

ORAL HISTORY T-0064
INTERVIEW WITH MARLENE FRIED
INTERVIEWED BY ANN LEVER
WOMEN IN THE SEVENTIES PROJECT
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LEVER: This is Ann Lever interviewing for the Oral History Project for the University of Missouri, St. Louis, and I'm interviewing Marlene Fried of the Philosophy Department. Why don't we start with some sort of biographical information? Your age, your marital status, your professional interests. So why don't I just let you tell your story from that point of view?

FRIED: Okay. I'm twenty-six years old. I received my PhD from Brown University this summer, and I'm an assistant professor here. This is the first time that I've taught. My dissertation was on the philosophy of history, and especially on Marxist theory of class struggle. And so my professional concerns, at least partly, are there. And I'm interested in trying to develop ways for philosophy to relate to women's study courses which are now beginning to crop up everywhere.

LEVER: What about where you're from originally, your family background?

FRIED: Originally I'm from Philadelphia. I'm an only child of Jewish parents and I went to high school there. I have not lived in Philadelphia since I was seventeen. I did my undergraduate work partly at Northwestern and partly at the University of Cincinnati where I actually received a degree and a Master's Degree.

LEVER: What would you say about your early childhood experiences? Was the fact that you're an only child; would you attribute some of your independence as a woman or something like that to the fact that you were an only child?

FRIED: Well, I think it imparted to me the fact that my parents owned a store and worked together constantly, so that my mother always worked and did as much work or more than my father. I always saw her as a competent, capable woman running a business and had a lot of responsibility and that sort of thing, but I think that any political consciousness that I have can't be attributed to family sorts of ideals because there certainly is disapproval of that on the one hand. On the other hand, there's always the great push to achieve, to be well-educated and that sort of thing.

LEVER: Have you ever thought it would have been any different, I mean, if you had a brother? Would the treatment have been different, the encouragement been in different areas?

FRIED: Well, I think so. I was certainly subject to the same pressures that most women are to get married, and that my profession was seen not as primary but as something to fall back

on if something awful happened. So I think it would have been quite different. My parents never understood why any woman should have a PhD, but that was of course contradictory, because they were very proud at the scholarly achievement and that sort of thing.

LEVER: You said your parents owned a store, what kind of store was it? Would you class your background as middle class, as upper class?

FRIED: I think middle class. It was a small women's clothing store.

LEVER: Were your parents college educated?

FRIED: No, in fact, I think, they were not even high school educated.

LEVER: But education had become an achievement, and it didn't matter that you were a woman in that way. What about your husband, is he in education?

FRIED: He was. He has a Masters' Degree in philosophy from Brown, and he has done some part-time teaching at the University of Connecticut. What he has been doing now for the past year is writing a book on ecology and capital politics, a sort of Marxist book on ecology, and what he would like very much to do is find work, either teaching or some other kind of work that is consistent with those interests which is rather difficult to do.

LEVER: Perhaps this is too personal, but have you had any trouble working out your...?

FRIED: Actually not at all. I suppose this might sound sort of, that I'm deluding myself, but my husband has been a feminist or sympathetic to the Women's Liberation Movement before I had ever thought about it. Partially I guess because he has two older sisters and was rather sensitive as he was growing up to the sort of pressures that were placed on them. So he's quite sympathetic, and I think understanding of Women's Liberation and those issues.

LEVER: Do you have any children?

FRIED: No, we don't. We just got married a year-and-a-half-ago.

LEVER: Do you want to? Or can you envision how to work them in?

FRIED: Now, actually not because our lives tend to not be very stable. We do a lot of political activity not just with Women's Liberation, but with just other movement groups.

LEVER: You mentioned the fact that your husband was more feminist oriented than you, was there some sort of experience that changed your perspective, was it some sort of epiphaniacal experience or was it just him educating you or what?

