

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Deborah Kayman

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Deborah Kayman conducted by Frances Garrett Connell on May 15, 2015. This interview is part of the Barnard Class of 1971 Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project	
Interviewee: Deborah Kayman	Location: New York, NY
Interviewer: Frances Garrett Connell	Date: May 15, 2015

0:04:00 Q: This is an interview taking place with Deborah Kahen Kayman—

Kayman: Kay-man

Q: Kayman, at her apartment in New York City on May 15, 2015. The interviewer is Frances Connell. Okay, are you ready to begin?

Kayman: Ready to go.

00:22:04 Q: Super. So can you tell me a little about where and where you were born, and about your early life?

Kayman: I was born and raised in Queens. I grew up in Jamaica Estates, where we moved when I was two. My Dad and my brother still live in the house in which I grew up. So I still feel quite attached to that place, and I haven't moved exactly far from it. I attended public schools: P.S. 131, Junior High School 217, otherwise known as Van Wyck Junior High, and Jamaica High School, and from there to Barnard.

00:01:10 Q: And what was your neighborhood like?

Kayman: Well, when I was growing up there, I really thought that I had to be about the luckiest person in the world because my neighborhood was beautiful. I thought it was the garden spot of the universe. That part of Jamaica has winding streets that are lined with big old trees, and people have beautiful gardens. Then in the spring, right at this time of the year, everything would be particularly beautiful, the bulbs were coming up, and the flowering trees were in bloom, and next to come are the azaleas and the rhododendrons, and I loved all that. And it was a great place to play in the winter, when we had snow, and ride in a sled down a hill in front of the house, because there was very little traffic on the streets. I used to bicycle after school a lot, and was very safe doing that, in the pre-helmet era. And I knew we were part of the city, and that was something my parents emphasized to me. We were within walking distance of a subway line, and so we never spoke of “going into the city.” We were already in the city. We went into Manhattan sometimes, and getting on the F train, I could be in Midtown in just a little over half an hour, and so I felt the city, you know, was at my feet. As I got older, I did lots of going down to the Village, or going to the museums on the Upper East Side, attending archeology lectures and things like that.

But my neighborhood was my base of operations, and I did love it, and I do to this day. It's not much changed, except in terms of who lives there. Most of the old houses are still there. Some of those which have been sold more recently are tear-downs, and some newer-style houses have been going up, but it's still, much of it looks as it did, and my old elementary school is still one of the best in the city. So I guess they were doing something right.

00:03:45 Q: And what about the ethnicity, the people you were surrounded by mostly?

Kayman: Well, that's been changing. The part of Jamaica Estates where we lived the southern part, was also Monastery Parish, so Mary Louis Academy which was a private high school for Catholic girls was very nearby. It was on my way to the subway. And there were lots of parochial school kids in the neighborhood. Many Italian, some Irish. I didn't get to know most of the parochial school kids well, although there was a family that was part of that parish that lived right next door to us that I was really friendly with. The neighborhood always had a mix of— obviously there were Jewish people, we were a Jewish family— but more of the Jews lived in the northern part of Jamaica Estates, on the other side of Grand Central Parkway. We had Greeks and Armenians, and some Chinese, a sprinkling of Chinese back then. I would say today there are fewer Jews, more South Asians, still plenty of Italians, some Russian, and Bukharian immigrants are also in the neighborhood now.

00:05:37 Q: Okay. And you tell me a story about your parents that explains a little bit about how they were, how you remember them.

Kayman: My Dad's still alive. He was just here today. He's going to be celebrating his birthday in August. He was born in 1918, so he's going to be ninety-seven years old. And, he's not all of what he used to be, but there's a lot of him still there. My Dad was a lawyer. He retired from the practice of law at I think about age eighty. My brother who lives with him is also a lawyer. My mom was a stay-at-home mom. I think that she wasn't really happy doing that, but I don't think

she thought she could do anything else, that she was doing what was expected of her. She did like to live by the rules. She went to Queens College, where she was an English major. She was very, very interested in the arts, and made sure that we were exposed to theater and many kinds of music, ethnic cuisines, and all the smörgåsbord of things the city had to offer. She was a big fan of Leonard Bernstein and creative writing. She—as I was coming up through school and was given creative writing assignments, she would seem to like to help me with those. I always felt kind of stumped. I'm more of a science writer type—just the facts, ma'am—creative writing didn't come so easily. I can still remember some of what she and I co-wrote.

Dad was very interested in Judaism, and a contemporary form of Judaism which was much less focused on theology and what God expected of us, and much more on what it meant to be part of the Jewish people. And we did have a fairly observant Jewish home, [though] certainly not Orthodox. We were members of a synagogue. We had a Sabbath dinner every Friday night, and my father prepared me for bat mitzvah and went to bat for me in the congregation, so I could have my celebration on Saturday morning, which would give me more opportunities to participate in more facets of the service. It was very unusual for girls to have bat mitzvahs on Saturday morning back in the day—

00:08:54 Q: So this would have been nineteen—

Kayman: My bat mitzvah would have been in '63. And he went to bat for me. There were people on the Ritual Committee who were kind of upset about it, some compromises were made, it all

got worked out, but passion for Jewish thought, Jewish learning, Jewish practice, Hebrew language, that was something that Dad had and that he certainly passed on to me.

00:09:27 Q: And how many children? Yourself and your brother?

Kayman: I had two brothers. I'm the eldest of three. It's my baby brother who lives with Dad. I say baby brother because he is almost eight years younger than I am. The brother that I really grew up with was two years younger than myself, and he is deceased. He died of AIDS in 1992 at the age of thirty-nine. So, I miss him. We certainly were close in some ways growing up, although we were very different people. And he was crazy about all things horticultural, which is something he shared with my mother. And he was much more interested in what was fashionable, and things that were markers of social status, and those were the kinds of things that interested my mother and didn't interest me at all. So they were close.

00:10:48 Q: Do you ever remember feeling different when you were growing up, because of your family, versus other families, or what your dad did versus other dads, or—

Kayman: I don't think I felt different in that way. I had friends who were Jewish who were much more secular than I. Friends who were Jewish who were members of the same synagogue and about as active as my family. I think the answer is that I was very curious about other people, so difference wasn't something troubling. I didn't think about it in those terms. It's just that I was curious about what was out there. So, you know, I remember having friends who belonged to other ethnic groups, and I had friends who lived in apartments, rather than houses, and lived in

different neighborhoods from mine, some of which I could bicycle to from where I lived, and that was all a lot of fun to me. I think I had essentially no class consciousness at all, and it was just, they're like this, and I'm like this, and isn't this great?

One of my best friends in high school was Greek. She lived right near the high school, and we would often go over to—she was a year behind me—we'd go over to her place after school and her grandmother lived with her and her grandmother would be making these Greek butter cookies, and I would get to enjoy them, and her grandmother barely spoke English. I thought this was very exciting.

In junior high, junior high was the first time I attended school with kids who were African American, and in my class there were two girls who I became friends with, and they were the ones, really, who started to open my eyes to think a little more deeply about some of these questions of difference and how they affected people. I think I was blithely unaware of that stuff until I became their friend. I'm very grateful for that, and it was right at the time of the blossoming of the Civil Rights Movement and also when there was a lot of conflict erupting in New York about changing feeder patterns for schools so they would be more integrated. And there was a lot of acrimony about it and having Lynnette and Toni in my life helped me see things differently from my parents, or other people I knew.

00:13:58 Q: Can you tell me more about your high school experiences, what kinds of things you were doing as activities, what subjects were particularly interesting, any teachers who were particularly formative for you?

Kayman: I really enjoyed high school very much. I had a lot of fun—I don't know how many people you hear that from. My impression is generally as I talk to people that most people have a terrible time in high school, they're dreadfully worried about being popular or whatever. And the height of my unpopularity was in junior high. In high school, I just bloomed. I was out there. And the world was my oyster, and I had a blast. I was involved in arts-related things, performing arts. I was active in the theater crowd at school and acted in school plays, and was part of the drama society that met every week, and we did various kinds of theater exercises and so forth, and certainly the teachers who led the Drama Corps were important mentors for me, especially Roy Greenfield. And about seven years ago, eight years ago we had the fortieth reunion of my class, and as it happened, the reunion was organized primarily by people from the theater crowd, so it turned out—and we didn't have access to a full mailing list, with everybody in the class on it, but the theater crowd was there in force, and one of us brought Roy Greenfield up from retirement in Florida, and he was there and got to see all of us, and we got to see him, and hug him, and tell him all about what our adventures had been, and it was just so thrilling to connect with him again.

One of the nice things, of course, for me about the theater crowd was that it was very diverse. For me, that added to its appeal. There were kids who were academically strong, and there were kids who were not academically motivated much at all, and there were kids from—all the different ethnic groups in the school were represented, whereas my classes tended to be kind of overwhelmingly Jewish at that time—

00:16:32 Q: Because you were in Honors, accelerated classes—

Kayman: Yes. So it was a much more diverse group, and that was part of it for me for sure. I also sang in the chorus, and I remember the chorus leader pretty well. Who else would I say was important to me in high school? I studied French in high school and ultimately was in an AP class in French, and I loved studying French. I really loved French, and I studied, and for two years not one. I studied for one year with Mrs. Newman, one year with Mr. Iorio, an AP class with Mr. Herold and in their different ways they were all wonderful. Mrs. Newman was the toughest. So it was a good thing that I had her first. Tough and fair but tough. And she expected a lot. And of course with so many Jewish kids in the class, and because Deborah was such a popular name at the time, there were three girls known as “Debbie” in the class, and they were “Debbie Première,” “Debbie Deux,” and “Debbie Trois.” And I was Debbie Première. And it was all based on your place in the alphabet. And, what else? I think those were my favorite things about high school. You know, we had challenging and good teachers for things like English and Social Studies, too. But I would say that I had that quality of instruction in those areas all the way through my schooling. It wasn't unique in what I had in high school. Mr. Silver, my English teacher, he was a real character. And eventually he went on to become the principal of the High School for the Humanities where I did an Artist's Residency at one point, later on, in my music career. But he died before his time. He didn't live long. But he was a memorable English teacher.

