Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington

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

Michelle Habell-Pallán

Interviewed by
Christina Yuen Zi Chung

October 30, 2017
Conference Room - Room B110, Padelford Hall,
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

Narrator
Professor Michelle Habell-Pallan is Associate Professor in the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies department and Adjunct Associate Professor of the School of Music and Department of Communication at the University of Washington. Professor Habell-Pallan received her M.A. in American Literature from the University of California, San Diego in 1993, and later earned her Ph.D. in Literature and Cultural Studies from the University of California, San Cruz in 1997. Her publications include: *Latina/o Popular Culture* (co-edited with Mary Romero, 2002), *Loca Motion: The Travels of Chicana and Latina Popular Culture* (2005), and *Cornbread and Cuchifritos: Ethnic Identity Politics, Transnationalization, and Transculturation in American Urban Popular Music* (co-edited with William Raussert, 2011). She guest-curated the award-winning bilingual and traveling exhibit *American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music* hosted by Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), which is documented in an upcoming book. As a digital feminista she transforms digital humanities through community engagement. She serves as co-director of University of Washington Libraries "Women Who Rock: Making Scenes, Building Communities Oral History Archive," which is an extension of her work as founder and organizer of the *Women Who Rock: Making Scenes, Building Communities* Collective.

Interviewer
Christina Yuen Zi Chung is a writer, translator, and PhD scholar in Feminist Studies at the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Department of the University of Washington. She received her first degree at the University of Edinburgh, where she achieved an MA (Hons) in Archaeology, and later obtained an MVA (Master of Visual Arts) in Art and Culture (Theory and Criticism) from Hong Kong Baptist University in 2014.

She became involved in the Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington through the GWSS 490: Oral History Research Methodology class taught by Professor Priti Ramamurthy of the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies (GWSS) Department. Students of the class were asked to conduct an interview with a faculty member of the GWSS department as part of the fulfillment of the course requirements.

Abstract
In this oral history, Michelle Habell-Pallán details her life story from her upbringing in Southern California, U.S.A. in the 1960s to her current work at the University of Washington in 2017. She traces her interest in feminism to her early days, growing up in a patriarchal household as a mixed race Mexican-American woman in Downey, California – a white-majority community. The double vectors of sexism and racism that she encountered in her family and at school, in addition to her lifelong love of music, drew her to punk rock and ska music, amongst others. These genres of music exhibited a sense of liberation and anti-racist sentiment that provided a channel of release for her experiences, and later influenced the course of her research. Whilst studying literature for her Master's degree at University of California San Diego (UCSD), the introduction of cultural studies into the field of literature opened up new possibilities for her, and it allowed her to perform literary analyses of music and popular culture in her writing. A feminist approach was present throughout her Master's and Doctoral work, nurtured by the feminist atmosphere that was prevalent

at both UCSD and the University of California Santa Cruz, respectively. Under the mentorship of scholars such as Lisa Lowe who integrated feminist theory into literary studies, Michelle Habell-Pallán developed a body of work that consistently blended her lifelong passion for feminism with popular culture, music, and Chicano/Chicana Studies. She joined the University of Washington in 1998, first as a member of faculty at the American Ethnic Studies Department, then joining the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Department (then known as the Women's Studies Department) in 2008. Michelle Habell-Pallán speaks on several significant projects that she has developed through collaborative processes throughout her career at the University of Washington, including: *American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music* and *Women Who Rock: Making Scenes, Building Communities*. In particular she highlights both the collaborative work that has resulted in the fruition of these projects as well as the archival work that are also central to these initiatives. These projects are guided by a strong feminist ethos, which is characterized by the presence of co-authorship and a collective mentality that does not elevate the individual above the group. She concludes the interview by sharing insights on new directions in feminist scholarship that she would like to pursue, both personally and for the future development of the University of Washington GWSS Department as a whole.

Interview recorded by Christina Yuen Zi Chung using Canon Vixia HF M52 Camcorder. One 100-minute .mov video file.

Files
Audio: list file names; file name.mp3
Video: Habell-Pallán-Michelle_FOHP Interview.mov

Transcript – 30 pages
Transcribed by Christina Yuen Zi Chung, November 2017.
Reviewed and edited by Michelle Habell-Pallán.

NOTE:

Transcript is derived from video file, but deviates in content due to editing. Timecodes in transcript refer to the edited video file, but timecodes for the original file are included where relevant.

Audio file taken from video file. Separate audio recording not available.

[Video: Habell-Pallán-Michelle_FOHP Interview.mov]

INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with Michelle Habell-Pallan, and I am the interviewer, Christina Chung, and today is October 30th, 2017 on a Monday, and we are at the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Washington at the Conference Room.

So, if you don't mind introducing yourself, with the name you go by, your faculty positions here, and also the pronouns you go by.

NARRATOR: Great. My name is Michelle Habell-Pallan, I am an Associate Professor here, at the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies. I am the Director of the Certificate for Public Scholarship, and I am an affiliate faculty member in Communication and the School of Music. I Co-Direct the UW Libraries Women Who Rock: Making Scenes, Building Communities Oral History Archive.

INTERVIEWER: Great. And the pronouns you go by?

NARRATOR: And my pronoun- preferred pronoun, is her or she.

[00:01:11]

INTERVIEWER: Great, so we'll get started on talking about your personal background. So, if you wouldn't mind talking about – your, uh – where you were born, and what your family was like, what it was like growing up.

NARRATOR: Sure, great. I was born in Southern California, in a town called Bellflower, which is part of Southeast LA County (Los Angeles County), in the 1960s. So, I grew up in Downey, CA. My mom is from East Los Angeles East Los Angeles and South LA., which is a big part of my story,

So at the time when my mother was growing up, in the 1940s and 50s, South LA would've been historically African American and East LA was historically Mexican American, Jewish, and Japanese American, so, very multicultural, and my dad grew up in Indiana, and he came from a town called, Hammond, Hammond, Indiana, which also was like a working class steel mill town. And he joined the service and they met in Los Angeles. hen he was in the service and they were young, and they would go dancing at a very famous ballroom called the Hollywood Palladium. And so they met there and my grandmother would drop my mother off in her Cadillac because in the 1960s she owned a bakery, a bakery called San Antonio Bakery, in LA, and so she was a small business person – actually

she had a bakery – she owned a tortilleria, so I call my mom the "Tortilla Princess," right?

So in East LA was, at the time in the 50s, when my grandmother had that, in the 60s, had the tortilleria, it was not so common for a woman to have a little mom-and-pop small business that was as successful as it was. But, anyway, back to the story, my grandmother would drive my mother from, would've been Florence Avenue in South LA to the Hollywood Palladium and wait in the parking lot reading her book while my mom was dancing. And so, that was how my parents met, my parents, my dad was on shore leave or whatever it was called, and my mom was at the club, at the Hollywood Palladium.

So, that marriage back then, in the mid-60s, was seen as one that crossed racial lines, so it was a big drama for both families. "Uh, what about the children? They're not going to know who they are! Blah, blah, blah…" My dad stayed in Southern California after he got out of the service and married my mom.o he lived most of his life as a white guy, as a Eastern European white guy within a Mexican American extended family.

And so, my mother wanted me to go to public schools, but public schools that were well-funded and college prep, and that would be in the neighboring city called Downey, California, which was where, I don't know if you know The Carpenters – you may not – but where The Carpenters grew up. So, it was a town that really prided itself on it being a homogeneous kind of place. And so, by the time we moved in in the 70s,, the city was beginning to change with more Latinos and more Asian Americans, including Korean Americans and South Asian communities moving in. And so, I didn't know it at the time, only as an adult I can look back and understand why then the hostility that the teachers had towards us students of color was SO strong. And it wasn't about us as children, that we were inherently flawed, it was that the city and the demographics were changing. And this was way before multiculturalism became a standard discourse.