FRIED: I think it was actually me. I had been involved for about a year in a radical political organization which consisted of both men and women, but the primary focus of the organization was not Women's Liberation but more anti-war and university related issues. There was a small group of women in that group who from the beginning were involved in Women's Liberation, a couple of people who had either taught courses or were interested in that sort of thing and who worked together in a group and for almost a year, I really didn't

have anything to do with that. I can't say exactly myself what happened, but several of us just decided to go and see what they were doing and became rather excited about it and rather active.

LEVER: What sort of work did you do?

FRIED: What we did, we met at...

LEVER: This was at Brown? What year was that?

FRIED: Yes, this was in Providence and this was last year. We met last year as a consciousness raising group, but felt very definitely that we also wanted to do political activity; but it was sort of interesting, the women who had been working together the year before, without the larger group felt a real need to come together in a more personal way, but they did not want to give up what they had been doing. Everyone pretty much felt that. So one of the things we did was organize along with some other people what is now called the "Rhode Island Womens" Liberation Movement which is a large group of women with all sorts of political persuasions and opinions.

LEVER: It does cover a gamut?

FRIED: Yes, yes, virtually everything.

LEVER: Not just students?

FRIED: No, it's not just students. It is still thought rather university based, except that one of the groups that was active in pulling it together was from Newport, Rhode Island which does not have a large university. The women there were not university related which was quite good for the organization, because people who came in from Providence, at least in the beginning were mostly associated with Brown, and the same thing in Kingston, Rhode Island, where the University of Rhode Island is located, so the people coming in from there were initially university based. But it's broadened now, and a NOW chapter has been formed within that, so the union now is an umbrella group that contains all sorts of things. The movement tries to move on all issues together, and there's all sorts of issues like abortion reform and repeal which enable to unite the whole group, and things like child care. That's actually worked quite well. We also worked at Brown forming something called, I think. Brown Women United which was dealing specifically with women's issues at the university.

LEVER: Were they mostly graduate students?

FRIED: No, it was mostly under-grads in fact, and almost no faculty, but of course there's almost no women faculty at Brown anyway. So, it was mostly undergraduates.

LEVER: Is it still officially Pembroke and Brown?

FRIED: They merged officially last year, and what that appears to mean is that there is only one administration. There were never separate faculties or classrooms.

LEVER: The admissions policy is...?

FRIED: Well, now that's sort of what's unclear, because as it stood before the merger, men were admitted on a ratio of three to one. Pembroke was much smaller. It seemed to me that the admissions criteria, and although it's unclear what they ever are, were much stricter for women than for men. Now I suspect they will begin to change the ratio, and Brown has made at least some sort of verbal commitment to increasing the number of female faculty. There were all sorts of discrepancies. For instance, secretaries who worked at Pembroke made less money than secretaries that worked at Brown, but they did exactly the same job, which was one of the things the women's organization was fighting against.

LEVER: What about your own treatment in graduate school?

FRIED: I was in graduate school for five years, two years at the University of Cincinnati, three years at Brown; when I was first in graduate school at the University of Cincinnati, I was the only...When was that?

FRIED: That was in 1968. I was the only woman graduate student, and there were no women on the faculty, and that was horrible, partially because I was treated as if I was not serious about what I was doing.

LEVER: Were you married then?

FRIED: Yes, I was married to someone else at the time. He was in medical school. So I was viewed as someone who wanted her fellowship so she could support her husband in medical school, but who was not very serious about philosophy, and could pull it off because she did it well, but you know, it was roughly a waste of education, something like that. Now that began to change when it became clear that I was going to go on, and also other women started to come in. At Brown, I think there were six female graduate students which I think works out to be about one-sixth or one-eighth, but still very few out of thirteen people who got degrees last year, only two were women, so it's much smaller in terms of getting through. The sorts of pressures one feels I think were more subtle. They have to do things which would be very hard to prove, but in terms of say, if you're in a seminar, now I've never had much trouble being listened to because I talk very loud and argue as desperately as anyone, but there are other women who are more shy, and no one ever listened to them. It was as if they weren't even there. It's sorts of things like that, instead of people coming around and pinching you in the rear.

LEVER: How about the distribution in aid in graduate schools?

