

Lynn Amowitz Transcript

JUDITH ROSENBAUM: It is July 31, 2001, and I'm in Providence with Lynn Amowitz, and the interview is being conducted by Judith Rosenbaum. So, I'd like just to start with a few questions about your family background, and maybe you could start by telling me when and where you were born and grew up.

LYNN AMOWITZ: I was born in – I can close these.

JR: That might be good, just because it's picking up a fair amount in the background.

LA: I was born in 1964, in Florida, while my father was doing his Ph.D. dissertation. Gainesville, Florida. My parents are actually from Boston, this was just where he was doing his Ph.D.

JR: Did you grow up for most of your childhood in that area, or did you guys move?

LA: No, we moved from Florida to Sweden, where my father was doing his post-doctoral work, and we spent almost three years in Sweden while he was doing his work. That was actually my first language because I hadn't started speaking before we moved. Then we came back to North Carolina, where my father's first teaching job was in Bowman Gray, Winston Salem, North Carolina.

JR: What field is your father?

LA: He's a neurophysiologist.

JR: So, did you have other family living nearby you as you were growing up, like grandparents or?

LA: No, I had nobody. It was basically our family in the South. At that time, in the South, there were not that many Jewish families, but all of my family was in Boston or around the Boston area.

JR: Do you have siblings?

LA: I have one sister and one brother. My sister is two years younger than me and has her own business. She's a trained preschool teacher. My brother works for a computer company, and he's about seven years younger.

JR: So, what was it like being among the only Jewish families in the south?

LA: It wasn't as bad in Winston Salem as it was when we moved to Greenville, North Carolina, which is a very rural, tobacco, agricultural area. At that time, it was starting a medical school, so my father was hired. He was one of the first faculty. When we moved there, there were twenty-seven families that were Jewish. There was only one other family in the area that had kids that were around our age and were Jewish. So, these were the only people that we knew. The Jewish youth group was a youth group that was a one-hundred-mile radius because in order to have enough people for the youth group, we had to go a hundred miles in every direction to get enough people to be in the group. But I remember when we first moved there, I had a Jewish star, a "chai," and one of the girls who was in the school – there were only three of us that were Jewish in the school at the time – she came up to me and said, "You really shouldn't wear that."

JR: How old were you at the time?

LA: Seventh grade, however old that is.

JR: Like twelve.

LA: Yes. She said, “You know you really shouldn’t wear that.” I asked her why, and she said, “Well, you don’t really want to stick out.” I guess she had been living there for a long time, and I don’t remember exactly how long she had been living there. But she made it quite clear that that was the wrong thing to do. Of course, I just decided to be the total opposite and wear even more or bigger “chairs” and Jewish stars, which was not to my advantage but definitely stuck to my ethics.

JR: How did your family try to give you a sense of Jewish community in a place where there are so few people?

LA: There was no synagogue at the time. People were meeting at houses on Friday night and having Shabbat services or Havdalah services at somebody’s house. Finally, the problem was that the two other girls, plus myself, were at bat mitzvah age, and there was no way for us to get bat mitzvah training or a synagogue to have this done. So, I guess I was about eleven, and my parents decided that what they had to do was start a synagogue. So, one of these girls’ fathers was also a rabbi but had since stopped being a rabbi and was a clinical psychologist. So, he decided to become the rabbi again, and he started teaching us for our bat mitzvah. So, all three of us had classes together, and we basically rented a synagogue in about a forty-five-minute drive from Greenville to have our bat mitzvahs. That’s how we did it. Now, the community is about six hundred fifty, seven hundred families because the medical school brought in a lot of Jewish faculty members. It’s much larger, and they have a huge synagogue. But at the time, there was no synagogue. The time I was there – it went through having – the Ark in our station wagon that my father built and dragging it from house to house, to buying a house in a neighborhood, to have a synagogue, which, of course, caused huge grief in the neighborhood. Because they didn’t want a synagogue in the neighborhood. It would quote, “Bring down the property values” – to buying a building and having a huge synagogue now for the families that are there.

JR: What movement is the synagogue affiliated with?

LA: It's Conservative.

JR: You mentioned that you were involved in a youth group, but did you participate in other kinds of things, like Jewish summer camp or something like that outside of [inaudible]?

LA: There wasn't one in North Carolina, and my parents were too busy trying to get us out of North Carolina during the summer that we didn't participate in any of those types of activities. My friends at the time, none of them would do that, so it wasn't something that I knew about or would do, and we did most of our international traveling during the summer. So, we didn't participate in that.