And so some of my elementary school teachers probably went to college in the 40s, so they were quite old and about to retire. Some of them were open-minded, and some of them were not. I was angry as a child in terms of my schooling because not all the teachers were happy to teach us, and they made it *known*. But, I was born – for whatever reason – with a gift for writing and so, beginning in high school in the 1980s I was placed in the Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Not all those faculty were happy to have me in there, but that's where I turned – in high school, especially – when I turned to the arts and culture and music to kind of survive a very unsupportive academic experience. And my parents they didn't necessarily understand

what was happening to my sisters and I, because, our, they didn't have that experience at all, of growing up bicultural. My mom's schooling was not, LA unified county at the time, in that part of the city where she lived, was not well-funded and they weren't prepping the students for college prep. And my father actually left home and went into the service, so he- he had a different experience. Yeah, he was a young man, like, I don't know, 16 or 17 when he joined the service. So, they couldn't really help deal with the kind of- anger that I was feeling, or even understand what was happening at the school, although they were very supportive always pushing us in school and we had to get good grades and had to go to college and all of that.

But, the music and arts were a way that I survived this experience of what was a kind of racialized, profiling of not just me but my friends who were brown, and also the racism of the city itself. Because I remember going to market with my mom when, when I was a kid, and she got a can of corn, and when she pulled out the can, a card fell out and it said: "This store has been patronized by a member of the KKK."

So it was that kind of moment which really did form my self as a person, but also what I would come to study, and how I would see the world. And how I became such a feminist. I was always a feminist because my dad, well there was three daughters in the family, I was the eldest and my dad would always say: "If you were boys, I would let you do whatever you wanted to, but because you're girls, you have to do XYZ…" I always thought that was so unfair and I wouldn't have had the language of feminism at the time, but definitely what I was feeling and how my critique was a feminist critique. And I did become an English major, so I became an English major as and-

[00:08:47]

INTERVIEWER: And this was in college?

NARRATOR: In college, right, because I did have an aptitude for writing, just a gift that came to me that I'll always be grateful for. Although, of course, I always wanted to be a musician. So the gift came, in the form of writing, and yet - you know how life is, the grass is always greener, you always want what you can't have, and I always wanted the gift of being a musician, but I –

[00:09:14]

INTERVIEWER: When did that start?

NARRATOR: That was, uh, literally I can remember being five years old and wanting to have piano lessons and trying to play on the baby

piano, the toy piano. I just never had the opportunity in school or anything like that.

So, always was a music fan, and my mom was a big music fan, so we always had the radio on, she was always listening to oldies. So I always, you know, I just grew up with popular music. Soul music. In my everyday life, so it just was part of the air. So music has always been a place where I could find refuge.

And so, yes, I got through highschool being very angry, Punk rock, also getting through those AP classes. But having the high school counselors- I'll never forget the high school counselor saying: "Well, even though you have these good grades, you should just go to the local college", not go to UCLA or USC or whatever t the time at the 80s, when I graduated it was 84, the colleges that were beginning to looking for more diverse students. So, all the small private colleges, all the- I had the grades and I could've gone. I was scholarship [material]- I had whatever was required for the scholarships, but the kind of the deep racism in the public education system at the time, you know, in part determined the course of my academic career.

In the end it all worked out.I ended up going close by to Long Beach State and then I transferred to San Diego State for my B.A. in English. Oo gosh, that department at the time was still heavily British although I did study American literature, but I had to learn a lot of British literature. And you know, I loved it all at the time, poetry and lyric, but I was also a college DJ at the same time at the college radio station. So I always somehow managed to keep connected to the music.

And then I was working in the art department. I was working in the art department, and part of my job was to file the – there was Master of Fine Arts, so the MFA, so I had to file the MFA applications. And I realised that there was a way for me to continue in college in this way, and I had never realised that I could. I mean I had great grades again. I think because I was such an unconventional student, I looked so different in terms of my fashion, my alternative Punk rock look. I was a brown girl, one who was studying British lit. I didn't fit any one's vision of a- this is a young scholar. Especially in the late 80s.

That was, until I took a Latin American women's writings class, and the faculty, the professor in that class said: "You know, you should really think about graduate student – I mean, you should really think about applying to graduate school. And,, I did actually have another historian[recommend graduate school], He was a man from the South, a professor, Dr. Cheek from Virginia who wrote about slavery and abolition.e was a radical white professor for the time, the first time I had met anybody like that,

and he also was very supportive. So between those two faculty who supported me, I applied for an M.A. program at UC San Diego (University of California San Diego) in Literature. The department in literature at UC San Diego was really unconventional at the time because it was a program that was not divided by national disciplines or national literatures. It was just literature you could take an English lit class, or American lit, or Spanish or French, or whatever… you could, you could create a pathway. because it was designed in the- I would say in the 70s when there was a lot of radical thinking about how to- how to teach literary studies.

It was a Marxist department at the time, [Michel] de Certeau taught there, a lot of exciting thinkers, you know, Angela Davis was part of UC San Diego. And so, it was a really great place to be because it had a lot of progressive thought. And by this time was the late 90s, so '89, '90, here was faculty that were really trying to, integrate for the first time cultural studies into literary studies. So this was the moment in which cultural studies, British cultural studies, entered the U.S. academy. And that was really exciting for someone like me, who have followed a lot of British music, and someone like Paul Gilroy writes a book called *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, which is all about the music that I had been listening to as a teenager, surviving racial hostility because there was a moment in Great Britain during the 80s when there was a musical movement against the National Front. Now the National Front was a nationalist party that was anti-immigrant in Great Britain. So, bands like 2 Tone, that were on the 2 Tone label, The Specials and-

[audio interruption - 00:15:33]

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, I'm just going to check on –

NARRATOR: Yes… is it on? Am I talking too much? I don't know if I'm going anywhere-

INTERVIEWER: Oh no, no, no, not at all… Let me just… see what's going on… It's just- the recorder has decided to stop…

NARRATOR: [laughs] I just- yeah! It's always, it's never, it's just so frustrating. But you've got it on the camera, this is just the back up?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah… It's such a pain. But thank you so much. This has been… this is really great. Um-

NARRATOR: I mean I'm going- am I going too deep?

INTERVIEWER: No! No. It's exactly what we're looking for. This is great. It's just this machine is not cooperating. It's fine… let's see how we can deal with this…

NARRATOR: Oh man, I was crying because I had taken some footage in Ecuador and I don't know how but the sound was off! Like, I was getting image and no sound. I was like: "Noooo!"

INTERVIEWER: No!

NARRATOR: But that's always, again, no, no, no, you just, it's like whatever can go wrong…

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, exactly. And the thing is the problem with this is it's gotten to the point where I can't… oh, there we go…

NARRATOR: I really miss my cassette recorder where I just like- [makes button-pressing gesture]

INTERVIEWER: Exactly! It's fine…

NARRATOR: Yeah…

INTERVIEWER: Well, I guess we'll have to rely on this one… It won't let me delete, so…

NARRATOR: Maybe if you restart it? Or you did already?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think I- I did but it won't let me do it. I'm sorry about that.

NARRATOR: It's okay.