I took, for reasons of pragmatism, I took a couple of commercial classes. I spent a year studying typing. Mostly, the room was filled largely with manual typewriters; we had a couple of electric typewriters, and the students rotated to those, but I learned to type on a “chunk-chunk-thunk”

machine, and I did a whole year of it, so I was one hell of a typist by the time I got out, and it stood me good stead in college and in work when I got out. I really learned touch-typing. We had these huge charts over the blackboard and in front of us, and you were not allowed to look at the keys, and you extended your fingers to the different positions, depending on what was in the charts. I also took shorthand, Pitman shorthand, and I did that for a year, and my teacher who taught me shorthand signed my yearbook in shorthand, and I can still read it, although I didn't end up using the shorthand as much as I had thought I might. The typing I used a great deal.

00:20:28 Q: How about your social life? Did you date? Have any memorable boyfriends?
Girlfriends?

Kayman: The first guy that I dated was not from my school. I met him on a Jewish youth weekend, and he played the guitar, and it was very romantic, and there was something a little bit naughty about him, and he lived here on the Upper West Side. And so he was my first boyfriend when I was fifteen. I had lots of crushes. One of the guys that I was crushed out on at one point, my gay brother Daniel eventually ran into in San Francisco—my brother moved there, spent his entire adult life there—and he ran into this guy. I guess the guy recognized the last name when he met my brother, and so they found out they had me in common, and the guy I had had a crush on was a drag queen. So little did I understand these things. And Mr. Iorio was clearly gay and flirting with the boys in the class all the time, and I didn't get it. All of this kind of dawned on me later. I wasn't aware at all at the time that I was attracted to women. That did not dawn on me until much later; I was around thirty. My brother Daniel apparently thought I was a lesbian, but he saw me dating boys and decided to let well enough alone, and we just never discussed it. Oh,

so that's a whole side of experience that I never got to have within high school. I had boyfriends sometimes at summer camp, and there was a guy in my high school that I fell madly in love with early in my senior year, and I'm very lucky that I didn't marry him. I guess I had an instinct for health and pulled myself out of that particular fire, although it was very hard because I was very much infatuated. I was madly in love with him but, of course, he didn't ask me to the prom, so I ended up asking a guy to the prom, a guy I had met who was already in college. He was a freshman, I think at Queens College, and I'd met him through a friend, and I asked him to accompany me to the prom. And a guy who liked me invited me to his prom. I was a junior, and he was a senior, and he invited me to his prom his senior year. But I would say, on the whole, dating in high school for me wasn't happening.

00:24:04 Q: Was there ever a time in high school, when you felt your parents, particularly your mother, was trying to tell you how you should be, what you should do?

Kayman: I would say I felt that a lot. Especially from my mother, although it was a very confusing and mixed message.

Q: How so?

Kayman: So I didn't really get it. Well, what my mother was modeling through her actual life was putting your family first and being a housewife. And—loving to prepare delicious and healthful and interesting foods, and my mother did not want that for me. And I couldn't understand why she was pushing me so hard to “Do as I say, not as I do.” I really couldn't add that up. I mean I

guess with twenty-twenty hindsight I can see more explanations for that, but it kind of drove me crazy at the time.

Another thing was that I was very, very interested in a career in the performing arts, and my parents were very aggressively steering me away from that. They seemed to be quite sure that I wouldn't make it in the arts, and of course—that was really good for my self-esteem, to have it be so clear that they thought I couldn't cut it—I also understood that they had this idea that basically unless you were at the level of Leonard Bernstein or Yo-Yo Ma, you weren't doing anything. So you had to be at the very top, or it wasn't worth the candle. So, they were actively discouraging me from that, and in some ways I ended up at Barnard because of that fight with my folks, because I would have preferred to go to a school with a stronger performing arts program, and Barnard didn't have it at the time. They have more now, but at the time, they just didn't have it. And my parents were aggressively steering me away from that.

00:26:29 Q: When were you able to, sort of, take off, in your career as a musician?

Kayman: After I got married. [Laughs] I married early, I married young, and I think part of it was in order to have an ally in separating from my parents, and getting out from under their thumb. My spouse, who died ten years ago, was very, very supportive of everything I wanted to do. I also internalized a lot of my mother's values about the importance of family and a steady home life, and so for me part of what was difficult about getting launched career-wise was figuring out how to make time for things like that, while also being sufficiently attentive to home and hearth and spouse. In the beginning, I really couldn't do it, and home and hearth and spouse won over

self for a long time. I really took a long time to achieve a decent balance; it was a hard-learned lesson, and I would say that I didn't really get the knack of it until after my spouse finished his doctorate, in 1978, when I realized he'd been so preoccupied and distracted and in some ways absent while doing that doctorate in ways that I hadn't anticipated would happen in our marriage. That wasn't what it was supposed to be about. I had to really re-evaluate, what is it that a strong life partnership gives you space for? I mean, how does it function? And how much autonomy do you have in it? And so after he finished that degree is when I did most of that work. So basically it was when I was in my late twenties and early thirties that, really, that stuff started to come together.

00:28:30 Q: Okay. Let's go back and look sort of at the broader world. What kind of political or world events do you remember growing up being aware of?

Kayman: I remember thinking of astronauts as heroes. I, of course, remember the day [John F.] Kennedy was shot. I was in junior high. They sent us home. I remember watching the funeral on television. I remember the drums, the drumbeat, and that rhythm, that somber rhythm haunts me to this day.

[Interruption]

Kayman: Okay, so we were talking about [John F.] Kennedy being shot and my watching the funeral. I certainly remember the coverage, the newspaper coverage of the March on Washington. The rabbi of my congregation went. I don't know if you saw the musical, Caroline

or Change? It was a wonderful musical which, like *Fun Home*, started out at the Public Theater and then went to Broadway, and it really was capturing this period. It was about a Jewish kid becoming bar mitzvah, living down South and dealing with someone who was like a mother figure to him. His own mother was dead; she was the domestic help. And she was African-American, and she was going through changes of her own and conflicts within her own family, generational conflicts that had to do with the Civil Rights movement, and it portrayed that era and I was really just that age at that time, and it portrayed it just right. I still think that was the best musical I ever saw. It didn't make it on Broadway, unfortunately. But Tonya Pinkins had the lead role; there was a wonderful performance. And it captured that era so vividly, and I'm saying it's all in here; I lived it; I remember it.

Then the other thing was the abortion rights fight was happening. In New York State, abortion was legalized before *Roe v. Wade*. And there was a legislative fight over it, and certain people who were out there in front banging the drum for it, and I felt myself to be an abortion rights activist from the time I was in high school.

I remember things about the student struggle for Soviet Jewry. There was a question of Jews feeling that their identity as Jews was suppressed in the Soviet Union, and they wanted freedom to immigrate to Israel and they didn't want to be punished for applying to emigrate. They had lots of allies in the United States among American Jews. I wasn't very active in that, but it certainly was a struggle that I was aware of.

And more dimly, but there, it was in the mix, I was aware of the “Ugly American.” I read the book [The Ugly American by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer]. You know, I knew there were ways in which I knew this country was not perceived as such a good place around the world because of things that we, or that American businessmen, did in those countries that were in some ways harmful to them, in the name of development in the Third World. So I remember when I was eleven, I went on a cruise, a Caribbean cruise, with my parents. Dan and I were both on that cruise and David wasn't along. I guess he was left home with a nurse-governessy-type person. And some of our ports of call were places where there was a level of poverty that I had never seen before, and it was my first time being exposed to this. So we did stop in Caracas and saw the whole “Yanqui go home,” thing. We stopped in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and there were beggars in little tiny boats surrounding our cruise ship, you know, some of them trying to sell things and some of them just wanting a handout. I had never seen anything this intense before. It kind of freaked me out. I mean, I knew there was poverty in the United States. We heard all about Appalachia and those kinds of things, but this was a whole other level, and I first became aware of that, I assume, when I was on this cruise as an eleven-year-old.

00:37:09 Q: Amazing. Okay. How about a moment, or maybe that counts—a moment or a day that you think really changed your life, turned everything around.

Kayman: A day? A moment? Well, I'd say spring of '68 qualifies for that. I mean, but it was a process that was already underway. But I think it was the moment when the die was really cast; there was no going back. There was no compromising. I was never going to see the world again [the same way] or be satisfied with simplistic explanations. It was just never going to happen

again. Not once I understood that there had been a police riot, not once I saw how the demands the strikers were talking about were distorted in the news media, not when I understood how Fortress Columbia [University] really was afraid of and standing against the community in which it was situated. It all—not when we were all in this horrible war in which the people who in various ways could be clever about deferments could manage to stay out, but the people who got drafted were being chewed up and spat out in a war that was very ugly and made no sense.

00:35:58 Q: And where were you when it all started. Let's go right there. We'll go back and look at some of the other questions later. What were you doing when the Strike began, and what was your involvement in it?

