'll move to the next section. It will be more about your coursework at the University of Washington.

[00:32:00.000]

So what was your major field of study at UW?

EVANS: English literature.

[00:32:05.850]

LIAO: So were there any Women Studies classes at that time?

EVANS: Well, there were. I suppose. I hadn't really examined this, but I suppose I would have ended up going there anyway. But the reason that I went was because over a while, where I was involved in all this political activity, women started talking about a Women Studies program and I was like I want to take those classes. It's very easy to get into the University of Washington then, thank goodness. (laughing) I had gone to several community colleges prior to that, and so I had been taking and loving literature classes. So I matriculated as an English major, but I knew that I wanted to take Women Studies classes.

So the way that the Women Studies program was set up, you had to have a core subject matter. And I actually had probably almost enough credits at that time for the English major part of it because I had been taking literature classes. But I still took a lot of literature classes at the University of Washington. And there were a lot of brilliant young women teaching English classes at the University of Washington at that time. Some of which were cross listed with Women Studies and some of which were not, but they were still being taught with a feminist eye toward looking at what women were writing and saying. So I was able to take both the classes that were being offered just by Women Studies which were very exciting and continue that lens in the literature classes that I was taking as well.

[00:34:22.950]

LIAO: Yeah that's great. It seems like your work in activism motivated you to take classes in Women Studies, so did the knowledge you learnt from those classes also interact with your political movements?

EVANS: Well, it did and in those days as well, I should say that we were always in study groups. I mean, not related to the university but like, I was in a Marxist study group. And I should tell you, I don't bring this up very often anymore, but I used to wear a beret all the time and I had a little red star of China on my hat, because we were just very ideal. This was during the war. We were very idealistic about

Chairman Mao. I had a little Red Book. So we were studying, I mean, we're madly studying all the time, in class and other classes and other places.

[00:35:34.320]

LIAO: I see, that's interesting. So my next question is in the early days of Women Studies, this field was always considered as not a legitimate scholarship. So, how were the dynamics and tension at UW around Women Studies program like and how did that influence your experience in Women Studies classes, and how did you respond to that?

EVANS: Well, I became a member of the Women Studies Advisory Committee. So at that time, Women Studies was a program and if you had a major you could add this Women Studies piece in it. And I didn't really care what my degree said. Because I did not think that my degree, either in English literature or Women Studies was going to be my ticket to a job. It was a time of tremendous idealism. And so, all I really cared about consciously was what I was learning. So the only concerns I had about what the university thought was the way that it fed my resistance to the patriarchy. All those people there, so unfair. It kind of fanned my flame of resistance to patriarchal authority. And I was concerned because although I was an activist, and very excitable, I was actually kind of a smart and sensible person. I understood that we had to be able to convince the powers that be at the university that Women Studies had to become a department. It had to be able to hire people and had to be able to have a solid foundation. But I really only thought about that in the context of my role on the Advisory Committee. I didn't think about it as a student. Because, as a student, the only thing that really mattered to me was there, the classes were there, the things that I wanted to study were available to me. And so, as far as my own education was concerned, it was going fine for me and the way in which I was concerned about the inability of the administration to see the significance was in terms of the long plan.

LIAO: That's really cool. I think that's a different perspective about university education, as we see it, right now, where it's basically a path to get better jobs for you.

[00:38:57.930]

So thank you for sharing that. What were the classes like at that time, such as what topics were covered, what was the size of the class and the demographics?

EVANS: Well, none of the classes were very big. As time went on, I eventually ended up co-teaching the introductory class, which was called Women 200. And there would be like maybe 100 people in the class, 80 to 100. It was very popular. And that was considered a very, very big class.

I took a lot of other classes. There was a class on women in the law. There was a class I remember taking, this counted as a science class, thank God, the statistics of discrimination, teaching us how to read reports that would twist numbers. I took a linguistics class on language of sexism. And I urge you to take a linguistics class. It's really a largely under advertised area of study, and you will learn a lot about how language is used to discriminate. They had a class called psychobiology of women. And it was taught by a psychologist and a biologist, kind of nature and nurture. It was extremely interesting. And I took a lot of literature classes. I remember I took a class on women in modern Europe, and women In Elizabeth and England. I think someone mentioned Claire Brights' class philosophy of feminism [in the panel]. She's such a brilliant teacher and became a good friend of mine. I'm trying to think. There was a class called women in the law.

I'm sure I'm not remembering everything and again, because I was a literature major I was really interested in the development of ideas in literature of how women describe themselves in their lives. So I think that developing my intellectual ability to critique that really helped me for the next 50 years with every book I ever read. So that was kind of important to me, just on a personal level. But, of course, then I went on to be an educator and so all of these... The way that I've come to look at the world changed the way that I did my job.

LIAO: Thank you for sharing. I'll definitely look into the linguistic classes.

EVANS: I really think that's a good idea.

LIAO: And also, I think a lot of classes are still going on right now, like the psychobiology of women and women in law, and also the philosophy of feminism. So what were the Women Studies classes that really stood out to you? Or faculty members that influenced you a lot?

EVANS: Oh well, you know, we'll just dispense with the literature classes. I mean in many ways, they were the most important to me, because they were the area about which I already knew the most. So you know, that the more knowledge that you have, the more knowledge you're going to be able to attach to it. But let's just put that aside for a moment.