[audio interruption ends - 00:17:29]

[00:17:30]

INTERVIEWER: But actually I wanted to um, because I think you talk about it's- what you've shared so far, it's almost like there's these parallel tracks in your life. There's, you know, your deep interest in music and there just this your budding writing and how you've developed that into your- your choices in college and later on. So, actually I wanted to go back and talk about the music track. What were your earliest experiences with Punk especially? Um, and why were you particularly drawn to that?

NARRATOR: Yeah. So, I go back to highschool. This is the- you know, I graduated in 84, 1984. So um, and Downey is about 20 minutes, on a good day, from Downtown LA, Downtown and even Hollywood. So there was a scene, I knew there was a scene. How

I heard about the scene though, was through radio. So radio was huge, so there was a station that I had listened to since I was you know a kid, like 11. I used to listen to this show called Dr. Demento, which was a- I don't even know how to describe it anymore, but it would've, it was a show that launched Weird Al Yankovic [laughs]. So, you know, parody music, parodies of music, kind of parody… it was a show that would put together kind of fake interviews with people. Like it would take interviews from here, interviews from there, patch it together and make some kind of funny commentary. And I just always loved that- those shows and I loved that so much that I think I went and bought an album of, or checked out an album of sound effects from the library and I would just kind of play with it And play with my tape recorder. I would just record stuff.

Anyhow, listening to that station kind of morphed into listening to KROQ, that's what it was called, and they would have this show on late at night by this DJ called Rodney on the ROQ and he would play all these Punk bands, and New Wave, and Ska, and I would say I was really into Ska and Punk, at the time. And because the Ska scene is- this is what Paul Gilroy writes about in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. So, it just happened to be in that moment, I didn't know much about what was going on over there, except that I just heard this music and I was like: "Yes! It's anti-racist." So I had this false idea about Great Britain as being like this really awesome, you know, anti-racist place, but the music was so anti-racist because it was responding to the National Front and all this anti-immigrant sentiment at the time.

So Punk, I just because of the anger and the injustice that I had experienced in school, when I heard it, and when I heard the sound of it, and when I heard the lyrics, when I saw the look, I was like: "Yes!" This is against the status quo, this is about justice, this is about not fitting in, this is not ab- not reproducing the norm, but at the time I would say, we would say: "We're not gonna be normies," right? I mean, so that we don't want to be what they are telling us to be, and we're not going to do it. And not being quite, ever accepted by the [normie] white kids in high school. I mean- I was and I wasn't. But I went to school with those kids [the normies] from kindergarten on. I always say: "I know Kelly Conway, I went to school with her." - Those are the type of people that I grew up with in high school.

And then us few brown kids always kind of being, feeling weird. You know, not really having support or being understood in any way. So I think we found our way through music, and it was a badge of honour. Instead of feeling difference as a source of shame, I was trying to be as different as I could be, like, I didn't realise at the time that I was just different by who I was, but I was dressed different, I was gonna listen to different music, I was

gonna wear my hair differently, I was like- my fashion was a big F You to the whole system. It was my resistance to also the gender norms that were being placed on me at home.

So Punk just was this incredible place of freedom, of- freedom of ideas, of political thought that I never heard at school, of gender representation that was liberating, and powerful. It was about a kind of a power, of being so visible and not invisible, and just making a statement against the status quo. And so that's why it appealed to me. And Ska so much, like I said before, it had, at least the Ska that I was listening to at the time, had such a critique of racism. And also the fashion was very 60s oriented, it connected to my mother, it reminded me of my mother, and that music also had a kind of a nostalgia for the 60s and Soul music. And so I- it just was like a perfect thing. I don't know what I would've done without- I don't know how we would've survived, how we would've maintained a positive sense of self in contradistinction to the 80s which was preppy and wearing the Izods and the Sperry Top-Siders and all that. It was the fashion of time, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, right?

INTERVIEWER: Mmhmm.

NARRATOR: I never gave it up [on music], I never let it go. It was always something- I think the most powerful thing about understanding Punk culture or musical subcultures is that it was a way not to be shamed for being different. So when people would try to shame you and cut you down for being different, the Punk ethos is to say: "No! This is- I'm proud of this! You're trying to diss me, but actually you're complimenting- the more you diss me the more powerful I get!" So, and you know this was a moment also when- because Downey was so conservative and it had the presence of the KKK and the police force was enforcing a particular kind of population or protecting the population, because Downey itself was in the center of Southeast LA County, which was surrounded by Paramount, which was next to Compton, which was next to Lynnwood, which was next to these cities that were working class, brown, and black. So it was this kind of little, I always say, piece of the South. And it wanted to stay that way, but it couldn't, because times were changing and demographics were changing and there were so many more mixed marriages and mixed kids and so things were really starting to change. So when I got to graduate school at UC San Diego at the literature department, cultural studies was just entering literary studies, and that's really where it kind of entered at least in the late 80s, it appealed to my because it created a theoretical framework for me to understand the experiences I described above

And so we were reading Paul Gilroy and we were reading Andrew C. Ross. But also what was happening at the time was

this really amazing development of Chicana cultural studies. So I had a class, in 1989, called "Chicano Cultural Studies" and it probably was the first seminar focused on the subject at UC San Diego at the time. And it was mind blowing because I had never had an academic experience like that before.I had never taken a Chicano studies class, and so I never had an academic experience that kind of valued or recognised or aligned my experience as being Mexican-American, you know, in Southern California. And I dove deeply into Chicano studies after that. And at the same time when that was happening, I also took a seminar with Professor Lisa Lowe on women of color feminism. Again, the closest connection I had was a Latin American women writers class, which was a feminist class and also mind blowing. But I also thought, "Whoa!" I have never learned this in the English department, and here I am in the literary studies department and we're reading women of color feminist theory, *This Bridge Called My Back*, and Asian American feminist theory. It was just amazing, and I was like: "Here, I found my people! Finally I found my people." And Gloria Anzaldùa had maybe released *Borderlands/La Frontera* only three years prior and she was doing the tour and we got to see her read, and it was just this really exciting moment of visiting scholars every other week we had bell hooks or maybe Gloria Anzaldùa or Paul Gilroy or someone like Andrew Ross, or Angela Davis coming through.

So it was the early 90s, you know, late 80s early 90s, and it really felt like there was this moment- you felt like, we felt like we were part of this really big change that was happening. And it was exciting. Itt was exciting to be an academic, it was exciting to see these new ideas, you know… I remember out literature department- was really, it was exciting you know. Edward Said came through, Larry Grossberg, I mean… I'm trying to- you know it's funny, I'm trying to think of the women scholars that came through and I'm- at a loss, his is the time when I met a scholar named George Lipsitz who also was influential in developing American studies, ethnic studies in a particular way and so, I had really great mentors like Lisa Lowe and George Lipsitz…and Frances Smith Foster.

[00:28:47]

INTERVIEWER: Going in to UC San Diego, I guess you didn't expect that, you know, because you declared your major later on?

NARRATOR: Well, I graduated from San Diego State with a degree in English and then that very last semester I had that Latin American studies women's writing course. In the meantime I had applied- I had worked in the art department and I was like: "I want to stay in school" and so I did get into the M.A. program at UC San Diego and I really didn't really know what I was getting into, so yeah! It

was a really great surprise, and it was just happy- it was just a happy circumstance and luck that I found myself there at this moment when cultural studies was, you know, entering the US academy. And, um, yeah!

[00:29:40]

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other departments that you thought you might've joined? Or was it quite clear that you wanted to join the literature department?