Kayman: As a freshman, I was a commuter. Students who lived within an hour and half commute of the college were not promised housing. So it was very common for freshmen to be living at home, and I was one of those. So I didn't see a lot of that with my own eyes. I would come into campus and see what had transpired the night before. And I was there for what was happening in the daytime, and then I went home. In that sense I missed a lot, but I was also going back and forth between these two worlds that, you know, were cut off from each other. It was like I was the bridge. And it was so hard to bridge. People talk today about how polarized our society is, and how rarely we talk to people that we don't agree with, that we tend to surround ourselves with people who think like us, and so because we're so dismissive of the other point of view we don't even expose ourselves to it. And I would say that if I hadn't been commuting then, that might have been the situation for me. But instead I was living in two worlds, and that was difficult. It certainly convinced me that I really needed to be living on campus the next year.

00:37:38 Q: Now, were your parents just outraged by this? What was going on?

Kayman: Yes. I wasn't sure where I was at about the striker's demands. I mean among other things, I didn't like a lot of the tone, you know. I didn't like pompous bloviating guys any more than I like pompous bloviating guys on Fox News.

Q: Bloviating. No one says that anymore. [Both laugh]

Kayman: You know just what I mean. And I didn't care for that. And I didn't like that whole terminology of demands, as opposed to talking points, something like that. I liked sweet reason. I liked to think sweet reason was still in the realm of possibility. And my radicalization process was near its beginning or somewhere in the middle. It wasn't complete. So I can't say I agreed with all these demands one hundred percent. I didn't feel that way at all. But at least I thought I understood what everybody was talking about, and I understood what was at stake, and I would go home and try to explain that, and my parents were just having none of it. They basically assumed that if I was trying to explain it, it was because I believed it. There was no way to just say, "No, this is what I saw with my eyes, this is what I heard happened, this is what the strikers are demanding." They just saw me as being in the middle of the mix although I really wasn't yet. I had a very good friend who was one of the occupiers of Low Library, and he's been somebody who had been working on raising my consciousness all year, and there were guys who distributed various radical papers at the gates of the campus, and I would talk to some of them, and they would be interested in introducing me to ways of thinking that were new to me and that

I wanted to seriously think about. I wanted room to think about it, and I took that room. Yes, I was being radicalized, but I can't say that I was all the way there. Yet. I think it's clearer to me now that I was firmly set on that path at that time, but at the time I still felt that this was a work in progress. And I just needed space to sort it out. I certainly felt that what was going on in the streets and what was going on on campus, but outside of the classroom, that was more alive for me, more immediate for me, than anything that was going on inside the classroom. I wasn't yet all that committed to academic life. I was the reluctant academic. I wanted to be in theater [laughs] so it's like I wasn't all that engaged by academics, and I was very interested in what people were feeling and this drama that was playing itself out live. And I liked the opportunity sometimes to go to professors' homes and have classes there instead of on campus. I thought it was interesting that professors, some of them, thought they could support the strike in that way. I mean, all of it was just kind of registering in the brain bank here, and I was mulling it over.

00:41:39 Q: That's a very good description of it [both laugh]. So do you think you're the same person who walked through those gates as a Freshman.

Kayman: No! As a Freshman I was a nice Jewish girl from Queens. I certainly wasn't that any more when I got out. I mean, I am still from Queens, but I wasn't a nice girl anymore. I definitely wasn't a nice girl anymore. I was a whole—It's true that, even before I came, certain kinds of social conventions were already not appealing to me anyway, but this was the thing that pushed me all the way over, and forced me to stop trying to be in both worlds and straddle the fence. All that happens if you straddle the fence is that you get a sore bottom. It kind of pushed me over. No, I was the same person in that I was bringing a certain set of values and passions to bear, but

my sense of how the world worked had been rocked. And what the significance of power was. I think back to the middle-sixties. I would have said I was a liberal, and by the time I was done with college, I was an anarchist, and I have never been anything else [laughs]. So—

00:43:17 Q: You said the decision to send you to Barnard was really your parents' as opposed to the performing arts school. How did you end up—

Kayman: The choice of Barnard, I mean given that certain things were ruled out, the choice of Barnard was mine. But things that I would have ruled in were ruled out. Barnard was attractive to me because I did not want to leave New York City especially. My mother really, really, really wanted me to go to Bryn Mawr College, and I went for an interview at Bryn Mawr and I just didn't like it. Among other things, the person who interviewed me was asking me things she could have learned by looking at my transcript, and I said, this person is not interested in me as a person. They could just read my transcript. Why do I have to be in the room? That bothered me. I didn't want to be a number, a score, a grade, a discipline. I wasn't thinking about life that way. My interview at Barnard was much more human. I suppose if I had gone to Bryn Mawr I would have come out [as queer] a whole lot earlier, but little did I know that at the time. That just wasn't on the horizon at all. Barnard was my choice. I applied on Early Admissions, and I got in and I was happy about it. My mother showed up—the letter came over Thanksgiving weekend, and my mother came to rehearsal—I was at school off hours—rehearsing for the senior play which was going to be performed—I had the lead role—and was going to be performed in December, so we were really at the end of the line for these rehearsals.

00:45:12 Q: What was the play?

Kayman: It was called *Once in a Lifetime*. It actually had a very similar plot to *Singing in the Rain*, where basically it's set in Hollywood and these New York actors get caught up in the change from silent film to talkies, and find themselves a role in Hollywood. That was the plot. And I was the female New York actor.

My mother showed up at rehearsal. She comes in the back of the auditorium waving an envelope. I'm on the stage and my mother is like this [gestures], so I get off the stage, and I run up the aisle to my mother, and then she says, "Don't make a scene."

[Q laughs; Kayman shakes her head]

Again, this is why my mother was always puzzling to me, because I couldn't understand—wait a minute. Who just made the scene? [laughs]. So she sat me down on one of the auditorium chairs near the aisle, and we opened the letter, and it was the acceptance letter from Barnard. It was very exciting. I was happy about it.

Q: And then you went back on stage and continued the rehearsal.

Kayman: [Laughs] And then I went back on stage and continued the rehearsal, and Mom went home. Mom wasn't willing to open the envelope. She felt she shouldn't open the envelope, but

wasn't willing to just wait until I got home for it to get opened. She couldn't sit on it, so she came over to school and made a scene. So I was happy enough about it.

College was a hard adjustment for me, academically. I mean among other things, despite the fact that I had gone to an excellent high school, and had taken all these Honors and AP courses, I didn't end up feeling fully prepared for college. And I was quite overwhelmed at first. I didn't have a lot of confidence. I was an anxious kid. I didn't feel a lot of support coming from the college, or from my fellow students. It felt like a cold environment, and I was quite intimidated in it. I was having trouble keeping up with the reading, particularly in French, and I loved French. But I found that even after my AP [Advanced Placement] French I couldn't keep up with what we were assigned in my French class. And the professor called me out in the most humiliating way in the middle of class and accused me of—basically—being a slacker.

Q: It was K—

Kayman: It was Rifaterre. And I had never been so humiliated in my life, and I went to see her in her office, and I broke down crying, and I explained to her that in fact I had been trying my damndest, but I just wasn't keeping up. And she never treated me that badly again. But I had already been through this terrible experience, so I would say that for about my first year and a half, I was kind of floundering a lot.

00:48:27 Q: So what was the experience like of arriving at the school? You knew New York already, so it wasn't as if the city was going to overwhelm you at that point. But the campus, other people you met, the orientation. Do you remember anything from—

Kayman: Well, I remember a lot. I mean my friend, Eric, who was one of the occupants of Low Library was someone I met during Orientation Week. And the reason that I met him, some people that I knew from high school came to Barnard with me, Most of them were not people who were my friends, but they were people that I knew, so Julia Hong was my high school classmate, Carrie Menkel was my high school classmate, Susan Shapiro was my high school classmate. But one of my good friends from high school was a Columbia Freshman named Jim Shaw, so Jim I felt very comfortable with, and we both really liked to dance, so I went to the mixers, and I spent a lot of time dancing with Jim. And Jim was living in Furnald [Hall], and he introduced me to the guys on his floor, and that's where my nucleus of friends started. My friends were on the Columbia side of the street. So I met these other guys, and they stayed; they were my close cadre of friends until I graduated. And I just attended his youngest child's wedding, not Jim's child, but my friend who occupied Low Library. His youngest child just got married two weeks ago, and I was at the wedding. I've known those kids from birth. This friendship has endured. I'm still in touch with Jim from time to time, but really Eric and I are very good friends.

Basically, what I ended up doing. I wasn't comfortable in libraries. Libraries were too quiet. So when I needed to study on campus, I wasn't in the library. I was in one of the lounge chairs over in Ferris Booth Hall. That's where I spent my time. In those nice, big comfy armchairs, those upholstered armchairs, with a certain amount of hubbub, but not really noisy hubbub or jukebox

hubbub went on around me. That suited me much better. So I spent a lot of time over there. Macintosh Center wasn't built yet. So there really wasn't a place on the Barnard side of the street to hang out. There wasn't a place on the Barnard side of the street to hang out. If I had wanted to casually meet Barnard women, it would have been impossible. It really was impossible. So I was lucky I had friends on the Columbia side and was perfectly comfortable on the Columbia side.

I also took classes, for the first three years I was at Barnard, I took classes at the Jewish Theological Seminary [JTS], which you can now do and get Barnard credit for it, but you couldn't back then. This was all extra, on top of my academic load at Barnard, so I was taking college-level classes over at JTS, and I had friends over at JTS, men and women. Most of them were students in what was called the joint program between the School of General Studies and JTS. One of my friends from that time lives around the corner and belongs to my synagogue. There's been a fair amount of continuity there.

00:52:08 Q: And what drew you to do that? Was it your father's influence? Your own initiative?

Kayman: I was very interested in it myself. The point is my father had instilled it in me, but I remember falling in love with the music of the synagogue by the time I was a toddler. I was going to synagogue with him as a toddler, and I was fascinated with the sound of the chanting in the synagogue. It enraptured me. No, so it became my own. It was because of Dad I was exposed to it, but it became my own.