I would say that the most riveting things for me were there were probably only four, maybe five classes that I took that dealt with women's history. Thereby it was revealed to me the tremendous gaping hole in my education, up till then. So it changed my whole view of knowing of the past but of the way people are taught. When I suddenly learned about all these things that women had done and all the contributions they'd made to the world that had never been mentioned to me, and all of my education, up till then. I became a very different kind of reader and a very different kind of citizen. And then, of course, I became a very different type of college administrator. One of the women on the panel, Mary Rothschild, taught several of those classes. She wasn't the only history teacher I had, but she was so illuminated by the knowledge she was gaining. She was very exciting. She was very dynamic. And that just completely turned my intellectual curiosity into a much more, what shall we say, empowered position.

LIAO: Yeah thanks for sharing that. I also felt the same thing when I was taking GWSS classes. It really got me to question where the knowledge was from, or why it has been like that.

EVANS: Yes, exactly.

[00:45:47.850]

LIAO: Great. And so, as you mentioned in the interview, you moved on to become an educator. And you also shared how the Women Studies classes influenced your role. So could you share a little more about how you applied your experience from Women Studies to your work in the Seattle Central College as the Dean of student life?

EVANS: Well, can I tell you something else before that?

LIAO: Yeah sure.

EVANS: When I got out of college in 1975, you might be surprised to know that nobody had a big sign saying, if you have a Women Studies degree or an English degree, apply here. So I got a job managing a restaurant. Remember, my parents had a restaurant. And I worked in that industry, or very similar industries, for about 10 years. And I managed a chain of delis, 11 delis, that were all in office buildings. So they were only open during the day. I learned during that decade a great deal about the working poor. In my marvelous education, Women Studies, one of the things that we always talked about were class and race discrimination that kept people in poverty. And so, then, when I was in the business of hiring people, in restaurants the pay is terrible and I wasn't the owner, of course. So my academic dreams and ideals had to be confronted by the people that were working for me that were perfectly brilliant who were working in a Deli, making sandwiches for minimum wage. And so I learned a lot about class discrimination and lack of opportunity. And I learned a lot about management.

Suddenly, a marvelous, my friend and faculty Member at the University of Washington, Sydney Kaplan, who was then the director of the Women Studies department, called me, and I was managing a restaurant at the time, and begged me to come and work for her because the University of Washington had been selected to host the International Women's Studies Conference which was in 1985. So I've been out of college for 10 years. But I had remained in touch with Women Studies. I mean, I still knew the teachers and I might have been on the Advisory Board for a while, too. And I did that. I took a huge cut and pay and came back and organize that conference. And it was a huge success, 1500 people came from all over the world. There were hundreds and hundreds of sessions and it was just a marvelous event.

Of course, I didn't do it alone, but I was fortunate to be able to be involved in it, because one of the things that I thought to do at that time was to try to get the people that were managing these women's programs in community colleges, because almost every community college had an office where they tried to help women get into college. That's one of the things that had happened, through the women's movement. So I thought, I know they're doing this at the community college. So that got me in touch with all of the people in the community college system and some of them got involved in the conference and some of them didn't. But nonetheless I had connected with them.

And then after the Conference, I was offered a couple of...I've had a chance to do a couple of little projects at the community colleges, because I had this recent success organizing something. So people started asking me to organize something for them, just little projects. Eventually, that led to my becoming the Director of the Women's Center at Seattle Central. So I stayed there and I kind of wiggled my way up through the administration and eventually became the Dean of Student Life, which we call this leadership there. So I had a 30 year career at Seattle Central. So I came to Seattle Central with my Women Studies background and my background managing those restaurants. In Seattle central, all community colleges

but in particular Seattle Central, serves a broad and diverse constituency. They were considered in the early days, I'm not using this term, I'm just quoting it, "the ghetto school." So it's still a kind of destination college for students of color who want to be in an institution which has a diverse faculty, a diverse administration. And the quality and the values of the school are impacted by that diverse administration. So it was a tremendous privilege for me to be able to work there and it was actually perfect for my background because of my fabulous education in thinking about underserved populations, i.e., women. I was able to using my own experience as well, but also everything that I learned in Women Studies applied to the kinds of programs and policies and leadership style that I tried to infuse into student leadership.

LIAO: I think that's such a marvelous journey, I will say, after graduating from UW to management in restaurants and then the conference and in Seattle Central. That's really, really great. So it seems like both of your experiences in activism work and also your knowledge from the Women Studies classes contribute to your role as an educator in Seattle Central at last.

EVANS: Absolutely, absolutely.

LIAO: As you mentioned the demographics in Seattle central, do you think the things you learned about race and class from those different parts of your life influenced your role as an educator?

EVANS: They made me ready to learn. They made me ready to learn, when I became a member of that population that worked at Seattle Central, I had a lot to learn. But I was ready to learn. I mean I wasn't quite ready to be a member. But I really had a lot to learn about racism and white privilege. Because it's all very well to talk about it in class at the University of Washington, it’s quite another thing to deal with it at Seattle Central Community College, or now it's called Seattle Central College where there are people there that know 500 times more than I do. So I

think it was the making of my life really, to make my life truly meaningful and to come to a much better understanding of this of the situations that exist in our society.

[00:55:43.980]

LIAO: That's great. Thank you. I have one last question to wrap up our interview. How do you feel or think about the GWSS department right now at UW?

EVANS: Well.(pause) Now I live in Missoula, Montana and I'm on the board of an educational project for old people, called Osher lifelong learning. So, how can I say this... Really, this is a bunch of old white people (laughing), which I am one. I just love it. We have marvelous classes and we're creating a really interesting lecture series.

But Montana is not very diverse. And so I think about GWSS with great longing and homesickness (laughing), and admiration and I wish them the best. And I wish that I could be of more service to them. And I'm not in any way criticizing my friends here, but it is not as exciting an environment, although very good people with good values. But I do think that. That was the richest time of my life.

LIAO: That's great. Thank you. I think that's a wonderful conclusion to our interview. And then I'll stop recording right now.