FRIED: In philosophy there wasn't, but in other departments people did some sort of survey at Brown last year, and there were quite horrendous discrepancies in women getting aid.

LEVER: Basing this question on my own experience, is there a difference in treating you as a good student as long as you are a student, but when it comes to getting a job something happens? Did that happen to you?

FRIED: Yes, well that's rather peculiar, and it's hard for me to piece out. It's hard to know whether one was discriminated against in looking for a job. It's hard to argue when in a year five out of the thirteen people didn't get a job, and I got two jobs. So it's hard for me to say

that, but for example, people asked me in a round-about way what did my husband do and what was he intending to do next year, when it was clear that what they wanted to know, was I free to move given what my husband would do. Now as far as my department was concerned, I think there was probably less of that. I think partly because there wasn't much of a question of whether I was qualified or not, but with other people it's just not so clear. Going to look for jobs was just a very strange experience, as I'm sure you know, because you were always interviewed by men, at least I was. You just felt that there was something going on, often if they were older, they treated me as if they were my father.

LEVER: Did they ever question your career or professional goals or interest?

FRIED: Actually...

LEVER: Either your department or your interviewers?

FRIED: I think not. I think that I can honestly say that that didn't come up at least out-right, but you sort of felt in a funny bind. People were very curious about your personal life and whether you had children, how long you've been married and that sort of thing, and you felt at somewhat a disadvantage at being married, because they expected you to have a baby. But I had a friend who was looking for a job and was not married, and she got the distinct impression that people were viewing her as if she was going to run off and get married and leave them.

LEVER: You never did interview with any women?

FRIED: No, never. I interviewed at two all male schools which was also very strange, schools that are now admitting women, Dartmouth and Colgate.

LEVER: Could you make any generalizations about philosophy as a field? Whether you think it's more removed from the pressure politics of say larger departments or something like that?

FRIED: I don't think so. I mean, part of what I think is going on in philosophy, why there aren't many women in it, is that of almost any field that I can think of, success in it is all in what we associate with traditionally as male sorts of behavior. Let me try and explain what I mean, that what's typical in philosophy is that one not write papers, but one present papers and open oneself to aggressive attack by junior faculty who hope to get tenure in this way be looking clever. So the whole style and manner of relating professionally is to attempt to refute other people's papers in the most devastating way possible, and I think that when I say that is a typical male way of relating, I think that there's certain sorts of aggressiveness and competitiveness which women are discouraged, or at least not encouraged, from doing, and women tend to have not much experience in doing that sort of thing.

LEVER: The stereotypes about women that they don't think logically, or...

FRIED: Yes, exactly. And not being afraid to defend something in the face of what sometimes are quite vicious attacks. I think in general it's a lousy way to treat anyone, and if you put people in that situation who have had no experience doing that, it really puts them at a disadvantage. So I think that there's that sort of thing about philosophy which makes it a

rather difficult thing for women to do. What I hope is that they change the nature of that if there are more women in it. And that's just a beginning. There's something that has just started which is called the Society for Women in Philosophy, which interestingly enough is begun by, at least one of the women who is very active in it is an older, I don't know how old, but I would say around fifty, a forty to fifty year old woman, quite successful woman philosopher, successful at a time when there were no other women in philosophy. They seem to share the concerns of younger women in philosophy and that sort of thing.

LEVER: When you were interviewing at Dartmouth or Colgate, were you being interviewed as the token women?

FRIED: I have no doubt, but I think that I was being interviewed everywhere as the token woman.

LEVER: Even here?

FRIED: Now, see that would be a very hard to substantiate because...Well, obviously it would be a very hard thing to prove. Did it give you funny feelings about being...?

FRIED: Well, it did if I didn't feel sort of secure about my credentials, but you sort of felt that no matter even if you were one of the top two students that they wanted a woman, and I didn't quite know how to deal with that, an old established male institution, the funniest thing was when I was at Dartmouth and I wanted to go to the bathroom and there wasn't a woman's bathroom in the building little things like that. But I think lots of schools are feeling the pressure. A friend of mine got a job with the state university in New York, at Buffalo, they had been warned twice by HEW that they were going to be sued, in that sort of situation, it's hard not to think that that's the sort of thing that's going on.