JR: What kinds of places did you go in the summer?

LA: We spent a couple of summers in Europe. Since my dad was a scientist and had meetings, we usually tagged along. Frequently, we came up to Boston and spent the entire summer with relatives here or out on the south shore, visiting. So that was the majority of it.

JR: Was your family involved in any kind of Zionist kinds of stuff?

LA: No.

JR: Or [inaudible]?

LA: No.

JR: Were your grandparents immigrants?

LA: My grandparents came from Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. My grandmother came when she was about four, we think. She doesn't necessarily tell us

her real age. My other grandmother came when she was young. One grandfather came when he was young, and one grandfather was actually born in Boston.

JR: Were you close with your family in Boston even though you weren't just close distance-wise?

LA: Yes, but it wasn't the case where I would ever run into a cousin. The only time we participated in things were big things or during the summer.

JR: How would you say your relationship to Judaism has changed over time?

LA: I don't think it's changed. I think it's just stayed the same.

JR: So how would you sort of define your Jewish identity now?

LA: I'm definitely secular, not so spiritual or religious. But I know my identity. I wouldn't do anything to change my identity, and I'm trying to teach that to my kids and let them choose whether they choose to be spiritual or not.

JR: Were your parents supportive of you kind of taking a stand about who you were when you were younger and living in Greenville?

LA: Oh, absolutely. Although I don't think they realized the grief that that entails.

Although they said – there was no discussion about, well listen, you can only get beaten up so many times before you decide you're not going to say anything. I mean, it's not that I didn't say anything, it was – or deny. I never denied that I was Jewish. I started to not, sort of, make it part of the conversation anymore. Because it wasn't worth it, emotionally and physically.

JR: What kinds of things did people say to you or do?

LA: People used to try and feel my head to look for the horns. I mean, these are very old Southern Baptists; they're fed the propaganda about Judaism. They would ask very inappropriate and strange questions, or they would call me – they would leave notes in my locker about how I was a Jesus killer or put – there were a lot of swastikas. Things that they may not necessarily have understood, but they knew it was an insult to someone Jewish. I think the worst thing was when I graduated from medical school in 1992; it was a very religious group, and I was the only Jewish person in this entire med-school class of like seventy-eight people. The class decided that they were going to have a prayer before graduation. So, I stood up and I said, "I don't want this." It's my graduation, too, and there's someone here who is an atheist, and there's someone here who is a Muslim. This isn't our prayer. It's totally inappropriate in a state-supported school. Unfortunately, at the time, we didn't realize that the dean of students was the head of this Christian Right group, and so she approved it. Of course, it went through.

But when I stood up and said, "I don't agree with this, and it's not fair," there were a lot of slurs that were slung my way by classmates that I had been in school with for four years, that I never knew had these feelings. Or I did, but it wasn't as apparent as it was when I stood up and said no.

JR: How do you think having to be in that environment affected you?

LA: It definitely shaped what I do now. It shaped my career, which is looking at discrimination and human rights abuses. A lot of things have. Having to learn about the Holocaust, having to learn about the Bolsheviks, [and] having been in a situation where I was discriminated against for many, many years, is definitely what shaped how and what I do.

JR: Do you see your work as being related to Jewish values also?

LA: Yes. I mean, we're taught tikkun olam, and I definitely have that sort of guilt and the idea that if I don't take a stand, who will? It's important to protect whomever the minority,

the majority, and never to stand by. Also, never forget where we came from and what we put up with.

JR: Were your parents committed to those kinds of things, too, or are they activists in that way?

LA: I don't think so. I think theoretically they were, but they didn't necessarily act on those feelings. I mean, they definitely instilled that this is the way you should be, but they didn't necessarily go out and do something to show me that this is the way that you should be. I remember when I was starting to learn about the Holocaust, and I had all these questions about "why did this happen, why did this happen, what happened?" My father once gave me this whole dissertation, [and] I could see the logic was wrong. That if I were there, I would have stood up and done something. I remember saying to him, "You weren't there, you weren't standing in their shoes, and you weren't trying to survive, so you can't say that." So, we had this long, drawn-out discussion about this. I, actually, at that point, changed his mind about his feelings. But he never really did anything about it. He just sort of talked about it. But he listened to what I had to say, and they let me do things such as – when I was in grammar school, there was a kid in our class who came to school every day and was filthy, and not well-dressed – or what I perceived was not well-dressed – and I decided for some reason that she was poor. Now this may or may not have been true, although looking back, I think that it probably was true, that she was really poor. I remember she came to school, and it was cold, and she didn't have a coat. Everybody else had coats. So, I just decided that day that I was going to give her my coat. So, I gave her my coat, which of course she took. I came home and my mother said, "What did you do?" It was a brand-new coat. I told her, and she said, "Well, it's a good idea except that you probably are not doing much by giving one coat. You need to do more." So then, of course, I cleaned out my entire drawer of clothes, brought them in a big paper sack, and gave them to this girl, who took them. I never heard anything from this girl or the girl's parents, but it just made me feel better to have done something. So,

they didn't stop me from doing it.