00:52:37 Q: Had you hoped to become a cantor?

Kayman: No. Didn't want to be in a Jewish ghetto. Didn't want—always wanted to be—always had a kind of multi-ethnic focus and didn't really want to be limited to singing Jewish music for Jewish people. That was not suitable at all. At the time, I'm not sure they were ordaining female cantors yet. If I had wanted a clergy role, at the time, it would have been the rabbinate, and they weren't ordaining women yet, but I was a religion major—not my Freshman year—but I was a religion major, and I think one of the first rabbis one of the first women rabbis was in our class. But it was very, very early days for that.

00:53:39 Q: Cheryl Weiner from our class. She's a rabbi.

Kayman: And Rebecca Trachtenberg-Alpert was in our class, and she was a religion major and she became a rabbi. She's the one I was thinking of just now. And I was friends with Ruth Katz, who was another religion major. So I hadn't declared a religion major as a Freshman, but it turned out that religion was a great subject to be studying at either Barnard or Columbia. It was a very strong department. And I was very interested in religious ideas. What did I write my Senior Thesis on? Protestantism—American Protestantism. I was not—It's because I was interested. You could never paint me into a Jewish corner. Even though I'm a committed Jewish person to this day, I was always enormously interested in these other things.

So I remember one of my favorite courses, it was really my favorite course in history that I took, and history was hard at Barnard—oh my God, talk about an intimidating volume of reading - was a course that covered millennial movements of the Middle Ages, many of which were

religious in nature. It was a great class. I still have some of the texts. I studied Bible with Gaster, and I loved studying with Gaster, and I can still recite verbatim his definition of religion. It's pretty damn useful, too.

Q: What is it?

Kayman: I've never found a better one. "Religion is the synthesis of thought, emotion and behavior whereby, under sanction, man attempts to determine and regulate his place in the scheme of things." It was brilliant. And Gaster was brilliant, and I loved studying with him. I mean it was interesting. He was a pompous guy, you know, and he was very authoritarian, and his was a very old-fashioned way to teach, but he was so eloquent [that] I would find myself just writing down verbatim everything he said. He liked to bait the boys in the class, all the boys who came from yeshiva backgrounds because his position was, "You think you know it all, you think you know what the origin of this holiday is, but let me tell you." You know. He would catch them saying something foolish, and he would say, "No, it's not like that." I didn't really like it that he liked humiliating people, but I did think that he was a brilliant guy and that it was a privilege to study with him.

So my religion classes were good and things got better and better as I went along. I had a class in Greek Drama that I enjoyed. I loved reading plays, so there was an English class [that] Professor Ulanov taught, the only class where you could read literature in translation, and it was plays in translation. I enjoyed that very much.

Q: I think I was in that class with you, actually. It was quite a large class.

Kayman: So we've gone a bit far afield about what was going on in my Freshman year and adjusting to campus, but basically I'd say I was unmoored by my whole Freshman year, and maybe that made me a kind of set-up for being pulled into the vortex of the Strike and so forth. I hadn't otherwise found a home on campus. I would have to say that I was already unsettled and then this incredibly unsettling other thing happened to all of us. And then nobody was settled. I didn't have a home base.

00:57:19 Q: So were there other classes that impressed you?

Kayman: I think I mentioned a few. Do you want some more?

00:57:30 Q: No those are good. Actually, I didn't mean to ask that question. You already answered it. I meant to ask, were you ever involved in any theater at Columbia or Barnard?

Kayman: In my sophomore year, I was in a class that was theater-related, and I think we were doing some reading and limited stagings of some Theater of the Absurd that I hadn't been familiar with up to that point. I was very “well-made play,” and I was being exposed to this stuff which I wasn't sure I was really ready for or that I really liked. I guess it was good that I was being exposed to it, but I wasn't feeling like I had come home to something in the theater. The other thing that happened- I mean Barnard was committed to this idea of the city being its laboratory. I didn't think that it fully lived up to that, but the theater class did make something of

an attempt at that. That class included a field trip to a warehouse near the theater district where they did things like building sets and making costumes and so forth, and it was this warehouse-y building, with one of those elevators with the cage kind of door, that you slide, and it would kind of creak and clank, and it was a kind of creepy building, the like of which I had not been in before, and we didn't go as a group. We all just sort of rendezvoused there. We didn't go as a group, so I went into that building by myself; I'm seventeen years old; I was a young sophomore—I'm eighteen by then. I think I was a sophomore when I took that class, in the fall of my sophomore year. But I was still young, as sophomores go, and some guy got in the elevator with me, who had nothing to do with our field trip, and he exposed himself to me in the elevator, which I found traumatic. It was the first time anything like that had happened to me. And I ended up thinking there wasn't anyone at Barnard to process this with; so I kind of kept it to myself, but I was kind of grossed out freaked out and—That's what happened on that field trip so, no, in terms of actually making theater, Barnard was not a success that way.

I took a music history class across the street to Columbia, so we were expected basically to in effect learn how to do music criticism, how to listen to music and analyze what we were hearing and think about a piece in terms of its structure. I found that quite difficult and not to the point. It just turned music into this very analytic exercise. Music for me had a much more visceral impact, and we weren't looking at that at all. So it felt very detached. And it was music criticism. No one was doing any music making. And there was no opportunity to do any music making. Nope. It was the music criticism class, and that theater class, and I remember, that class in the fall, and I got very sick. I got a bad flu near the end of the term, just in time for finals, so that class ended in

a blaze of dud. That semester was my low point, first semester sophomore year, and after that things started to improve.

01:01:35 Q: So when you arrived at Barnard or even in your years there, what did you think your life was going to be? What did you think you were preparing yourself to become? And how did that change?

Kayman: An adult. I did not see myself as preparing for a particular career. First of all, because my folks had deterred me from the career that I had wanted [laughs]. Look, I suppose if I had had the spine to fight them, some other kids would have fought them, I didn't have that. I was too much of a goody-two-shoes, which is what I am. The nice Jewish girl from Queens really wasn't going to fight them. Someone else would have said, "Okay, you won't pay for me to go to Sarah Lawrence, I'm going to go anyway and I'll apply for financial aid." I didn't have that gumption; didn't do it. I wasn't that kind of a rebel; I wasn't an in-your-face rebel. That's part of why the Strike was difficult for me. It was so in-your-face. I didn't like the idea of being in anyone's face. But what I understood was that this was an opportunity to meet people from other parts of the country and an opportunity to explore ideas in some depth, and to improve in my ability to think analytically and critically and write about it. And that this was preparation for life. I didn't care that much whether it led to a career or not. I mean, among other things, once I had been radicalized, the whole question of a career became much more problematic than before, rather than less. Because anything that most people would recognize as a career, as opposed to just a job, you know, flipping burgers, felt like in some way an opportunity to be co-opted by the system. An opportunity to gain privilege and status that I didn't want, and so I knew I didn't

aspire to those things. I didn't want to be absorbed into the system, and I didn't want to do something that women typically did.

My parents were getting desperate when they saw that I was floundering. They sent me to NYU for some extended career testing. They did all this testing to see what your personality was and what your interests were and to make recommendations to you as to what would be a good career choice or not. And I went through this whole battery of tests—it took several days at NYU—and they came back with the verdict that I should be a librarian. And I remember I couldn't even sit in libraries at the time. I absolutely couldn't understand [laughs] where this was coming from. The funny thing is, ironically, today it would be a good career for me. The interesting thing is they obviously picked up on something that was there, but I wasn't ready for it, and it wasn't where I was at, at the time. Ironically—but it was absolutely off the wall from where I was sitting. And I didn't want to be co-opted by the system, and I didn't want to know what to do within it. I knew I didn't want to be a lawyer, and I didn't want to have some kind of esteemed status, and I didn't want to have degree letters after my name, and titles. It was all repugnant to me, so career was the last thing on my mind. But to be an adult who was living according to her values and who was decent and was nobody's fool—that felt like a worthy goal to me.

01:05:52 Q: How about the sexual revolution? Was this something that impacted you? Did you change—

Kayman: Well, that was one of the things my Columbia friends were working on [laughs].

Q: She puts it very subtly [laughs].

Kayman: Well. Among other things, this nice Jewish girl from Queens couldn't laugh at a dirty joke. I was only embarrassed by a dirty joke. So basically they would bombard me with dirty jokes until I would laugh. And I couldn't curse, you know, use four-letter words. They got me to do it. They wanted to take the “nice” out, so they did it, you know.

And certainly there was a drug scene going on and I was very slow to come to that. And I did see some of the harm it could do. One of my Columbia friends ended up dying of an overdose later, not while we were close.

01:06:57 Q: It was someone from Sha-na-na I thought who died of an overdose.

Kayman: That might be, but this guy wasn't from Sha-na-na and he was a poet, and he wrote me a love poem, but I thought he was too crazy [laughs]. Again, that instinct for health kept kicking in, and I wouldn't go for the really crazy ones.

01:07:13 Q: Did you feel you were doing a lot of experimenting then?

Kayman: I was say I was doing some experimenting, and for me it felt very adventurous, but really we're talking about baby steps. I certainly, once I met my spouse-to-be, which I did the second term of my sophomore year, I was doing things like sneaking him into the dorm. At that point, sophomore year, I was in Hewitt [Hall]. I was on the third floor of Hewitt, kind of in a

corner room, in a suite, unlike anyone else's room. On the end, there was a room that was a double, and there was a room that was a single, and they were separated by a Jack-and-Jill bathroom. And I was in the double. And it faced the quad, and I remember there was a panty raid and guys came climbing up and through my window to enter the building, and crazy goings-on like that. I really think that I was doing more experimenting with my head than with anything else, but I certainly did sneak my boyfriend into the dorms and out again, and I had to do that while I was in Hewitt. I don't think that was necessary anymore by the time I got to "616." I think those rules were gone. I was in "616" for my junior and senior years. And "616" felt like home to me. That was where I got to settle down and feel like part of the college a bit.