LEVER: Do you think that you survived the system because you were better or you were competitive?

FRIED: No, I don't honestly think that, the myth, the exceptional woman, that sort of thing. That people try their darnedest to keep women out of the professions in all sorts of ways ever since they are babies, and I don't quite know why some people have done it anyway, I always say I majored in philosophy because it was the only thing I was good in college, but I don't know. I guess what I think is most important about that is there is no reason why any group should have to be outstanding in order to do what average people do.

LEVER: Yes, and I would say that ought to be true, but the fact that you went to a public grade school, public high school, I know Northwestern is a private school, in a way you were mixed right in, I mean there was no way in which you were insulated from all of the pressures.

FRIED: Well, I did go to an all girl's high school and I think that had quite a bit to do with that. It was a public school, but it was a college preparatory school so it was much more like a private school and received all the favors...

LEVER: Would you say that that was important?

FRIED: Yes, I think no doubt, because that was a situation in which women did everything, and there, contrary to what goes on in the rest of society, I mean it was sort of an enclave where nothing that went on there was like anything that went on in the rest of the world. It was, I guess, 25 per cent black, and there were poor people there, and everyone went to college, because they did anything they could to get you money if you couldn't afford it, and we were encouraged to go into the sciences and into mathematics, and all that sort of thing. It was not the sort of thing that would occur if I hadn't been in that school. Going on to college and to graduate school was really pushed. That was the sort of thing they were there for, succeeding in a competitive way was unfortunately pushed, too. I remember if you got in the 700's and not in the 800's on some board scores, you were told that you were going to end up at some dreadful college. You better go home and try to work yourself up.

LEVER: Would you say that that was a turning point for you, a crucial factor in why you are a professional woman and not a house-wife?

FRIED: I think that that has at least a lot to do with it, because it was a place where we were never subject to being afraid of being bright in a classroom because there was no one who was going to look down on us. So all that kind of pressure was of course removed, and I think that that has a lot to do with it. On the other hand, I think it was a rather schizophrenic situation for most of the people, because they still had all the outside pressures, primarily parental pressure to achieve with men. I think especially when you were as young as we were when we started to go there, I don't know, I guess fourteen, and you don't have day to day contact with men, you become very shy, plus all your friends, or all my friends were friends from school and we really liked to do things together as much as going out on a date, and that was clearly discouraged as far as my parents were concerned, so that was rather difficult. And we had one reunion after our first year of college. Most of the people were going into traditional sorts of things. I take it there were many more people who were intending on going on and finishing school, but lots of people weren't because it was still very difficult.

LEVER: Thinking back now, were there any influential people, influential books either in your past or in more recent history that were consciousness-raising or career directing?

FRIED: Let's see, that's a tough question. Actually I can't answer that for the past, and I guess most recently the most influential people are people that I was able to come into contact with through the women's movement.

LEVER: Can you be more specific, or give examples?

FRIED: Well, it won't be anyone famous.

LEVER: No I don't expect them to be, but what sort of things have contributed to your own psyche?

FRIED: A remarkable experience for me was being in a consciousness-raising group. I guess I never really had been terribly aware of, or at least just didn't think about it much, the ways in which women relate to each other, even to women who are your friends and sort of standard competition situations and that sort of thing and so an ability to deal more honestly with other women was really important.

LEVER: You were in a consciousness raising group at Brown? For how long?

FRIED: Right, for about a year, and all the other women in the group were radicals.

LEVER: Were they married?

FRIED: They were everything.

LEVER: Everything, but all of them students?

FRIED: Students, faculty wives.

LEVER: How large a group?

FRIED: It was, I think, ten, eleven, and the ages ranged I guess from twenty to around forty, but most of us were in our twenties or early thirties.

LEVER: How was it organized? I mean, how did one proceed?