JR: How and why did you get involved in the kind of human rights work that you do now?

LA: Why I did it is probably because, having listened to my relatives, which I loved to do, listening to what happened in Russia, what happened in Germany, what happened in all of these places. It was very intriguing to me because I had no idea that people could be so horrendous at times or do such horrific things, and then really trying to understand it, I think, is what sort of got me to where I am. How I did it is a much longer story because when you go into medicine, you're not taught to deal with human rights abuses, even though health and human rights are interconnected and indistinguishable at some points.

It's not something that you're taught. You don't learn that everybody has the right to health. You just basically learn to treat, diagnose and treat. So, they don't teach you how to do this, so you have to sort of decide what your interests were. My interest, early on, before going to medical school, was marine biology, so I pursued a career in marine biology, but then sort of figured out that this was more of a hobby, and it wasn't getting at what my goals were, and what I really wanted to do. So, I decided that I had to go to medical school, and I ended up in public health school because I wasn't the greatest college student. Even though I graduated in two years, I really had no interest in what they were teaching me in college. It just didn't seem applicable to me. So, I went to school to get a public health degree, and the easiest thing for me to do, because I was a marine biology student, was to study parasitology, which – every animal had a waterborne cycle, so it was easy to make that sort of move from the water to people.

Once I was there, we started hearing lectures about the refugee situations. At that time, it was about the Cambodian-Thai refugee camps, and so people were coming to tell us about what was going on. I started realizing that this was really my interest. That I, first of all, understood what was going on – partly – and understood what was going on medically. That public health-wise was really important. Also, there were a lot of human rights issues that were similar to what my relatives had gone through. It was just

something that pulled me that way. However, I was trying to get into medical school at the time, so I had to sort of put that on the back burner. Once I got into medical school, it was just impossible to do anything internationally, and also what are you going to do as a student? There's nothing that you're really trained to do in the field. So, I waited until I got to residency, and then the first chance I got in residency, I went to Africa and spent twelve weeks in a really remote, rural part of Africa, doing medical care and learning about what was there. At that time – it seems like human rights abuses just follow me – the Rwandan crisis was breaking out. I remember leaving at the end of twelve weeks and saying, “This is really tough. I'm not sure that this is something that I could do. I'm not sure how I want to do this, but I don't feel like me starting a clinic in Africa, or giving medical care treats the issue.” Because the issue is not necessarily the medical care, it's the infrastructure, it's the political situation, it's the world response, it's humanitarian aid, it's all these other things. I came back, and about four weeks later, I was called to go to Rwanda. In Rwanda, I was faced forward of human rights abuses. Dead bodies piled on the side of the road, dead and dying babies on the side of the road, picking up infants that I thought were survivable to try and resuscitate, taking care of an orphanage, taking care of refugees who were macheted, had lost arms, hands, had ball peen hammers put through their head. The things that I witnessed at that time was what changed my direction. At that time, I was thinking about doing oncology and research, and this is what made me decide that I had to do something more. But still, the problem is, when you decide that you want to do this, there's no mentors in medicine that say, “Okay, well, this is how you do what you want to do,” or “Here's what I think you can do based on your work.” So, I continued over the next eight years to do these types of things. So, I was in Zaire, I was in Albania with the Kosovo refugees, I was in Kosovo, and then I was doing clinical research.

JR: Who did you go with to these places?