I was with some congenial roommates, especially my senior year, when we had a choice of who was going to be in a suite, and I had a good friend who lived [in another suite] across the hall, and she had a little TV in her room and every night at 11:00, our little ritual: I'd go over and watch the news with her and we'd talk about the day. Her name was Joey Gordon. She had originally been in the class ahead of us, and then she lost a year because she had a lot of surgery. She had rheumatoid arthritis; she lost a year and then came back in and ended up being in our class. She's gone now, but she was a very good friend for a long time.

I wasn't—I mean, what I saw [of the sexual revolution]—I was enough of a feminist already. Remember I had been thinking about abortion rights and stuff since my teens, and I believe abortion became legal in New York in '69, I think that was the year. And so I was taking the sexual revolution with a lot of salt, because I could really see the anti-feminist parts of it. And it was clear to me that women were still disadvantaged. I mean it was fine, it was okay by me to

think in terms of sex being something to savor, but it wasn't a hobby in and of itself. It was part of a relationship context. It didn't have to be the committed relationship you were going to be in for the rest of your life, but for me it needed to have a real relational context. So I wasn't really interested in one-night stands, or trying out lots of crazy stuff. So, in that sense, it didn't hit me. The guy who became my spouse was a student at Cornell so, once we were seeing each other, I was spending a lot of time off campus. I was going up to Ithaca a lot of weekends. And I was very settled in that relationship from middle of my sophomore year on, and I married him a couple of weeks after graduation. No, I would have to say that I rather deliberately gave the sexual revolution a pass [laughs].

01:11:54 Q: So, how about some of the events taking place during those years, the riots and the burnings up in Harlem, the assassination of Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, of Martin Luther King Jr.—Kent State, the marches in Washington.

Kayman: I certainly was involved in the marches in Washington. I remember freezing my feet off. You know a lot of those marches were in very cold weather in November and stuff, and the cold just came right up through the bottom of your shoes. And we were outside for long periods of time. And I remember crashing in other people's apartments, and we were wall-to-wall sleeping bags on the floor. And it was a great thing to feel like I was part of something big. I didn't have any delusions of grandeur, that the student movement was going to change the whole world, but I thought that we were doing something important and that others—and that we weren't alone with it, that there were adults and other communities also feeling affected by this, that African-Americans were on the march, labor was on the march, the Farmworkers were on

the march, and there were liberation movements going on in Latin America, and I thought that together there might be this momentum that would grab some power back from the greedy. I think I ended up feeling pretty heart-broken about all that. At the time, not long after I graduated from Barnard, things like the assassination of the archbishop [Romero] in El Salvador, things like the coup against Allende and his death, these things broke my heart. The horrible defeat of McGovern. It wasn't just that he got defeated; I didn't expect him to win, but I didn't expect him to be trounced. And I just felt that what had happened when I was in school, all those events, the marches, the demonstration stuff, the anti-war stuff had stirred up a lot of hope and, after I got out of school, the first thing I saw was that those hopes were being dashed, left, right, and center. And I was quite heart-broken. I wasn't de-radicalized at all. I didn't think anything I thought or fought for was wrong, but I realized that it was going to be a long, hard road, and probably with more defeat in it than anything else.

I mean, we got Roe v Wade in 1973, but then the abortion fight ground on and on and on, and it's grinding on to this day, and still the access to abortion is being cut back and cut back, by a thousand cuts, in a constant assault, ever since 1973, and that was sort of what I was up against. I wasn't a big [Robert] Bobby [F.] Kennedy fan, you know, [but] I was an admirer of Martin Luther King Jr. In general I tended to not trust leaders, so I didn't get that invested in them as leaders, but their assassinations were very shocking. I think that the stuff that went on in Latin America hurt me more.

01:16: 03 Q: And why do you think you were particularly tuned to that situation? I mean Chile, El Salvador, the assassinations?

Kayman: I'm not sure exactly what spoke most to my heart about that, but I could—I know - really see the naked power play of the United States government, the various U.S. corporate interests. It was naked and undisguised there, whereas things here were always more complicated and more veiled. There was something that it was just out there, and in this hemisphere and, after all, I had been on that Caribbean cruise, I had seen a little bit of that world. And what I saw was that there were these attempts in Latin America to achieve democracy, and all we wanted to do was support dictators—in the interests of the greedy, so that really disgusted me. I thought, here are these nascent movements, they have a chance to do something different, and so those things were heartbreaks for me. It unfolded gradually, over time, but eventually, in about 1976, a few years after we graduated, I read a book by Bonnie Mass called *Population Target*—it's still on my shelf here somewhere—and that really opened my eyes. That was the thing that made me decide that I'm done with being an armchair radical. I'm done with sitting here thinking about where I'm positioned in all of this. I have to get out there and really fight and really be involved. Not just as one of hundreds of thousands of people in a march, but somebody who is leading and organizing and mobilizing, and getting the word out. I had to do just do it. After I read this book, which was focusing specifically on the role of the U.S. in population control in Latin America, which touched me where I live, because it had to do with reproductive rights, abortion and sterilization, and it hit me where I lived as a feminist. And so I said, that's it. That's it. I'm done. I've got to get up and do something. And that was really where I feel my own personal activism began. No matter what I participated in while I was in college, this was a more sustained, a more committed kind of activism that started in the middle-seventies.

01:19:14 Q: So, let's go back a little chronologically. So you graduated from Barnard and where did you go from there? And you're married. You got married right away.

Kayman: [laughs] I got married right away. And we stayed married until he died. And we had a kid together. The first year of our marriage, Sam didn't feel ready to go straight on to graduate school when he finished at Cornell, so he didn't apply to graduate schools during his senior year, so he was happy to follow me where I was going to graduate school. I had applied to several programs in Theater Arts [laughs]. I was no longer under the parental thumb. So I got into the program in Theater Arts at the University of Pittsburgh, and I had a graduate assistantship, so we moved to Pittsburgh for the year, and I ended up not liking the program, and I ended up instead of feeling a lot of conflict about how to reconcile my commitment to this theater thing and my personal commitments—I couldn't work it out—I felt my tastes being challenged again, because here I was with well-made plays and old-fashioned musicals, and they were doing this other shit. I was working for a professor who was putting together some kind of a dictionary, really, of technical terms for the theater, and that was his creative project, and I was supposed to be helping him on that. And I didn't feel engaged. And I also felt at times overwhelmed. I mean one of my best instructors was a guy who was teaching us set design, but we had to do drawings, and I didn't feel I could draw. I didn't know what to do with myself, so I lasted two trimesters and dropped out.

While I was there, Sam [my spouse] was working in a lab at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School and, partly on the strength of the recommendation of his boss at that lab, he got into Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT], so our next stop was Boston, where we lived for

six years while he did his doctorate. And where I played the field, in the sense of trying to figure out what I was going to do with myself. My first job was as a clerk-typist at Personal Sportswear, which was in the part of Boston called Southie. From there I went on to do some other things.

I was a secretary at MIT in the cryogenics lab; I was a Gal Friday in a Jewish community organization called the Associated Synagogues of Massachusetts. Eventually I found my way to a Harvard teaching hospital where I was working in Human Resources [HR], and HR seemed like, conceivably, an interesting place for a woman to be. It was a career where a woman could advance without a graduate degree—remember I wasn't into collecting letters and credentials—and Affirmative Action, which supposedly was something HR was responsible for, was blooming at the time, and so I thought, maybe I'll have a role in that. Maybe it'll be exciting here, developing career ladders. People were talking about job sharing, so you know, in effect, both woman and men could work part-time and have a life at home raising a family—and you know, there were things like that, models that people were talking about. I thought that maybe I could do that in HR. Then I found out that the HR thing was really just a big camouflage for union-busting, and I hated it, and I got myself out of there after two years [laughs].

01:22:55 Q: Can you say more about that?

Kayman: There was a union-organizing drive going on at the hospital where I was working, and the HR department was working very closely with the hospital administration to undermine and thwart the union campaign, dishing out lies, spreading rumors, putting up scary posters. We were

definitely Headquarters [HQ] for union-bashing, and I was disgusted. [PORTION OF INTERVIEW CLOSED UNTIL DEATH OF INTERVIEWEE]

So I managed to get myself transferred into my first research job, working for the guy who was the head of ambulatory surgery at this hospital for women and, basically, ambulatory surgery was where abortions were being done, abortions and sterilization procedures. The Center for Disease Control [CDC] was doing surveillance, at the time, of abortion and sterilization methods—I mean abortion was newly legal—and they were trying to find out which methods were the safest and least associated with complications. My job was sort of a chart review, pulling, extracting from the charts information about the different cases, and what had happened in each case, and then I had brief conversations with patients on the phone, to find out what had happened when they had gone home. And it was an interesting job which fit in with my feminist stuff, and I did that for two years, and I was eligible to be in the union bargaining unit, and I went out there and campaigned for the union and, of course, then someone from the administration went to my boss and tried to get my boss to fire me. And my boss said to this guy, “You know, as long as she gets her work done, I don't care what she does with the rest of her time.” And he refused to fire me. So I was able to continue doing this.

And that was my last job before we left Boston and came back to New York.

01:26:06 Q: He finished his PhD here—

Kayman: He finished his PhD at MIT—

Q: —And you were starting this radicalization. Not radicalization, but you said you had read the book and were ready to get out and do something.