NARRATOR: It was- you know, I really didn't have good advising, so, you know, I thought: "Well, my degree is in English, I guess I'll just apply to the literature department." And the faculty member who did teach the Latin American women's writing course she said: "Oh, there's a person that you could study with at UC San Diego. You should apply." Again, you know, I, even in the English department as an undergrad, wasn't identified as somebody, you know, I just was too weird [laughs]…

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs]

NARRATOR: Just too weird! Although I did meet really great faculty there that really, like I said, supported me and it helped me develop as a writer, but in terms of advising or somebody making a plan or like, oh options, you know, I didn't really have any… I didn't take advantage of- I didn't know to take advantage of the services that were there or the different organizations there that could've helped me. But I did make it to UC San Diego, and it was, it was all I have to say. I had no idea that at the end… I don't know if you really want to put this in, or I probably shouldn't say it, but I had no idea that at the end of a PhD program you would become a professor. I mean, nobody really broke anything down to me, I just was like: "I love being here, I love ideas, I love talking, I love writing, I just want to be here."

So it wasn't really until I applied to the PhD programs after I- I guess while I still was in the M.A. programs that I understood the whole process and the point. So it was a huge learning curve for me. I was the first PhD in my family. I had to stumble and really figure it out myself. Those were back in the day, well, I think some grad departments are still like this. It's sink or swim, you either figure it out or you don't. Super competitive amongst students. So that was my UC San Diego experience. But I did have some amazing mentoring like I said, like Lisa Lowe, George Lipsitz, and um… so this is where we also met Angela Davis coming to talk. Learned about amazing writers like Elizabeth Martinez who were civil rights writers you know and in allyship with Angela and Angela would talk about women of color feminism as a thing.

So I decided- the reason I decided to go to UC Santa Cruz (University of California Santa Cruz) to do my PhD was because, one: Lisa Lowe had gone there and I was like- and I thought, if Lisa got that kind of training or if Lisa's training me, I want to go where *she* went. And also we- there were some other graduate students and I- we had gone to a conference at UC Santa Cruz where Angela was speaking at, and we just fell in love with Santa Cruz, and I just thought: "Yeah, this is where I want to go."

I applied- I can't even remember where I applied. I did apply to other places but my top choice was UC Santa Cruz to the literature department, which was also structured in the same way as UC San Diego in the sense that you got a degree in literature and then it wasn't by a national…

INTERVIEWER: And then you specialize…

NARRATOR: Yeah, you specialize. And that campus is at least it was in the humanities and in social sciences, it was a very feminist campus. So it was like walking into, I sometimes say, an upside down world. Or where the world was turned upside down, where all the things that had been disparaged and ways of thinking that were critiqued and made fun of in my previous life were all of a sudden the things that were honored and recognized. And so it was also a kind of a bubble, right? Because it was a very different world.

[00:34:19]

INTERVIEWER: Was it a particular hotbed for feminism at the time? Or was it just responding as a resistant, sort of, environment towards what was happening outside?

NARRATOR: I think it was- it was- there was a, at least, you know I'm seeing it from a grad student- I don't know behind the scenes, but at least in the literature department and the history of consciousness department, which I connected with a lot, there was a strong feminist current in the curriculum. So I know there were probably divisions within the faculty and within the curriculum, but there was- unlike UC San Diego – which had- did have a strain of it, it was much stronger at Santa Cruz. And I think being near the Bay and this whole other- you know there was a larger context of radical thought, and Angela had just been hired in History of Consciousness [Department] and she brought- attracted a whole bunch of students, you know, particular kinds of students. And there was this real, at least from our perspectives as grad students, a real recognition of the power and importance of women of color feminism and feminist thought.

And so it was really a big relief to be there, and a really exciting time, as I said. And also, this was a moment in which I met many of the colleagues that I am still in touch with today. We came together- I think the year before I got there there was a group called- I can't remember the timeline, if it already existed or it existed and then we kind of developed it, but [it was called] "Women of Color in Conflict and Collaboration." And so we were graduate students that supported each other but always wanted to make it clear that it wasn't a demographic identity, it was a theoretical take-up, so that's why we put "conflict"- you know, "in collaboration and conflict."

And that mostly I think kind of emerged around a film- a women of color film festival that a graduate student named Margaret Daniels - I want to say – organized, and went for years, the women of color film festival. And so there was a connection between the film festival and the women of color cluster. They had research clusters, that's what it was, at UC Santa Cruz, you could be a research cluster. And Angela Davis was our advisor, our research advisor, and she was so generous that she had won a research award. And it was a research award of 30,000 dollars that would be distributed 10,000 dollars a year over 3 years, and she gave us that to develop programming for the women of color research cluster and film festival. So, that was significant! And empowering. 'Cause when a faculty person does that, it's so unusual and we were able to develop a lot and we organized a lot and we… yeah, there was conflict, but what we did was that we called it- we mentored each other, because Santa Cruz was a very much commuter campus, and so we didn't have access a lot of the time to- there was a lot of demands on the faculty that we wanted to work with. So we had to learn how to develop ourselves, right? And learn to take advantage of the resources on campus that we had to do that.

So it was really great. The collective, like people like Maylei Blackwell, Kehaulani Kauanui, gosh! It's this concussion, I can't think of all my friends… Deb Vargas, Sherry Tucker… many, many of us who went through that program at the time, we did support each other. So it was the opposite of the other model of training that I had been through at UC San Diego, which was like, students were cutthroat and people weren't really helping each other. So I think that that feminist ethos and feminist of color ethos really, at that time, at Santa Cruz, I'm not saying that it was perfect, we were all young, trying to figure out life, but that we were at least trying to work in that collaborative mode. And we did, we have a collection, I have a collection in my office, it's called- it was published by the center for cultural studies, and it's called *Women of Color in Conflict and Collaboration*. And it's got a little intro I think by Angela and it was our first publication! And so it was a really great opportunity

again to learn how to publish and it was a- what do you call that, when a journal doesn't c- an occasional journal from the center of cultural studies that Jim Clifford was running at the time. So, Jim Clifford at the time was really well-known, well-respected around cultural studies, so that was going on… it was- it was an exciting time, and I worked with Rosalinda Fergoso, Herman Gray… just…

[00:40:11]

INTERVIEWER: How did that, did you feel… did that develop into your personal project for your PhD? And how has it influenced your later work?

NARRATOR: I think that… I went there to work with a professor named José Saldívar who is now at Stanford, and he had just written a book called: *Nuestra Americas*. So, understanding Chicano lit in a hemispheric context, or understanding American lit in a hemispheric context and taking into consideration Chicano literature. So, um, he was great, because he said it in a wonderful way, you know, he was supportive of feminist thought- I mean, femini- it was almost expected that you would have gender critique. You know, or at least that's how I remember it. That was, you know, feminist courses were in the curriculum, there wasn't yet a gender studies department yet at Santa Cruz, so, but it was coming through the English department.

So there was never a struggle or fight or anything. It was just, yeah, you have to have a gender critique: race, class, gender, sexuality… That was- that was kind of the mantra. And, um, what was I going to say… so José never questioned my feminist critique and he was always very open to me not studying literary text but performance art, music, and film. Or independent film. Basically, grassroots or independent cultural production. So, he was fine. You know, though I didn't have to- this was a moment in which even at UC San Diego, and this was kind of the gift of cultural studies is that you could talk about text rather than literature. So text could be film, or it could be music, it could be literature, it could be television, it could be some kind of artefact that could be read and understood in a deep historical and theoretical context. So for us, the way I was trained, cultural studies as a method was doing a close analysis. So literary studies was at the time close analysis or historical analysis, so a formal reading, but situating it historically and from a theoretical perspective. So my theoretical perspective that I decided to- the lens was gender, you know, was a feminist theory. That was my lens to studying Chicano/Chicana performance art and music at the time.