LA: Mostly JDC. Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and International Rescue Committee, as well as a couple of other small NGOs, but I always ended up being farmed out to UNICEF or CARE [Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere], or other groups as well, to help startup either health-based community programs or emergency medical stops for refugees that were coming down a pass or something like that. So, over the next eight years, I continued to do these things, and then I was doing clinical research at the Brigham, and I had a horrible mentor – was this woman who was destructive. I had two other mentors who weren't destructive but were helpful. But what they kept telling me was, "Well, what you need to do to get to assistant professor or associate professor is to do X." I kept fighting with this. I'm not interested in getting to assistant or associate professor based on this stuff, and I'm not interested in doing this just to get to there. It was like ninety percent of what I was doing was to get to the next level, with only ten percent of it may be making an impact in medicine, and to me, that was just too much to bear. So, I ended up deciding, "Okay, I'm not going to do this anymore." The easiest way out was to go to Albania, against the wishes of my department chair, who was my mentor, as well, but it's sort of hard to call her a mentor. There, I finally decided that I could no longer stand by. As a humanitarian aid worker, you always accept access for silence because otherwise, you lose your access to the most vulnerable, and your mission as a humanitarian aid worker is to feed or care for refugees. But the bottom line was, again, that feeding or caring for the refugees was doing nothing to change the situation. Or changing this from happening again elsewhere. So, I decided that I had to do something different. I had to be more active, I had to be more policy-oriented, I had to do more advocacy, but I wasn't sure how to do that. So, when I came back, I started talking to people. Everybody that I knew in the field. At that point, I had a huge book of people that I had met along the way. So, I called everybody and started asking questions. "What do you think I could do?" For the most part, I got, "You might as well just keep doing what you're doing because that's all that's available." But at one point, I went to talk to the ex-dean of the Harvard School of Public Health,

and he was in my division. He said he looked at what I had done – he didn't really know me, and I knew of him, and I knew him. I said hello to him but did not really know him. I handed him my CV, told him what I was interested in, told him what I had done, and about twenty minutes after talking, he picked up the phone and called Physicians for Human Rights, and said, "I'm sending over someone. I think you need to talk to her. I think she's exactly what you're looking for." I went over there after a few mishaps of not getting there and canceling a few appointments because I wasn't sure that this was what I wanted to do. It ended up that I was hired that day to do their human rights investigations, which pulled together everything that I had. It pulled together my research skills, my epidemiology, my women's health, [and] my field experience, both from my marine biology days as well as being in the field as a humanitarian aid worker, and it's turned out to be the most rewarding, and the easiest fit for everything that I do.

JR: So, what have you been doing for the Physicians for Human Rights?

LA: I've been doing population-based studies on human rights violations. The first study I did was in Afghanistan, looking at the human rights violations that the Taliban had laid upon the women. I did a large population-based study, interviewing about 1,100 people or more and publishing a large report about this. Then, doing the advocacy around that. Then, that's where I'm headed in a few days.

JR: Back to Afghanistan.

LA: Back to Afghanistan with a newsgroup, who wants to –

JR: How long were you there before?

LA: On and off, three months. Three separate trips. This will be the fourth. I've also –

JR: The newsgroup that you're going with is [inaudible]?

LA: They're profiling the report and basically taking what we're saying and putting the Afghan situation into better context. Instead of dealing with the issues around dress, they're dealing with the real issues: poverty, the humanitarian crises, and healthcare education and those things that have made surviving in Afghanistan almost impossible.

Then the other thing I did was a study on the prevalence of sexual violence in Sierra Leone and taught human rights courses in Kosovo-to-Kosovo medical personnel, who, although they had been through a horrible humanitarian disaster and a human rights catastrophe, still had their own sort of biases, and inability to recognize that even though the Serbs did horrible things, that they were people and deserved justice as well. I mean, they were very ready, and very readily admitted that they would do exactly what they did to them, which we all know just sort of propagates everything.

JR: What role would you say your work plays in how you see yourself?

LA: I think it's my personality. I don't know.

JR: I mean, do you see yourself as a doctor, or as a humanitarian aid worker, or –?

LA: I mean, I think I'm a little of everything. I'm a human rights, public health physician, someone with societal guilt and desire to make sure that [I'm] an advocate so that this doesn't happen again. I'm a lot of little things, not any one big thing.

JR: How have you balanced having a family with doing this kind of work that takes you all over the place?

LA: Having a family hasn't changed how I've done this work. The only time it was limiting was I couldn't go to Sierra Leone because I was giving birth to my daughter. But otherwise, it hasn't stopped me from doing anything. It makes the details harder.

Because I'm leaving, I have to make sure that I have backup for my husband, who's taking care of my son. Because I'm leaving, I have to make sure that my children have enough to eat [and] have their calendar arranged. Their friends know that they may need

to help out and those types of things. But it hasn't stopped me from doing anything, and I think it's only added to my ability to do things. (Zoe?) is actually going with me to Afghanistan, which is new for PHR [Physicians for Human Rights], but you know what? It's my job, she's nursing – I'm not going to stop nursing. I'm not going to give up one or the other just because I need to do this. She can continue nursing. I'm still going to be able to do my work. Frankly, if you ask any of the refugees that I'm going to be seeing whether they think it's extraordinary that they brought my daughter, they would probably say no. Because they're living under a lot more harsh conditions than I would be, even if I am living in a tent. I still have access to water, food, and all of these other things. So, I don't think it's changed.