Kayman: That was while he was a doctoral student. I read that book in about '76, and he finished the doctorate in '78. And, then we moved back to New York,

01:26:23 Q: So you were ready.

Kayman: I was definitely ready for some action. So we moved here and, not to this apartment, but to this neighborhood, and I got a job at Columbia in the School of Public Health that was quite similar to the job I had had at the Boston Hospital for Women, as a research assistant. But I did not like Columbia nearly as much as I had liked Harvard. It was a very different environment, very elitist—

Q: Columbia was more elitist than Harvard?

Kayman: Much. Columbia has a complex about not being Harvard. Harvard doesn't have a complex. [Laughs] Harvard is just itself. I worked with wonderful people at this Harvard teaching hospital, I will say. And the Columbia experience was nasty, and so it was around that time that I decided to pack it in and be a musician.

So that is what I ended up doing for the next dozen years or so. I had started, while I was living in Boston, to take voice lessons. Basically, after having gotten burnt in Pittsburgh, I was kind of scared off from the arts for a while, thinking maybe my parents had been right. And then I kind of wound my way back to it, and I started taking voice lessons, and it was going well, and I continued studying voice while I was in New York; and I decided I was really excited by what was happening, and I decided to bail out of pushing paper and become a musician full-time. And that was a fun thing to do, and I was doing what we used to call, back in the day, cultural work with my music, because I was doing multi-ethnic programs in six different languages, contemporary and traditional music, and bringing in stuff by contemporary songwriters from Nicaragua, Chile, and you know, all this stuff I was doing, singing songs in Yiddish about slumlords, and bad working conditions, and I was pulling all that together, singing Yiddish with Puerto Rican kids in the Bronx, and it was a pretty cool thing.

01:28:30 Q: What was the structure for this? How did you get to do this? You were an independent act?

Kayman: I was an independent act. And I was the lead singer, bandleader. I didn't always get to work in a band. It depended on how much the gig paid. Usually I worked with one accompanist. I took up Afro-Caribbean percussion and played usually with a guitarist, occasionally with someone playing something else that manifested chords, you know, like an accordion. And I marketed myself around the Metro area. I played for a lot of not-for-profit sector settings. So I did programs at Y's, senior centers, and libraries. Libraries! I was getting into libraries. I did a couple of shows at the Brooklyn Museum, I did shows at historical sites, and in parks in the New

York Metro area, played at Alice Austen House on Staten Island. The Brooklyn Museum shows were fun. I did one on immigrant groups that built Brooklyn, and I did another that was a Valentine's Day family show and the theme was love, but it was all different kinds of love. Instead of focusing on romantic love, it was focusing on love of your work, love of your country, love of your family, love of your hometown, you know, and things like that. Love and loss. Worrying about somebody who is sick. Things like that. Different kinds of love. And that was a pretty good show, and we had enough money from that show to pay the whole band.

I sang a lot in hospitals and nursing homes, adult residences, out in the Rockaways, and Coney Island. I also sang to empty chairs in Greenwich Village, that too. I sang at Folk City, I sang at Speakeasy. I sang at Sun Mountain Cafe, I sang at the Uptown Coffee House in Riverdale. You know, I got around. Then I did a party for a major organization, like Hadassah [the Women's Zionist Organization of America], you know, they might have a luncheon, and they would hire me to entertain. I sang for Passover Seders at Creedmoor, you know, the mental hospital out in Queens. So, basically, I mostly sang for children and seniors.

And I did a couple of art residency things, which is how I got to the High School for Humanities, and I did an all-Latin American program there. Part of what was difficult for me as a musician was that there was a lot of pressure on me to be in one ethnic corner, to be a specialist, and I didn't want to do that. There was a lot of pressure from—institutions wanted to be able to celebrate Black History Month, or Women's History Month, and have one theme, or it would be a St. Patrick's Day show, and they wanted an all-Irish program, and this kind of thing was frustrating to me, because for me, the interconnection, the intersection of the different cultures

was part of the point. The other thing that was frustrating for me was that, in a way, the more successful I got, the less artistic control I felt I had, you know, because people who were hiring me for things like their private anniversary parties and things like that, they wanted to hear the old chestnuts, they wanted to hear the same old songs they'd heard a million times before, and they didn't want to be exposed to new things off the beaten path, and I was such a good ethnomusicologist that I was collecting all these cultural things, and they didn't want to hear it. So this was driving me bonkers, so there were a lot of things about the music business that I didn't like, and then my brother got sick with AIDS, and public health just called me back.

That's basically what happened; I mean, it just felt like there was this horrible epidemic out there and—

01:32:48 Q: Which had touched you personally.

Kayman: Which had touched me personally. And my art wasn't really addressing it, and there was urgent work that needed to be done, to help poor people get more and better services, to help people find out that there were ways to live well with HIV, and to get a message out to young people to have responsible conversations about sex so they could have responsible behavior around sex, and reduce their risk behavior. There was all this prevention work to do, and I wasn't doing it behind a microphone, so by the time my brother was in his last six months of life, I was actively hunting for a job in HIV work, and I had been doing HIV volunteer work already for a couple of years. I volunteered in a soup kitchen called the Momentum AIDS Project, which is still around, although it has changed auspice a couple of times, and they provided healthy meals

and nutrition counseling and other kinds of support for indigent people with HIV. They would help them get hooked up to services, and they would provide them a dignified meal, you know, with tablecloths on the table, and the volunteers would sit and eat with the clients, and this was back in the time when people were still afraid to be in the same room with people with AIDS or share the same air, much less the same silverware. And so the idea was to treat these folks with dignity, and humanity, and I had been doing that for a couple of years before Dan died.

About two months after he died, I lined up, finally, a position as an HIV health educator, basically as an HIV test counselor working for the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation and, from there, it was on into social work and doing what I do now. But it was a long road there.

01:34:56 Q: And what's your population that you work with now?

Kayman: I knew when I went into social work. I went to social work school—

01:35:10 Q: Wait, did you end up getting one of those sets of degrees behind your name—

Kayman: I ended up with not one but two. So, after having dropped out of graduate school three times- I only told you about one [Laughs]—Having dropped out of graduate school three times, I finally finished two programs. I got an MSW and a PhD, both. So, both were degrees in social work. But after dropping out of theater school, I also dropped out of a business school program at Boston University [BU] during the years we were living in Boston, back when I was in HR and thought I was going to have to bootstrap my way up. And I dropped out, while I was

working as an artist—Columbia had a program at Teachers College to help develop Artist-in-Residence programs for schools, and you could get Masters credit for it, so I did a whole year of it, and then didn't stay on for the second year to collect my Masters. So I dropped out three times, and then I did two degrees.

So, like I said, I was obviously very ambivalent about pursuing a career and having letters and titles, and I finally had to find the right thing, and what happened is it happened with HIV. After I had been working as an HIV test counselor, I became acutely aware of the shortcomings of HIV test counseling as an intervention for HIV prevention. It mostly scared people. And it was a two-shot deal, you know, you had your pre-test counseling and your post-test counseling, and by the time you got to the post-test counseling, no one wanted to listen anymore. Either you were just telling them that they were positive and they were busy like dying inside and crying and in shock and not listening to you, or they were negative and they were delighted to have this thing over with, couldn't forget about it soon enough and were in a hurry to get out of your office, so it was a two-shot deal, but it was really a one-shot deal, and it was scary and, although fear can be an effective motivator, it tends not to be a good motivator long-term. The effects wear off fast and then you get a rebound, where someone is saying, "I can't be bothered with this anymore. I'm not going to think about it anymore," and they just go right back to what they were doing before. Fear is not a good way to get people to have long-term behavior change. And the same is true with other kinds of health behavior, whether it is changing your diet so you won't get diabetes or you won't get heart disease, learning to exercise is also—you don't usually accomplish lasting change just by scaring people. You need something else that feels positive, and you need more ongoing support.

And I said, I want to develop that intervention, that better intervention to prevent HIV, and I want to prove it works, and I want to disseminate that information to the field so other people will adopt it, and it gets implemented widely, and for that, I knew I had to be a researcher, and I had to have a graduate credential. There was no other way around it, so I knew when I went for the MSW, I was headed for a doctorate and a career in research. So that's where I wanted to go. It's not where I ended up. I ended up in a career in research, but not specifically in anything HIV-related. I got pulled into addictions; the epidemic changed. There was more of a focus on drug use as a risk factor, and I got very, very fascinated with addictions, and in particular with opioid addictions and it was, I tell you, an opportunity to really de-stigmatize a stigmatized treatment, methadone treatment, and to defend a population that was probably more scorned and more feared than any in our culture. You know, the addict. So I was really going for the defense of the underdog big time. I mean, I was still [Unclear]—I felt really—

01:39:14 Q: So you did your dissertation on this?

Kayman: I did my dissertation on this, patients on methadone, I did my dissertation on how the attitudes you have before you enter methadone treatment affect your ability to adjust to methadone treatment and do well and benefit from it. So, the attitudes and the prejudices you bring—and I demonstrated that in fact the more negative attitudes you have about methadone going in, the less likely you were to adjust in treatment and the more likely you were to terminate prematurely. And this was true whether you were male or female. I was looking specifically for gender-related differences. I didn't find them, but I did find this prejudice difference and so, the

more preconceptions you had, the more tightly you clung to them, the harder it was for you to benefit, the less likely it was that you would benefit. And that's what my dissertation was about.