So, I didn't think at the time how out of the ordinary my dissertation was, but this was- I finished in '97, so you know this was kind of happening between 1992 and 1997, so it really was doing something different because of the openings that these other generation of faculty had made for us. So I was just taking it there with the blessing- you know, I stayed in contact with George Lipsitz. George Lipsitz always blew my mind as a historian because he was writing historically about those songs that my mom was playing to me when I was a baby in the crib, from East LA, Chicano music, right? So, you know it was kind of- again it was that perfect moment when I- back at UC San Diego when I saw George Lipsitz give a serious academic talk about *Land of A Thousand Dances*, which was a really popular song in the 60s that I knew, and that I thought: "Okay, this is a place I can be, because the things I care about are recognised."

And so, I think that I had made every mistake in the book at UC San Diego about what does it mean to be a graduate student, how do you write, how do you develop a scholarly voice, how do you select what your research question is, how do you build a research project? You know, I did everything wrong, so that by the time I got to Santa Cruz I got through really fast, it was not a problem, you know I could impress my professor because I knew what to do, but they never had seen all the- the, you know, really painful hard work that I had to do before I got there. I mean, they saw that at UC San Diego. [laughs] But, um, you know at UC San Diego I did have a wonderful mentor named Francis Smith Foster who taught African American women's lit and was one of the first scholars to really- to focus… well, let me restate that. She was one of the first scholars to publish a book focused on- Frances Harper, yeah, Frances… Frances Harper… and taught a black women's writing course- graduate seminar. At the time there were not that many seminars offered on African American women's writing. . And that is interesting, UC San Diego did hire a couple of faculty who- another poet, and I know her name, but I- I'd have to- I'll send you her name. So there was this presence of black women scholars that I assumed was just normal. And so Frances was one of them, and she was also a great mentor.

So, I think I had, um- so like I said, by the time I got to Santa Cruz, I knew what to do, I had a project and it was, it was awesome… [laughs] It was also a really fun time in life and I always try to bring that energy to the graduate seminars that I teach now and to encourage the students to have a version of their "Women of Color in Conflict and Collaboration," which we have had in the department with… I think they called it the Women of Color Collective, or whatever its- the different iterations of it. So, I think that I have always been interested in collaborative learning, collaborative teaching, collaborative mentoring, and I really take that into my current, you know,

teaching now that I've been in the academy so many years. So yeah…

[00:47:00]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I was just going to ask - what brought you to the University of Washington and when that happened?

NARRATOR: Yeah, so I finished my dissertation, I was really fortunate to have a job before I finished my dissertation. So I was hired actually at Arizona State University in the Department of Chicana/Chicano Studies, but you know, I had a very feminist dissertation, and two really senior Chicana and well-respected scholars – Vicky Ruìz and Mary Romero – were on the hiring committee and they were so- they were supportive my project I got that position and was there for a year. Vicky left to teach at UC Irvine, I think.Mary left that department. I think for lots of reasons I applied for post-docs.I got a Postdoc, went back to UC San Diego to work with Lisa Lowe. And then this position came up at the University of Washington, actually in the American Ethnic Studies. So I applied and took that position, in the Chicano/Chicana Studies.

I was immediately befriended by Angela Ginorio who at the time I think was directing both the Women's Information Center and the Northwest Center for Research on Women.

[00:49:00]

INTERVIEWER: But, what- what year was this? When you joined AES?

NARRATOR: So, that would've been 1998. Twenty years ago!.

So, I always had a connection to this department and I always tried to stay as connected as I could while I was, working to get tenure… and so there was an opportunity at a certain point, after I did get tenure, for me to move departments. I want to say 2008, so it was probably about 10 years ago.

[00:50:19]

INTERVIEWER: What was that transition like?

NARRATOR: It was amazing and awesome! [laughs] - I'll just say that it was amazing to move into a department that really understood and valued the feminist critique that I was bringing into Chicana and Chicano studies. Sometimes I had to make the case for it, or it was misunderstood, or not quite understood, or not respected. But here, it was not even questioned, obviously, it was valued. So, that was really wonderful and allowed me to take my research in directions and ways- that I never expected, and have been really

satisfying, on many levels: personally, working with students,, making an impact in the field. So, I had always admired this department and I had always from afar wanted to be part of it more formally than I was, so then the opportunity came up for me that I could do that, and I was very happy to be received by the department and my colleagues. And so been working hard ever since to just keep up the level of respect and camaraderie and real feminist understanding of knowledge production that I always saw from afar, you know?

[00:52:02]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, what was the department like at the time as an intellectual community? What were the big issues at the time?

NARRATOR: I think, let's see… I think that smaller departments such as GWSS, or departments that are maybe unconventional in terms of traditional disciplines, are interdisciplinary departments their work is so important. Their work is so important intellectually, for the development of students, for the development of knowledge. But I think sometimes that work might be hard to be read by the institution. Not just this institution, we're talking across the nation. And so I think at the time there was- that I came in, it was, the discussion was about how do we grow the department. How do we take this really powerful department that has so much potential in terms of spreading its wings, if it could be a little more resourced with a few more faculty. So that was the discussion.

So, for me, because of my- interest in cultural studies, music, and the art- that, and having to make the argument that it was valuable to understand these texts because there were social- important social negotiations that were happening, social reproductions of particular ways of thought that were happening, and the way that popular culture was made and shared, those were the discussions I was involved in.

This was also the moment in which the discourse of transnationalism came in, and how was feminist studies going to open up a new pathway for transnational studies? But how could you engaged in transnational feminist studies in a way that wasn't framing,domestic U.S. women of color as and transnational feminism as either/or. Because I think there was a moment, at least in the humanities or the way that I was perceiving it at the time – that the validation of transnational feminism came at the expense of women of color feminist critique. There was sometimes what I thought an unfair critique that positioned those defining transnational feminisms as "true" scholars. I'm remember that conversation was happening nationally. That was a national conversation. And that started

happening at the end of graduate school when I was at UC Santa Cruz.

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I filed my dissertation in 1997 or something like that- so in the mid to late 90s, that conversation was happening. This department was really interesting to me because there were faculty that were trying to turn that conversation, move that either/or kind of framework into a different direction. And my question was: what is- what's at stake? In framing it that either/or way. What's to be gained? What's to be lost? How will resources be shared or not, in this calculation. So I think that was really key, that I saw that in this department, that there was a space for really loosening up that conversation from only this way or that way. And that was exciting to me..

[00:55:38]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. How have you, um… Since joining this department, how do you feel like it's changed, and what are the main issues that have emerged?

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[00:55:45]

NARRATOR: Sasha and I were social science enough in that we were doing historical and theoretical framings of our work. And so we were looking at cultural politics. So it was still political, it was a feminist cultural politics, but it was different than someone like Shirley [Yee] who was a historian or Priti [Ramamurthy] who was doing feminist economics, or Angela [Ginorio] who's in psychology, right? Or Nancy [Kenney] who's doing psychobiology. And so… and who else was there at the time? But, but I- so that- so Sasha, so Amanda [Swarr]… Amanda is also very interdisciplinary, but I think the object of our studies, for Sasha and I, more clearly in the arts or bringing in the arts and music…

So I think that change, you know, that changed the conversation about what we did and the kind of students that we began to attract to the grad program, and that was exciting too, to be part of that. When I moved to the department, the *American Sabor* exhibit had just opened. So the *American Sabor: U.S. Latinos in Pop Music*, which I had co-curated with colleagues in ethnomusicology, Shannon Dudley and Marisol Berríos Miranda,

but that we had co-curated with the Experience Music Project (EMP) museum, so that-

[00:57:21]

INTERVIEWER: So you developed that whilst you were in the American Ethnic Studies Department…

NARRATOR: Yes. So, but, um, well, it continued, the project, so I developed other pieces of it here. What I brought to that exhibit wasn't just more cultural studies but it was also bringing the women and making sure that we have women there. Not that anybody was ever opposed to the women being in the exhibit, they just maybe didn't know how to include the women in the exhibit. But anyway, I learned a lot- we all learned a lot about how different museums are from academic institutions, what the museum discourses are about Latinas and Latinos.