JR: How do you explain your work to your son?

LA: Ari actually figured it out on his own. When the Kosovo refugee crisis happened, he was watching TV with us and saw the refugees. They had pictures of the refugees coming down that famous road; and all of the kids were without shoes, and the refugees were crying. Ari said, "Mommy, those are sad people. Why are they sad?" At that time, I guess he was just three or going to be three. So, I told them that there were people that were chasing them. He said, "Oh, bad people." For lack of a better word, fine. In a two-year-old's mind, they are. They're doing bad things. They may not be bad people, but they're doing bad things. But at that point, you just sort of accept. So, he decided that the bad people were chasing the sad people, and he knew that I do some of this work. How he remembered that I don't know because the first time I left, he was seven months old, and then there were other things that I had done in the past. So, he turned to me, and this was before I knew that I was actually going because I didn't leave until May. He said, "Mommy, you have to go, you have to go and help these sad people." So, Ari tells everybody that what mommy does is that she helps the sad people and that she tries to make them happy. He contributes in his own way. He knows when I'm going on a trip because I start collecting medications that I'm going to bring, and if I start packing,

certain things come out that he hasn't seen in a while, and then he starts adding to the pile. So, he goes to his toy box, and he pulls out his little McDonald's toys because he knows I can't take anything big, so he always gives me the small toys. He puts them in a big pile and he says, "Here, Mommy, give these to the sad people." This time, since he's been able to write, he's been writing his name, and then underneath, putting it phonetically, instead of A-R-I, putting R-E, so that the sad people will know how to say his name, and telling me to give those to them so that they'll know that he is involved.

JR: Do you see your work as fitting into or challenging women's traditional kinds of roles?

LA: Oh, I don't think it fits into women's traditional roles at all. It's not so common for women to travel and do these things on their own. I generally travel alone, and I am meeting with government officials, UN officials, NGO officials, and there's not a lot of women in the field that I meet that are doing this. There are a lot of UN women field workers, but not so many human rights people or people that are doing things that are considered risky, although I don't consider it that risky. The fact that I don't allow – I hate to use the word balance because it's really not balance, I just do it. It's just that I have a few extra details that have to be taken care of, is not traditional. I mean, most of my friends always say to me, "Oh, I would never do that, I can't leave my kids for a second." But my feeling is that one month out of their life is not going to make a huge difference and to be able to come back and tell them stories or bring them pictures about interesting things around the world, I think, is more important than being here and watching Cartoon Network for the month or playing the same game for a month.

JR: What have been the biggest challenges for you in the kind of work that you've done?

LA: Biggest challenge. I think learning everything that I needed to learn about human rights because it wasn't taught to me. So, it had to be all – it wasn't something I learned in medical school, it wasn't something that I learned. It was something that I sort of innately knew and had experience with based on family history and a desire to know

about it. But the rest of it, putting it into a more academic way, was harder to learn. I mean, that was a challenge, trying to figure out the vocabulary and how to do it, and how to be – how to do advocacy was hard because they don't teach you how to do interviews or get out the most that you need to say in three seconds. So, that was challenging.

Also, convincing my family and friends that it's okay for me to do this even though I have a family. That was a challenge. I don't think they necessarily agree with what I do, but I think they've just sort of come to realize that their views are not going to stop me from doing it. But I also think that they've seen that it hasn't caused harm, and so they're less vehement about where I go and how I go. They just sort of go, "Oh. We'll pray for you." But they don't voice strong opinions anymore, as they used to.

JR: Has your husband been supportive of you going [inaudible]?

LA: Absolutely. I mean, I don't think I could have done it otherwise.

JR: Have you faced – well, I guess that what you just said sort of fits into this – but have you faced particular challenges as a woman trying to do this kind of work?