FRIED: From catastrophe. The way in which it was begun, we sort of went around and everyone talked for as long as she wanted about her life and just things that she thought were important for other people to know, family, trying to sort of give it some kind of general political focus, socialization and that sort of thing. And they really varied according to style. It was in the beginning, people didn't know each other very well so some people tended to be rather completely honest, and other people just didn't tell you anything you didn't know before they had begun, and that caused a great deal of tension, because people who had been more honest felt there was a certain element of give and take that was missing. Prior to that, what we had done was to read some articles and try and discuss them, and everyone objected to that because it remained then on an abstract level and people had wanted to do something different. So then we tried the personal political autobiographies. I think what we did next was go back and have everyone talk just about sexuality and their own sexual education and that sort of thing, and that was even more difficult to do except time had passed and so people were feeling a bit more comfortable. Then what we tried to do was to pick sort of particular topics like the nuclear family and talk about that in a personal and in a more general way, but that was sort of a tension within the group all the time because there were some people who thought that it was more valuable to draw more broad generalizations. Other people thought that that's what we're doing except we're not doing it explicitly, and all that sort of thing. The other thing that made it strange was that all the people in the group knew each other, very well, knew husbands and boy friends of everyone else, and did other things together. For one thing, the men whose wives or girl friends who were involved, went through a period where they just sort of freaked out, they all thought, 'my God, they're all sitting around talking about us, and so they formed a men's group rather quickly which, I take it, was not very successful. Since I'm in charge of the tape, I can say that it was organized chauvinism. There was that sort of difficulty. But there were a couple times the group almost fell apart because they were in a situation where people were really trying to deal honestly with each other with certain questions. Since you knew certain people very well, you knew there were certain things you were reluctant to deal with, and every now and then some disaster would occur on the basis of that. But I think that the fact that it stayed together, I just couldn't envision that this sort of thing would happen amongst grown up

people. I think it shows that people did really feel some commitment to it and felt that it was worth while. And the really good sorts of things that came out of it besides interpersonal things were—our aim had been at the end to write some sort of analytical papers about women's liberation, we put out a women's news letter, and people sort of felt very comfortable about writing articles with one or two other women and found it an experience that they never, you know, paper writing had just been a devastating experience for people, and this was a whole new approach to creative, intellectual work. And that was really valuable.

LEVER: What are you involved in now in a political or organization fashion?

FRIED: Well, that's been sort of confused since I've gotten here.

LEVER: This is your first year here in St. Louis.

FRIED: Right, we came about the middle or the end of August. As far as the women's thing is concerned, I've been involved with the UMSL Women's Liberation group which is rather amorphous at this point. It's never clear whether there is one, but there's this project to work on a child care center which I think would do a lot to pull that group together, and I've done lot's of research in that; and then I've been involved with a group of high school women. I guess they're about thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old, that age group, in Soulard which is a very poor white working class neighborhood down in South St. Louis.

LEVER: Was there already some sort of skeleton of an organization there?

FRIED: No, there's a lot of community organizing going on down there, and someone who is close to VISTA workers suggested to have a girl's club, these high school kids. Roughly the initial idea was to get people off the streets, because there is almost nothing to do down there and people don't have any money to do things. And it was envisioned by her as a fairly traditional girl's club that we could sort of do sewing and baking and that sort of stuff, and I said, "Do you know the thing that's called Women and Their Bodies?" Well, it's something put out by the Boston Women's Health Collective which is a group of women who got together to teach themselves something about their bodies because all of them had had some kind of awful experience or other with a gynecologist. And they put out this amazing thing, and it's put out so it can be given as a course. It just has everything in it, pregnancy and menstruation and all that stuff. So I suggested why don't we try to do that? And the person who had thought about it said that that was fine and so I said well I would come down and do it. That's sort of up and down, at first it was a tremendous success, but it's subject to all kinds of problems for example, the girls can't take the book home because their parents would just have a fit.

LEVER: How many girls?

FRIED: At its best there are about twenty or maybe more people, sometimes it's just ten or twelve.

LEVER: Do you find them receptive?