And, you know, my Punk rock self always came through because we decided early on not to be paid by the EMP for the work that we were doing so that we could retain creative control over the curatorial narrative. hat was really important. And that was such a hugely successful exhibit, it ran for seven years, it traveled all over the United States, it got picked up by the Smithsonian. e became partners with the Smithsonian Traveling Institution Exhibit (the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service), we translated the giant 5,000 square feet exhibit into a small traveling one with them, it exists online… So all the kind of new interests I developed in media studies, digital studies, online archiving, came through that project of *American Sabor*, working with the Smithsonian and with the EMP, and getting to work with these cutting edge new platforms that those institutions had to be working with, and I didn't necessarily have to be working with as a professor.

I had to be publishing and writing, I didn't necessarily have to learn those new platforms. But I was forced to because, in a good way, to work with the museum and to work with the web, you know, building a website online, what does that mean… And to think about sharing knowledge in a whole other platform. So that was a huge shift.

So that shift for me came in right when I moved into this department. And after the exhibit, we finished the exhibit- it still went on to live, but I said: "The next project I'm involved with is gonna have women in the title!" Only because I don't want to have to explain at every meeting – I don't want to be the broken record saying: "Where are the women?"

INTERVIEWER: Or it gets subsumed or buried under the main title that does not include women.

NARRATOR: Yeah! Right, right. And it's not conscious. I really saw that it wasn't conscious. It was just more of how things are done. And nobody's trying to exclude women on purpose. Nobody's saying: "Goddammit, there should be no women in here!" But if you don't really have that understanding in the design, in the initial design of the exhibit or online platform, then it's an add on, and it just falls off all the time, it falls off. So I wanted- for me, I said: "The next project that I want to be involved in, from the inception of design, is gonna have women at the beginning, so there's no way women can fall out."

[01:03:01]

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And even though, you would think by 2010 we had already done the whole conversation around essentialism, and the term "woman," that there is no essential woman, so why are we still using that term? Which I think is a totally valid critique, but when working with a public-facing institution like a museum, people aren't having that conversation, they're not even understanding why you always need to have an equal representation of women in an exhibit.

[01:00:56]

INTERVIEWER: Right.

NARRATOR: So, um, I think that it was important for me, even though the term "woman" had been- you know, we weren't gonna use it in an essentialized way, but that it was important as a marker to keep that in there, just so that in the design, women wouldn't fall out.

So that- I had this, you know, [laughs] really crazy hope and dream, and some of it came to fruition, but, to take everything that I had learned from working with an institution that had an infrastructure for exhibition and archiving and take those lessons and create something here. Well, - you need infrastructure to these kinds of highly media-based projects. And I think that *Women Who Rock* is going on eight years now, and it developed over time. But it took time for it , because we didn't have the infrastructure, to be what it is now.

Now, *Women Who Rock* is as successful as it is because of the amazing graduate students who , came into the program. Someone like Monica De La Torre, who had an interest in media, who had skill in media-making, had been doing radio shows in LA herself, and who was excited about using new forms of media to do research and graduate work. And Angelica Macklin,

who was a filmmaker 20 years before she came to graduate school, who also was really excited about this possibility, or Nicole Robert who wanted to do museum work, who came in from museology program… Of course, somebody like Martha Gonzalez who had been a musician for almost 20 years and brought a lot of community- and lot of skill and knowledge about developing community.

[01:03:15]

INTERVIEWER: Could I ask, um, so I think, you're really well known for *Women Who Rock* and your collaborative projects that bridge the academic and public spheres. Was it always welcome in this department? Or did you have to carve room for that?

NARRATOR: It was always welcome I've been so blessed! Part of the reason it could be and develop as well as it has, is because there was never a questioning of its value. And I, at that point in my career, I had come in with tenure, so I could do this- this is a different ball game pre-tenure, right? I don't know- I don't know what the possibilities are pre-tenure for doing the kind of work that we were doing, but post-tenure, there is more freedom I think maybe at the beginning, people didn't really know what it was? Didn't really understand it or get it, but nobody was hostile to it at all. And people were fine as long as I was doing my job in training graduate students and training undergrads fine. I really am blessed to be in this department that really understood that there was a method to the madness, that there was some value behind it.

Even though I was developing it with Sonnet Retman, my colleague, and we were making it as we were going,we knew that we wanted to do…here's the three elements that we wanted So we wanted to have a – this is what we started with – a conference that featured scholarly discussions of women making music, women of color making music, which had not been done here at UW, to our knowledge. We wanted graduate students to feel that they could be part of this conversation. Because Sonnet and I were often presenting at the EMP, the Experience Music Project had a annual- still has an annual pop music conference, and it is an amazing conference with scholars and journalists and people coming all over the place. And we always wanted our grads to apply and be part of it, and one day a grad student said: "It's just too intimidating." You know? It's too intimidating. And we thought that, "Well, no! We have to do something!"

So, what they wanted, in particular a graduate student name was Georgia Robert, who was in the English department, was a more intimate conference, more intimate place to meet faculty and scholars who were writing about music and gender, sexuality,

race… but in a less intimidating format than a giant conference. And also we wanted to have some kind of performance piece or something too.

So those were the three- three pieces, and maybe there's one more. Sonnet and I always wanted to teach a class on women in music. So that in- so this department, when I came here, I could actually do that, so that was also something so amazing for me.

[01:07:07]

INTERVIEWER: Was it always intended for *Women Who Rock* to be, um, based in the University of Washington but communicating with communities outside of that?

NARRATOR: I hate to add more complication to the story, but Martha Gonzalez, the grad student who came to our program, she helped build the community which became the Seattle Fandango Project. I became part of it because I- I was really curious, you know: "Okay, what is she doing?" It was part of her dissertation project and I was like: "I need to understand what that is" – what this is – plus, I love music and I have a three-year-old and I want to do something with the family on the weekend. So they would have these free workshops at sometimes here at UW and at- just different places, and in the community. And then I fell in love with the tradition and the music.

This was all happening simultaneously as *Women Who Rock* was developing, and we were doing different things – we were developing the online archive with *American Sabor*. But also I was basically just watching the Seattle Fandango Project , learning the tradition of the *jarocho* but also learning how to build community through music. So that was also built in, and Martha was here, and that was a really big part of how women who rock came to be. And what's so beautiful about *Women Who Rock* is that there is no set formula for it. It's a fluid, open … project, that becomes whatever the people who are involved in are doing, that's what it becomes. It's not like we have roles and then we find people to fill the roles. It's that there's-opportunity or a playground or a something to bring the skills that you have and want to share and warp the project into that.

So that's how it started, and so the mentoring workshop for grad students, that was the piece, the less formal- the interface between scholars and graduate students that really was at the heart of *Women Who Rock* and it became again another instance of collective mentoring, which I pulled on my friends who were originally in the Santa Cruz women of color research cluster-collective. So, you know, it was a nice kind of way to build upon all these different things I had been doing.