So, I got part of it published as a paper after I finished, and I really felt I had finally found the right livelihood, that I was still doing something creative, and that I was probably a better social worker than I was a musician. And I was very happy. I mean, my spouse was a researcher, another of my best friends was a researcher, so they were mentors for me, and very supportive, and I was very happy. But basically, research money was drying up, and research priorities were changing. With research money drying up, and the [George W.] Bush years being very unkind to research, and the fact that research was moving away from psychosocial interventions and more toward biological ones, you know, drugs and devices, and genetics, the research priorities were moving away from the research I was trained to do and that I wanted to do, so it was very hard to stay afloat as a researcher, and I ended up—

01:41:13 Q: Now were you working for the city?

Kayman: No, so I actually worked for the city in two different two-year stretches, because I worked for the city initially as an HIV test counselor, and I left that to go to social work school. Then I came back, later, and worked for the city as an auditor for health services, basically, on Riker's Island. There was a prison health services contractor that it contracted with, and we had to hold them to their contract, as to the quality of the services they were providing. So I was going out to Riker's and Riker's was where I was on September 11th [2001, the day terrorists

attacked]. It felt like having a front-row seat [at a horror movie]. I watched a [World Trade Center] Tower fall from Riker's, with an unobstructed view. It was pretty freaky.

So, in between, I worked for New York State, for the agency, OASAS, that licenses substance abuse [treatment] programs, and I was doing that while I was a doctoral student, and I had actually hoped to do my dissertation on data we had collected while [I was] working [there]—at the Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services [OASAS]. That was not to be. I ended up leaving OASAS.

So my four really happiest, most satisfying work years were while I was basically ABD [all but dissertation]. I had gotten all my coursework done and was working on my dissertation proposal and eventually ended up defending it, and I was at this all-grant-funded think tank, all soft money, where there was this wonderful, creative, collegial environment, where I was valued, and where I was able to support other people and get the support of other people and learn a lot about how to do research, and I loved being there, but the money was drying up and after four years there wasn't any more for me. I couldn't get funding; I was a fledgling PhD and couldn't get my grants funded, and many more experienced investigators who had previous grants to their credit couldn't get funded, and so I left there for where I am now, which is the Department of Veterans Affairs [VA]. I've been working at the VA for eight years, a little over eight years now, and I had to shift focus again, out of substance abuse and away from HIV and into serious mental illness, mostly psychotic illness. And making services more accessible for veterans, and more effective, and supportive of their families, and all these other things we try to do at the VA to improve the

mental health services that we offer. So I've been doing research on mental health services for the last eight years at the VA. And that's where I expect to retire from.

1:44:09 Q: So, your clients, are they people from the recent wars, or older men?

Kayman: People who come for basic services to our VA—I'm based in the Bronx—the people who come are from a lot of different eras. We have some of the younger veterans, from the most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, but I would say we have many more Vietnam Vets, Vietnam Vets and Korean War Vets. It's interesting. It's difficult. It's not an easy fit for me, a life-long pacifist, to be in this semi-military environment, you know, in the middle of this military culture that I had to try to understand in an empathic way in order to work with these folks. It was a big exercise in opening my ears, you know, and my mind, while still feeling like I was being true to myself. And it's a bureaucracy, and I'm more of a creative type, and it was not an easy or natural adjustment for me, but I guess I've managed to create a niche there. It's not what I envisioned doing with my research, ever, but at least I managed to stay a researcher, instead of having to bail out, which lots of people did. Lots of people just ended up doing other things. A biologist, for instance, got out of the lab, went to law school and became expert in biotechnology patents, you know, all kinds of—lots of people left soft-money jobs for that kind of work, and I managed to stay doing what I was doing, and I'm doing public service. I mean, one way or another, I've been working for the public most of my career.

01:46:10 Q: What would you rate as your greatest accomplishment, something you are most proud of, in all those years of working and being involved in—

Kayman: Raised a great kid.

Q: Okay, can we hear about that?

Kayman: [Laughing] I don't—I think that's a path I wouldn't have missed for anything. And there were certain things about my family's pathology that I wanted to make sure did not get transmitted, and I succeeded. And I'm very proud of that. Family and community have remained very important to me and, again, one of the reasons I always felt a little funny about the Class News and the culture at Barnard was I felt Barnard itself sent a very mixed message about what it wanted women to be doing. It was proud of women who became respectable professionals, and it didn't recognize what other important contributions women could make.

Except that sometimes one got a feeling that in effect to just be like my mom was also okay, but there was no path in between, somehow. It's like, if I had decided to be a carpenter or a piano tuner—I studied that for a while in Boston, and I worked as a piano tuner and repair person—[or] if I had been a labor organizer, this wouldn't be celebrated in the Barnard news. It's just—you know—the whole message felt elitist to me. So you're either going to be elite because you didn't have to be in the workforce, or you were going to be elite because you were in an elite position in the work force. And I didn't aspire to either of those things. So, for me, part of what was important—I felt we lived in a society that was competitive, alienating, and it was very important to try to build lasting communities, where people were responsible to each other in a deep and long-lasting way. And preferably, alternative kinds of families, where roles were shared more

fairly—according to what the strengths were, and the desires were, of the people participating. And, where you could have alternatives to the nuclear family, which I thought of as a hideous pressure cooker, and I knew I didn't want to have. And it's one of the reasons I waited as long as I did to have a kid, even though I was married. I didn't want to do it in the context of the nuclear family, because I knew that was toxic. I'd grown up in one. There were other things I envisioned.

I came to the West Side and became part of a Jewish community here that I helped to build, and that was very, very precious to me, and where we were in and out of each other's kitchens all the time and where we thought about doing co-housing of various sorts—I mean—zoning and various other things ran against it—and it ended up being a really hard thing to do, but that's what we were aiming at, and we at least ended up staying in the same neighborhood, not actually doing co-housing, and having that network so my son, who was an only child, feels he has three siblings, because this other family which we were very close to had three kids. I mean, this is special, this is special. We did this right. And this is part of what our time was about. Now I got no Brownie points for this in the Women's movement, none whatsoever. Because, in the women's movement, the only mothers who were celebrated were mothers of color, who were counteracting sterilization abuse, and genocide against their people, so I realized—there was one day when I had this epiphany.

I was at this poetry reading, I think it was for International Women's Day, and I think it was a Puerto Rican woman who with her baby came up to the stage to read her poetry and handed over her baby to somebody, and she said, “I dedicate my reading to Puerto Rican motherhood,” and I

realized that, if I had gone up on stage, and I had dedicated a reading to Jewish motherhood, people would have thrown tomatoes at me. [Laughs] And it was okay to be a single mom, and it was okay to be a lesbian mom, but to be married to a man in what in some ways looked like a conventional marriage, this [raspberry whistle] was nothing.

I'm sorry, but we had a really different marriage. I had one of those first guys who wore a Snuggli, you know, and let our kid sleep on his chest in the hospital, and was a nurturer Dad and took care, took over all the childcare when I had to go out to California to look after my sick brother. I had the freedom to do that because of the kind of family we made and the kind of community we were in. And we were living those values, and I got a kid who grew up consistent with that. I'm sorry, but I did good stuff, and no one is ever going to celebrate that in the alumnae news.

01:51:48 Q: Your son will.

Kayman: [Laughs]

01:51:59 Q: So you said at one point you recognized in your thirties that you also were attracted to women. So do you want to say more about that, because the next question is how you perceive of yourself as a woman and how that has changed over the years. And I think you have answered in large part, part of it, but I think there is more.

Kayman: Yes. Phew! Well, it gets complicated, because among other things, this is still a work-in-progress. But when my brother came out to the family, I mean, he had been living a

clandestine, gay life for a long time, before he came out to the family. When he came out to the family, I was a junior at Barnard, and I was kind of shocked because he had kept this completely secret from me. It was total news to me, and I felt that I had been shut out in that way. After that, I had to go through—gay liberation stuff had already started, and I had already been thinking about changes in sex roles, gender roles, so I was open to looking at many kinds of possibilities, different kinds of families, and so I was kind of ripe for processing this stuff. But I had homophobia issues to process like anyone else had, and I had expectations that if you were gay you were not going to have a permanent relationship, you were not going to have children, you were not going to have all these kinds of things that were central to my vision of what a life was, you know, and I was sad about that. I had grieving to do, and also I had to see beyond these stereotypes.

So I had a lot of processing of stuff to do, and I did it then, because my brother, whom I loved, had come out. So by the time I figured me out, I didn't have much to work on—the homophobia bit, being afraid of being gay and how it could mess up my life—it wasn't in the picture at all. What was there for me was, “Oh my gosh, my life makes a whole lot more sense now. I understand what was going on when I felt this, and when I did that!” And it was a delightful discovery, because it made things make sense that hadn't made sense before. And all the things where I had been misleading myself because there were stock, heterosexist explanations for everything I was thinking and experiencing and feeling, and I used those. But they weren't right. And realizing that it had to do with an attraction to women made much more sense.

It was a hard thing, I think, for me to discover, because my relationship with my mother had been so fraught and conflicted, you know, and my friends while I was at Barnard were the guys over at Columbia and, you know, it's like I hadn't ever really gotten comfortable in the company of women, so of course I was slow to wake up to this. But it made things make a whole lot of sense. And once I discovered it, I didn't want it to be a secret to anyone. I mean, I came out to Sam; I came out to my synagogue community; I came out to my other friends; I came out to my family; I was out everywhere. Because, again, I never liked secrets. I never liked clandestine stuff. I never liked being one person in one setting and a different person in another setting. That felt very weird to me. I liked being more whole. It made it more okay, I guess, as I had never been a particularly feminine woman, and some of that made sense, although today there are a lot of lipstick lesbians so you don't have to be masculine to be queer, queer and female. So, it made sense of things, and it didn't have to upset the whole applecart of my life. And it was, in fact, after I came out that Sam and I went ahead and had a kid. We decided to stay together, which is not what I think most women do when they find themselves in that situation. Sam and I had a relationship of great mutual respect, trust, and we didn't want to give it up. So we didn't. It was difficult; it was painful; it was not easy. But I'm not sorry I did what I did.