FRIED: Yes, very. It's kind of an incredible experience for me because I've had very little

contact with people from a working class background and especially with kids of that age for a long time. It's a tough crowd.. I think I've been accepted which sort of amazed me cause I talked funny and looked funny. But it's actually worked out pretty well, I mean for a while it was sex education, so I don't have to race out and learn something, and sometimes we talk about the ways in which they are treated by guys and how they don't like that.

LEVER: What about their family mores? Is it really a challenge to those?

FRIED: Yes, most of them are from very strict Catholic backgrounds, and they've just been told incredible things, like they'll die if they have sexual relations and that sort of thing, and just everything is sort of heaped upon them. They're just kind of messed over in every way, as girls, as poor people...

LEVER: Is this totally unconnected with the school system?

FRIED: Yes.

LEVER: Are you fighting a battle there, too, from what you can tell? Is the school system a bad one.

FRIED: It's hard for me to tell. They seem very alienated from school, and I think for most of them its very unclear what their lives are supposed to look like. A lot of them have huge responsibilities for younger brothers and sisters, and house work, and all that sort of thing. It's just so different from anything they've ever talked about. There's always of course a lot of giggling and nervousness, people periodically look like they're going to faint or something like that.

LEVER: You have any admiration. I'm not sure I could get up to do that.

FRIED: Well, part of it is that they are terribly receptive, and these are a couple of kids who are really committed to keeping it going as a women's group.

LEVER: You mean students involved in it rather than VISTA people?

FRIED: Yes. There's two people involved who are not students but live down there, I think they are not VISTA but they are closely allied with them.

LEVER: Community organizers or something like that?

FRIED: Right, that's what they are doing. But they, too, I think it is a new experience for them, too.

LEVER: Is it all white?

FRIED: Yes, which is one of the...

LEVER: Have the girls encountered any hostility from boys because of it?

FRIED: Yes, in fact we had to fight them off. Well, in the beginning, the other thing that

started simultaneously with our discussion group was a self-defense course, and guys immediately thought the girls were going to learn how to beat them up, and so anytime we had a discussion group or the self-defense met, guys would come and pound on the door—we met in an old building which we had just gotten—they just beat on on the door and scream. And one night they came, and this happened three or four times, and they came and they were beating on the door, and where we were sitting there was an old window right by our heads and someone started trying to do something with a knife. And so we decided we would go outside and confront the situation, and there were about twelve of us. We marched outside, and there were only four of them, sort of young bratty kids outside. The tense thing was that they were at one time or another boyfriends of any one of a number of the girls in the group, and we sort of asked them why they did this and they began showing off and were terribly embarrassed, and someone said, 'well, ok, why don't they come in, and we'll have a discussion with them?' And so they came in and we were all sitting on a stage, and they sort of hovered down and at this point they were getting kind of scared, I think. And what we had been discussing was the ways in which guys there treated girls they didn't like, so one girl just amazed me, she very bravely looked straight at one of the guys and proceeded to relate something that he had done which was just sort of awful to some girl, and the guys just 'oh, no, we don't do that sort of thing,' and it finally resulted in these screaming battles back and forth, the guys apologized in a kind of show-offy way, but at that point it was the only thing, they would never do it again, they never did. But after the great incident, I heard that the girls and the guys did not talk to each other for a week. But it was a rather funny experience for everybody, and I think a really good experience for the girls, because it was the first time that they had ever actually stood up to the, and I could see why, cause it intimidated the hell out of me; I was just shaking.

LEVER: Do you have any idea whether anything like this is going on in other poor white communities, or school districts?

FRIED: Yes, I honestly don't know, there's been a lot of talk in the women's movement about at least getting birth control information to high school kids because that's apparently sorely lacking.

LEVER: Are you in some other group other than the UMSL group that's talking about this?

FRIED: No, no. When I was in Providence, we talked about it a bit, and it never actually came off. In Providence we had a Women's Office where people could go and get literature and that sort of thing, and so that was sort of one way in which people could get information, but what we would have liked to have done was to go to the high schools, and I think that that might happen. The other thing which doesn't seem to be widely publicized here is something like a speaker's bureau for women's liberation.