And also it was funny, with Martha came her husband Quetzal Flores, who is the kid of community organizers. So there was a grant that my colleague Shannon Dudley ran between the EMP [and] UW School of Music, and Shannon was a PI and so in order to like entice Martha more to come here, Shannon was able to create a job for Quetzal as a community liaison between… I think it was the Simpson Center and EMP, I was talking to Quetzal one day and I said: ", we always wanted to do this women in music symposium but we applied for grants and we never get 'em." And he was like: "Well, just plan it anyway." And I was like: "What are you talking about?" He was like: "Just plan it and people will come." I was like: "You know, you don't know academics." He was like: "Trust me, if you plan it, people who get it will come." I was like: "Okay, I'm going to prove you wrong."

And so, Sonnet had not gotten the grant for WWR but we had created the format, the program, the vision for *Women Who Rock* and so we just started planning it and we got little funds here and a little funds there and I think by the end of the planning, I think we actually re-submitted the grant or maybe the EMP, this consortium that Shannon was the PI for, I think we got funding from there. And then the Simpson Center actually supported a class that Sonnet and I were going to teach. And that changed everything 'cause we hadn't thought about asking for funds to support our class. That we did in that class is we had students do oral histories, and that's how it all started- the archive started.

And I think, um, I can't remember the timeline now, but it was at that same time that maybe Kim Muñoz who was a PhD student in Music, in Ethnomusicology, received a stipend from t the Simpson Center. I think Quetzal suggested: "Oh Kim should apply for this position to help create the oral histories." Kim had done oral histories on her own, with musicians in Mexico, and she had translated them from Spanish into English and from indigenous languages into English. I was impressed So she helped with the initial way that we set up the oral histories. In the class Sonnet and I taught there was undergraduates and graduates. So Monica de la Torre, Nicole Robert.Well, it just worked out that we had enough grad students to undergrads that the grad students were the crew leaders, and they did oral histories in crews of 3 or 4, they learned how to operate the camera,everything you're doing right here.

And I think Kim had talked to the UW librarians . e Simpson Center was trying to help faculty connect with the librarians because it was the- just beginning of the digital initiative- the UW digital initiative, and we had a meeting with Anne Lally there about the oral histories we had, and she was like: "Oh, that would be a great collection." And so kind of miraculously, and

what a beautiful gift, we became one of the projects of the UW digital initiatives project and we got to develop the *Womxn Who Rock* archive through UW libraries. Wee have the UW library infrastructure supporting the archive, which for us was so important because we didn't have funds, any funds to support an archive.

So we had to learn to prepare a digital archive,, through the process of making it. And with Angelica Macklin who had more experience in meta-data, with Monica de la Torre and Carrie Lanza and Kim Muñoz and other students we went through this process of learning meta-data protocol, of learning how to curate an online website, and learning about content management, basically, the back-end as well as the front end. So all of a sudden this process blossomed into this other kind of graduate training as well. I've learned so much from the students. Angelica Macklin came in as a media-maker and Monica as a audio producer. So all of us working together, with our intellectual interests, and wanting to think about how to do feminist production as an intellectual theoretical endeavor. It was really exciting, you know, really exciting.

And so exciting to know that people got jobs, good jobs, and they came with their own brilliance of course. They made this project brilliant, but also I think they opened up the space for other students coming and really helped me rethink graduate training – that what could it be, if we start to think about the new platforms in which knowledge is produced and shared, right?, I think that has been a really exciting development too, and then with our recent hires including Regina [Yung Lee] and Bettina [Judd] and Kemi [Adeyemi], all of them have an interest in delivering and-producing and delivering research in new modes and methodologies, and Cricket [Keating] too, with understanding-with the FemTechNet and teaching feminist- feminism through technology, I think- I think our department is so amazing and unique in that way. And you know how Luana Ross has been doing that work in native- Native Voices um, documentary project. She's been doing that for years and how we're so unique as a department.

It's like a dream sometimes to have the faculty that we have with our specialties and it's like we almost hit every single note in the songbook of gender women sexuality studies department. So you could come into our department and find someone to study that is connected to these larger debates in the field. Of course we can always grow, but I feel as a department right now, if you compare us nationally, we're- we're very unique. Very unique, and I think really cutting edge, and all due respect to my colleagues everywhere else, of course, but we've been developing a

particular sensibility about how to do what *is* feminist studies, who produces feminist thought, how do we share it..

[01:18:03]

INTERVIEWER: Mmhmm, yeah, um, I was interested, like I'm really glad that you shared about how the archival side of *Women Who Rock* came about, because I mean, I think archival work has become one the benchmarks, or the landmarks of your work. And so, do you- do you feel like you have a particular approach to archiving, and how- how do you feel like it has developed?

NARRATOR: Sure, yeah. I think what's exciting about *Womxn Who Rock* is that it is an experiment in collaborative archiving. And archiving, which is scary, because we're archiving the work of people who are living, right? [laughs] And really trying to save or preserve the stories of folks who have been left out of archives. You know, women who have been – and their allies – who have been left out of archives. Women, women of color…

And so, we- it was so exciting for Sonnet and I to think that we could become part of this archiving process around women in music because one critique that we would hear *all* the time at music conferences or even just discussions about women in music is: "Well, what's the evidence? Where's the evidence?" Right? And we get into that tautology because, um, if women's contributions aren't valued, they're not gonna be recorded inside chronicles that chronicle the development of music, right? And so then it becomes a self-feeding…

INTERVIEWER: It's like a cycle that continually leaves out women.

NARRATOR: Yeah, yeah. And so we're like: "Ah! We have a chance to create an archive of evidence!" Right? And that was really super exciting and intimidating and scary. But we also wanted to take the lessons that we had learned so much from feminist theory, from women of color feminist theorizing, to really not make it about an individual...

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NARRATOR: That, when I get tired and that's the concussion. But- but- it wasn't so much about virtuoso, but we wanted to… we wanted to archive the collective, the movement, right? The community. And because the oral histories themselves had to be recorded by a crew,.It's hard to record and- you know, you're doing this, you have to have somebody who's in charge of the camera, you have

to have somebody talking to your person, you have to have the editor, it takes a whole collective- you have to have somebody doing the meta-data… So it made sense to start thinking about these as a practice, as a *archivista* practice in which the idea of the collective and the collaborative was going to be the guiding ethos.

And a lot of this of course in conversations with graduate students, with Angelica Macklin, with Monica. And it was- it wasn't preset- we were figuring it out. So,we didn't always have it figured out perfectly. And how do you think about attribution and how do you give credit in a collective because you want to make sure that graduate students do get credit and that they have individual projects that they can point to when they go on the job market. So all those question,s we had to really think about and really, you don't resolve these questions once and for all, because these continue- they take on a new context or a new life. But that was something we were always very conscious of, and that's always at the forefront of the conversation.

And, what do we do with these oral histories? Who owns them? *Womxn Who Rock* doesn't own them. The library doesn't own them. The person who gives them owns them. And this was also key, is that Angelica Macklin who had been a filmmaker – documentary, for many years – with a feminist ethos, was very clear that we cannot post anything until the person who has been interviewed has a chance to review it, and to ask for edits and we make those edits. And so, the process is slow, but it is a truly feminist process and it is collaborative because then it is a co-production with the person who's being interviewed, or the narrator who is being interviewed. And so wanting to recognize the collective labor.

So I think that's how ours is different. Oftentimes an archive is donated and it's one person's collection. So this is not a single person's collection, and it's a living collection, and it is a collectively made archive – different people contributed. And also the way that it's shared online, that was always exciting to us, because we didn't want to have an archive that was going to be behind and a wall, and that's why we even considered doing it- the project at all, because we knew it would be shared right away, as fast- or at least as fast as we could process. And that the narration or the interviews would be of use to the people who gave them.