LA: In some ways, it's been easier as a woman in the areas that I've been in. In other places, it's been harder. Surprisingly, in Afghanistan, it was actually easier to do it as a woman because they were very curious why a Western woman wanted to deal with these issues or talk to anybody. So, I got access that I probably would not have gotten if I were a man. Also, because I'm dealing with women's human rights issues, it's much easier for me to get access because, in many of these societies, it can only be woman to woman, so it makes it a lot easier. In other ways, it's sometimes harder, like in the UN system, which I think is very old-world, male-run. The UN is full of a lot of societies where it's patriarchal. So, in that sense, yes, it is much harder for me, particularly [as?] a scientist. But I've been pretty credible, and I also work with a very well-known, established, credible group. Just being associated with them has sort of raised me to a level that I would never have been raised to previously.

JR: What's been most rewarding for you about doing this kind of work?

LA: That I feel like I'm contributing. That the work that I love to do and the work that I'm doing makes some difference. Maybe not large, maybe sometimes it is large. Increased humanitarian aid, or whatever the policies are that we set out, that we think should be changed. The fact that I am finally happy at what I do, and not struggling to figure out who I am and what I should be doing.

JR: Do you think of yourself as an activist?

LA: Yes, you have to be when you do this type of work. I mean, who else is going to bring what's happening in the world to peoples' eyes? The only way to do it is to do something like this. You can either standby, or you can do something about it, and I chose not to standby.

JR: Did your family talk a lot about the kind of struggles that they had dealt with in Europe? Because it sounds like that had a big impact on you.

LA: Yes. I mean, talked a lot about – I listened to my grandmother a lot, who talked about Russia, and about what happened, and I listened to relatives. For some reason, I like to elicit these stories from these relatives, so obviously, it was an interest of mine, and I would get them talking. But my parents did talk about the Holocaust, and I actually ended up doing a lot of reading over the years and have a huge collection of books about the Holocaust. So, they had sort of brought it up. I don't think they actually knew a lot of it. They didn't have the same amount of training that I did in it, but just reading on my own sort of helped. I didn't necessarily talk it completely over with them.

JR: How would you say that your contributions have affected others? What are the ways in which you feel like you've made your biggest impact?

LA: Since I've only been in this two years, I don't think I've made a huge impact. I think where I have made the biggest impact is among medical students and residents who are interested in doing things that I have done and are not quite sure how to do it or how to take the path to do it. I think that's been my biggest impact. My impact for the work that I've done, I don't think, is yet to be seen. The work is out there, and it's slowly being taken up and the work that I do is quoted by a lot of sources, international sources. So, people are reading it. But what the full impact is, I'm not sure. Most of it has been sort of increased appropriation for aid, which is a big impact. It doesn't solve the problem, but it's a big impact. I haven't seen that it changes policy, which is what I would like for some of the things. But I'm also not done. I've got a lot of time to go.

JR: What do you hope will be your impact?

LA: I hope I'll be able to, in the areas that I've been in, help to mold policy towards the area. To help change the situation, even the smallest amount, that would stop some of these abuses and improve the life for whoever the group is that I'm studying, whether it's women, or men and women, or whoever. I'd also like to be able to – for other people to be able to do something similar to what I'm doing, so that we're not the only group in the field doing this type of work. So, to help sort of develop the methodology for looking at human rights abuses [in] a scientific manner, and coming up with numbers that then change policy, that then become advocacy tools, etc. There's not a lot of people doing this, and it's a new field. So, I'm hoping that that's what it'll do.

JR: How do you think this kind of work has changed you?

LA: It's made me more aware. It's made me more accepting and unaccepting in many ways. So, accepting of cultural norms that may or may not be compatible with Western culture. But also understanding how they interplay with human rights abuses and what the difference is between culture and accepted abuse. It's made me more comfortable with who I am. I was always sort of struggling to find a place where I fit in and where this

sort of mishmash of degrees and expertise could be used, and definitely, now it's all used in one place. It's made me a better mother, for sure, in explaining what goes on in the world and trying to figure out ways to make my kids more sensitive. Particularly Ari, since he's five, and this is the age when they start calling each other names and not being nice and sort of reminding him that this is what leads to bigger things. So, I think those types of things.

JR: Have you had role models?

LA: My mentor now, definitely, is my role model. I've had other role models along the way. [The] sort of people that I felt were human, who supported me no matter what I decided to do. But role models for the type of work I do, not necessarily other than my mentor. Role models for life? Yes, my friends and people that I knew or professors that I felt were very accepting of my ideas and sort of pushed me along the path without sort of saying, you have to go that way. But letting me make my own mistakes and then come back to mid-center.

JR: I think that's about the extent of the questions that I have for you. [inaudible] But is there anything that you'd like to tell me that we haven't covered?

LA: I don't think so.

JR: Okay, great. Well, thank you very much.

LA: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]