LEVER: You got into this sort of via the back door, really, the community organizers are radicals involved in other things. It seems to me that this is quite undeveloped. The one person I've interviewed in NOW, and there are only 25 people in NOW in a city this size, which is really incredible. And NOW is the establishment group, that's the NAACP of the women's movement, and you'd think the largest involvement would be there, and if they can only count 25 members, it's frightening.

FRIED: I'm not sure what to attribute that to.

LEVER: I don't know whether it's their lack of organization or lack of publicity or whatever, but still this is really a virgin area.

FRIED: Yes. In Providence, the speaker's bureau was the most active thing, and we just couldn't keep literature in stock.

LEVER: I mean, this town's got enough colleges, and enough student population that you'd think that something would begin to spread out of that, but I mean here the UMSL group is, as you said, amorphous at best.

FRIED: Well, there's one good project that I heard about. I don't think it's actually started, by some women at Washington University, and it is to do something around rape. One part of the project was to sort of organize places you could call if you had to go somewhere alone at night so that you wouldn't have to go alone, a sort of women patrol type thing for really scary neighborhoods, and the other part of the project, I think, was to write something or do something public on the politics of rape which...

LEVER: Do you have any names, or do you know the name of the group or the people involved in it?

FRIED: Well, the only person I heard of was Gail Hellitt who worked on the Outlaw, and who I've heard about from a lot of other people, because she's into a lot of stuff.

LEVER: Is the Outlaw an underground paper?

FRIED: Yes, it's sort of your basic underground paper, and there's also On the Line, which is a split from the Outlaw, which is quite a good newspaper aimed at working class people, and it's really good.

LEVER: Other than what goes on around Washington U., you don't know of any radical women's organizations in St. Louis?

FRIED: No, I don't. There are, I think, isolated women's collectives, and I think there is a women's collective at Washington University, and my suspicion is that there are lots of projects going on, but that it's just not coordinated at all.

LEVER: Oh, there's no umbrella group like your Rhode Island Women's Union?

FRIED: Right. Well, I have seen the publication Real Women, which is the newspaper of the St. Louis Women's Liberation. I don't know what it's called, but when they had the women's center, that's the group that put it out.

LEVER: Was that the thing that was at the "Y"?

FRIED: No, NOW is at the 'Y', but there was something somewhere else on Pershing or Washington or something like that which was closed almost as soon as I got here, and I don't know what was involved in that or if they're still putting out the paper, but at least that had a

place where people could call because they were running self-defense courses, I think they were running courses on Women and Their Bodies which has turned out, at least in the Boston area, and excellent way of organizing people, and just sort of reaching people and something that everyone responds to. And when I saw this newspaper when we first came here in the summer, it had numbers to call for that, and I don't know, maybe some of that still is going on.

LEVER: You said your dissertation was on Marxist ideology, how do you tie that in with your own interest in women's liberation? Do you understand the politics of women in a Marxist framework?

FRIED: Yes, I try to. It's not always clear to me exactly what that's supposed to mean. The part that I was thinking about when I was teaching a course was that I would like to teach it from a Marxist perspective.

LEVER: Maybe we ought to make that clear, what the course is.

FRIED: Yes, it's called Women in America, and it's what I hope will be a radical perspective on the women's movement and women's liberation issues. And I think mostly what that has to do with, at least I believe that the liberation of women will never be achieved in a capitalist society. What I also think is that removing a capitalist economic structure will not in and of itself solve the problem of women's oppression.

LEVER: So you don't understand women's oppression in a totally economic, I mean not just because men don't want women competing in the job market or...

FRIED: No, I don't. I think that one has to distinguish the causes of the oppression of women from the way it exists now. I would say that the oppression of women supports the oppression of women as it exists now, which is what I think I believe about racism, too, although neither came into existence at the time, which is why I think that it is absolutely necessary to remove everything that benefits from it in order to begin to deal with it in any sort of way. I mean I think it's impossible, say, for everyone who wants a job to have one, and that means women. There's six per cent unemployment now, what do we do with fifty-three per cent of the population who say they want to work, too? That's the sort of situation. I think I find less interesting the question of 'where did it all begin?' sort of studies like Firestone's which tries to argue that patriarchy is the basis of everything. I find that sort of intellectually intriguing...