And so that- that is a different sensibility to archive than most conventional archives have- which is sometimes precious objects behind a wall, you have to be vetted to see the archive's collection it's a collection owned by a person, it's kind of a sacred texts that has to be really taken care of in a particular way.

And it's interesting 'cause I just came back from a conference, we were invited to talk about *Womxn Who Rock* at Harvard, at the 75th Anniversary of the Houghton Library- rare books library. It was amazing conference because they are also having this conversation about how to open up the archive. What is an archive? How to archive? And it was quite an honor to speak about the- our archive,when we made it so clear that this was collaborative, with students- grad students and how, but that it was hoping to serve, yes! The academic world.But also the not-people maybe not have access to the kinda academic resources we did. And so that, to go back to the Seattle Fandango Project, that was something I had learned from the Seattle Fandango Project, was to think about how do you share work, how do you think about community, how do you think about whose voice should be heard or whose voice should be archived. So, yeah, it was a lot- it was just a synergy of so many different experiences I was having in collaboration. And so that's- I think that's the power of it, that no one person could put together this archive. No one person could direct it. It's too big. Without resources- in the way that we do, or with the resources that we can get, we are so grateful for the resources that we do get, but that- it can't sustain itself on the small financial resources we are able to raise alone. It is a labor of love.

[01:25:53]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think also it reflects the, um, interdisciplinarity that's part and parcel of this department and of your work all along. So it just seems to fit so well. Um, I was going to move it to a discussion about how the department itself has changed. So, the name change that happened from Women's Studies to Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies in 2011, and also like, new issues that have come up that are being addressed by the department. So, trans issues have recently come into the forefront… So how has that, actually, these changes, um… what is the relationship with that to your work and how has it developed that way?

NARRATOR: Well, I think it was really an exciting moment when the department changed names. There was a lot of change going on in the department, and you know, it was/is great to have a faculty person like Amanda Swarr whose research is so cutting edge and so important in looking at issues around trans justice and issues of gender.

I think that was a carefully made decision to change the name in the way that we did, and we talked about it a lot. And we all came to consensus. We had to come to consensus. And what I do really appreciate about this department is that we, for the most part, make decisions on consensus. So we have to keep talking and talking and talking until we really feel that we understand

what's happening and that we agree and that everybody feels heard and valued. So we had quite a lot of conversations, and I think- I know that there was a real deep thought about why we needed to keep women in the title.

And that had to do with the historical formation of the department, and you know, this is a department that came out of activism, of women in the 70s and 80s. And though it is a very academically solid and really amazing department, we can't forget where- where Ethnic Studies departments came from or where Women's Studies departments came from. It wasn't as if they were always part of the academy. These were hard fought for, argued for, advocated for, departments.

And so, we, you know, I think the consensus was that that historical reality should be kept in the name, and then we added, you know, included gender and sexuality in order to really help students and faculty understand how the feminist debates had continued to develop in the academy. So that was really exciting and you know, it's so great to have Amanda really at the forefront of those issues in our department and keeping us and our department accountable to that discussion. Thinking about it also not just in a U.S. context, thinking about it in the context of South Africa and spaces outside of the U.S. I think the new issue- new issues are thinking about feminism, for me, across the Americas. Like it would be really great to build upon what we have, because what is happening right now in Latin America, in terms of the feminist discussion, Andean Feminism around trans issues, around all issues: reproductive rights… it's really a robust and inspiring conversation that I didn't really know enough- that I need to know more about, right? And especially Indigenous Feminisms in Latin America, discussions of blackness, and women in Latin America.

It's really vibrant right now, and you know, I was just in Ecuador and it was so – this past summer – the feminist- feminist movement, feminist discussion is just so on fire right now. And even though Ecuador has a leftist government, in speaking to activists and academics in Ecuador, they discovered cannot depend on the leftist government to support feminist causes, because abortion is now criminalized, and it never was up until recently with this leftist government. And, um, even though there's one step forward in terms of trans issues, Ecuador has a national ID card that one can elect their gender, it's not determined by birth certificate. It's very progressive in that way, but at the same time, you know, the recent march for- against violence against women, the *puta* march was denied. So there's- there's no consistency, in terms of the left in support of feminist struggles, so their conversation is very robust and inspiring and

we should- I would love to hear more, I would love to have that more of- highlighted.

This would again mean growing the department, which I think would be an ideal thing to do. Because I think we are serving the needs of students, undergrads and graduate students, and I think that it's so important now in this moment to connect all the different feminisms, movements that are happening all over the globe, because I think women all over the world, and their allies, and trans and queer people are really suffering from oppressive policies, oppressive traditions, oppressive ways of thinking about the lives of women and to think that we're in this moment where actually we- we need to be more emancipated than we have been, not less.

And so I think if we can link up our global conversations, now that is not easy, because translation is difficult. It takes time, and this is really the only thing that- well, I don't want to say the only thing, let me restate that. I think that this takes an investment of time, and time is not cheap. So time is a resource that is- that we don't- seem to not have enough of, although I think we can make it if we want. So, but I think it's time and commitment, and I think we have the commitment, I think we're figuring out how to make the time, and so, yeah, that- that is the- for me, on the horizon is really how do we link up all these different movements, feminist conversations around the globe from communities who haven't been really heard from before, you know. Or, let me restate that: from communities who may not have been heard in the U.S. academy before, and really need to be heard.

INTERVIEWER: 'Cause it can be such a silo here, so like breaking that down and connecting those conversations could totally change the game, really.

NARRATOR: Yeah, so it's like, just having more dialogues and conversations about that.

[01:34:18]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and um, so finally, I just wanted to conclude with asking um, if you had any particular memorable moments or joyful moments that you felt particularly proud of within your history with this department.

NARRATOR: You know, it is so wonderful to be able to teach Chicana feminist theory- Chicanx, To write about Chicanx futurism, to do projects like *Women Who Rock: Making Scenes, Building Communities*, I think that is such a moment of joy, and I am so fortunate- I am so grateful that I am surrounded by the brilliant minds and hearts of students and scholars who are so committed to changing the

world through knowledge production. And we get to experience the joy of that at the *Women Who Rock (Un)conference*, which is the interface between public and the institution and the joy of music- feminist music and art, um, I am so proud that we were able to change the conversation on contributions of women and women of color in music, a subject dear to my heart as you know, through this conversation.

That gives me so much joy, and I have just so much joy everyday being in this department and I think that we really are committed to our students and our students are committed to the department. I think there's just a- there's a lot of wonderful feedback loop that generates a lot of good energy. And I- so I think that that for me is just- I'm so proud of this department and keeping the positive energy feedback loop, and keeping this idea of consensus as a true feminist form of leadership. I think that's the leadership that we try to model for our students, in the way that we interact with each other as faculty and as human beings. So that makes me very joyful to be in a department that really is trying to walk the walk of the theory, you know, of the theory and the knowledge.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much. Thank you for spending this time and this conversation. I've learned so much and it's going to be a really important addition to the archive. Um, and I will transcribe this and I will share the transcription with you and you're- [laughs]

NARRATOR: [raises a *Women Who Rock* sticker to the camera]

INTERVIEWER: -you're very welcome to um, edit and to- yeah, to make comments on it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh no, those are all part of the process.

NARRATOR: But thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much, this is so wonderful.

[End: Habell-Pallán-Michelle_FOHP Interview.mov]