LEVER: Firestone's Dialectic of Sex.

FRIED: Right. That's not the proper sort of thing to be dealing with.

LEVER: So in a way you could lay out your priorities for things to be done heading toward some sort of goal. How would you, what could you do? How could you structure it? What would you begin to change and to wipe out or whatever?

FRIED: Well, I think that in one way, the oppression of women, just like racism, is really destructive in that it serves to divide people who could be unified and could actually fight for and win a better society. I think that one of the primary things to do is to attempt to fight

male chauvinism and racism among non-ruling class people and to begin to break down those sorts of barriers. I think it's really crucial for any, for there to be a women's movement and because I don't trust radical groups anymore than any other sort of groups to deal with that without an organized force which would demand it's end and fight for the rights which belong to them. I don't know if that answered your question.

LEVER: Well what about in terms of the capitalist structure, how does that, be more specific in the connection you see between women's oppression and the economic structure.

FRIED: Well, I think there's some fairly obvious sorts of thing like I think that the ideology which is most oppressive to women that women solely belong in the home and that's the woman's job, is an ideology that really, you know, didn't sort of come up out of nowhere that it really was sort of pushed as a direct answer to an economic problem. What I mean is that, during World War II when women were needed for work, quite the opposite ideology was pushed and then as soon as the war ended and women weren't needed in those type of jobs then the tune changed quite a bit and it became absolutely crucial for women to be home and that sort of thing. That's a case where it's just so blatant that one can really see exactly how these sorts of thing operate. The other sorts of things is I think that keeping women in a subservient sort of position at least where the power they have is surely less than men functions essentially to keep everybody down in the same way that say racism functions to keep everybody's wages lower because there's no united group that can fight for it, and because it can be said, 'well, look you're doing better than those guys over there.' So I think the same thing is true of women's oppression. I think that part of what's required for women to really come into their own is something like quality child care and help to everyone, not because I think it's bad for people to take care of children. I think that's probably the most important job in our society, I just think it's bad that only women should have to do it that it's not seen as a job, and it's not seen as valuable. Now I think that that's the sort of thing that really cannot be dealt with, the way that it's dealt with, child care for the rich and everybody else can fend for themselves.

LEVER: But you still feel that the origins of sexism are not economic, but psychological or sociological.

FRIED: Well, it may very well have economic origins in terms of primitive divisions of labor that seems to make some sense to me. It seems to me not to have anything or very little to do with biological differences since that stuff has been discredited by finding societies where women do all sorts of work.

LEVER: What about biological differences. Is that like the cart before the horse or the cart after the horse?

FRIED: Well, I think so. It's sort of interesting. I think the biological thing is too pushed to sort of keep people in their place.

LEVER: I'm only pushing you to say whether the desire to keep people down is an economic reason or is it a psychological reason for power or...

FRIED: I guess I don't honestly believe that there are innate psychological drives for power,

that so much is explicable in a complicated way, but nevertheless explicable in terms of social organization. We can see on very simple levels the way people are socially organized to effect their behavior and their attitudes, and I guess that has more to do with it if not everything to do with it, although I don't think there is always a simple one to one relationship between one's attitudes and the way in which one lives. But I suppose I do think that at base it has everything to do with economic organization, but it's not necessarily peculiar to the capitalist form of organization although it thrives on it because capitalism is a system which cannot survive unless there are people with privileges over other people and that's surely what happens to women.

LEVER: So you would agree with say Kate Millet's idea that the black revolution is never going to succeed without a women's revolution as well, until black women stand up for their rights, and then on to some other change in the economic...

FRIED: Yes. I think that any group or any people who are sincerely committed to creating a society without any divisions have to be committed to doing that and that means that racism and male chauvinism have to die or fought against otherwise you'll just have the same old thing.