It made me a puzzle to a whole lot of other people, including my [gay] brother, who basically—my family never took me seriously. Because they felt that—there goes radical Deb posturing again. It had nothing to do with substance for them, you know, as long as I was married.

01:57:25 Q: Was this something you were able to act on? Did you have lovers? Or did you stay—you don't have to say—

Kayman: It's okay. Let me put it this way. Sam and I negotiated an open relationship. We didn't have secrets. So no sneaking around; no cheating in that sense. But I would also say that though that sounds very enlightened, perhaps very flower child-y - after all, I missed the Woodstock things, but I did this—I would also have to say that, because I was a very relationship-oriented person and not just looking for a romp in the hay, it sounds more exciting than it was in reality. Women by and large didn't want to date me, and women by and large didn't want to date Sam either. So it sounds very risqué and exciting and pioneering and new, and I still think, in some ways, it was a right solution for us, and I still think that possessiveness is not loving, and that jealousy is a sign of insecurity, not of love. And I think that when you feel jealousy it is something that you need to struggle with and work on as a couple, but not that you need to humor, indulge. That's not what you do with it.

1:59:04 Q: Would you'd been my marriage counselor [laughs].

Kayman: [Laughs] So, I'm not married anymore, but my ideas and my ideals are still the same. And I wouldn't go out of my way to date someone who was married because it is difficult in some ways, but you know, people who objected to sharing me, it's like-what? I'm always going to have multiple commitments. I have aging parents I'm taking care of; I have a son that I'm raising; I have precious friends and one of them is sick with cancer. And sometimes other people are going to take priority over my intimate relationships, and that's how it is. You're always going to share me; no one possesses me. I mean, that's ridiculous. So anyone who had that idea, that every Sunday they were going to wake up with me next to them in the bed, and we were going to

read the New York Times, they're out of their tree. So, it just wasn't a vision that I shared. And that I don't share now. I'm not very happy with the labels of what people are. I used the label bisexual for a long time. I think, if there is a right label, that's still probably the right label. I've only dated women since Sam died. I'm obviously not partnered yet. I did have a woman friend in my life for about a year and a half, and then I felt the relationship wasn't getting deeper, so I broke it up. I don't know if I'll have another partner in my life.

Talk about some of the stuff that is heart-breaking, the work I did—to build an extended family that was a family of choice—didn't work out the way I thought, either, because people die. I lost my spouse. I lost my best friend to breast cancer three years before he died. You know, the whole center fell out of my life. Obviously, I'm still standing but I don't know what the next model is. But I do feel that my profession is not my whole identity and that there is more that lies ahead of me to do after I retire, which I hope to do by the end of this year.

02:01:52 Q: So how did you deal with your husband's death? Was it sudden or was he—

Kayman: Yes, quite. We were planning the renovation of this apartment. It took a long time to make the plan and then to get the approvals from the co-op and by the time the approvals were in, it was getting toward summer and I thought, why don't we just stay here until after the fall holidays, and then move out and let the renovation proceed. So once we actually had the approvals, we delayed a little while longer. And I didn't realize that Sam was sick until we were basically nine-tenths packed for the move, and we were about to move out. I realized something was wrong that needed to be checked out. I was concerned. And by the time we found out what it

was, this apartment had been demolished, we didn't have a home to come home to, and he basically had a diagnosis of lung cancer and wasn't going to live for more than a few weeks and, in fact, from the time that I first suspected something's wrong until the time he was dead was twelve weeks. So we moved out of here so the renovation could be done, and I moved in again after the renovation, and he was dead. So I sat shiva out at my dad's house in Queens, because I didn't have this house. My community wasn't there, you know—members of my community came out and supported me out there, but, you know, it wasn't the same as having my family [of choice] around me when Sam was sick.

We ended up doing some inpatient hospice care for him because I didn't feel it was right to bring him home to my dad's; I thought it would be too stressful for Dad to do home hospice. The inpatient hospice was a horror. I mean the only good thing about it was that it lasted only two days. But other than that, it was so badly mangled. And then I had—Sam and I, we grew up together. We did the sixties together. We met when I was eighteen and he was nineteen. We were [gestures with hands and wrists locked together] part of each other. I miss him terribly. I'm okay, I guess. I'm still standing.

02:04:41 Q: So, where did your support come from after that. Was your son—

Kayman: Noah had his own stuff to go through. He was a senior in college when his father died, and Noah had had his own issues with his dad, during adolescence, so he had a lot of anger he had to deal with before he could get back to some of his more tender feelings toward Sam. And when you grieve, there is something about bereavement that you feel you are doing it alone, even

when you are surrounded by people. And Noah did a lot of his alone, and I did a lot of mine alone, in that sense. But in that first year after Sam died, and I have to say that was the most horrible year of my life, bar none, three people were really outstanding for me. One was my baby brother. And it's made us much closer than we'd ever been before 'cause, in effect, we didn't grow up together. I mean his bar mitzvah was the day before my wedding, and we really had separate childhoods. I moved out and on, and he was still living with Mom and Dad. So one was my baby brother. One was the man who had been the husband of my best friend who died three years before Sam. He has remained a close friend, and it's his kids that Noah thinks of as his siblings. And, since he was already widowed, he had been there, done that, and understood. And the third person was an old friend from back in our Boston days, who had remained a friend, very close in our lives, who at that time was living in L.A. He had come originally from Boston and we had met him in Boston. He was living in LA, but was here for the shiva and kind of took charge of things; this lapsed Catholic from Boston knew exactly what to do.

He had been our roommate before we had Noah. He'd lived with us. He was our housemate in Boston, and he was our housemate here in New York. I mean, we were doing things like this, not just being the nuclear family thing. So he was like an uncle for Noah, and when—John would call me from time to time from LA to see how I was doing, and when John found out that Sundays were particularly terrible for me, because every Sunday I was re-living Sam's death - because Sam had died on a Sunday, and the day he died was horrible, and I had a lot of work to do to get over my feelings of guilt and helplessness, and everything around that—so I was re-living Sam's death every Sunday. When John found out that I was re-living Sam's death every

Sunday afternoon, he started calling me every Sunday afternoon, so I would survive those Sunday afternoons. Those were the three. Those were the three.

And after I had been a year alone, and I'm glad I had that year alone, Noah came back—my son came back to live with me, and he lived with me for four years. And then he got involved with a woman who is now his wife, my daughter-in-law, and they were here today celebrating Mother's Day with me—

02:08:21 Q: And what does he do? What work did he end up doing?

Kayman: He sells wine. He's the manager of a wine store, Martin Brother's Wine Store at 107th and Broadway. He's in New York, lives in Riverdale. So he is a really bright guy who is not academically-minded, and his temperament is a lot like my brother Daniel's, and Daniel- the one who died—sold real estate. My son sells wine. He loves it. He's the manager of the store. He's making all these plans for what they should stock and how they should display it and all this—

It's a very responsible position and he—of course he's had to cultivate all this knowledge and taste for wine. He's the son of two foodies, so of course he can taste the stuff. He cooks; we have a lot of fun together. He helps me make Passover Seders here. We're very close.

02:09:35 Q: So what do you look forward to happening in the future? You said you wanted to retire by the end of this year. And then what would you like to be doing?

Kayman: Well, I'm not a hundred percent committed to a plan yet, but I have several ideas, though; I'm not going to just sit home and knit.

Q: [Aside] Is that your quilt as well?

Kayman: I didn't make that. That's a quilt that Sam and I bought; it's a real hand-made Amish quilt that we bought in Pennsylvania, in the Poconos, years ago on vacation. So it's a cherished possession, and it is hand-made, but not by me. And I love things that are hand-made. That's just something that I appreciate, whether it's food or the cabinetry that I bought here after the renovation. I love these things, that kind of stuff, pottery, metal work. I respond to that more than I do to fine art in a museum. I like the stuff that combines function and beauty.

Q: A little Shaker in you.

Kayman: There is that. So, one of the things I'm thinking about doing is—and actually I had planned to do it—I thought about retiring this spring and I thought I was going to do it and then I got talked into another project at the VA, which is kind of exciting [setting up a program with LBGT veterans]. So I'll stay there at least long enough to help launch it.

But one plan is to go and be a docent on Ellis Island so, basically, I would be giving people tours of the Public Health hospital there and teaching them about the intersection of public health and immigration. It's what I do, something I know something about. I'd have a lot of fun doing it. And it would be a big change. And it would be a very iconic thing to do, and a very New York

thing to do, and they have a very exciting education program there on the island, and I'll explore with people down there the possibility of doing this, and I will yet do it, but I'm not starting as soon as I thought I might. Something else that is very much on my mind is that there is a lot of health care-related organizing to do. You know there are still people out there trying to mobilize for single payer, you know. We are going to have to work hard to keep what national health care we have now, through Obamacare, to keep it from being rolled back. I think Obamacare is a very flawed system, and I would rather be fighting for single payer, but it's a defensive action with this, just as it was with abortion rights. And I see myself conceivably being involved with that.

And, of course, I hope to be a grandma. And when I am a grandma, I intend to be fully involved in the raising of my grandchildren. So, that is something that is also very exciting for me. And I know my kids look forward to that. They want me involved in that way. So, it's a good thing they do, because wild horses couldn't keep me away. Those are some of the things that I have in mind.

02:23:31 Q: So in looking back, is there any point in your life where you would have said to yourself, I just want to do this totally different. You've mentioned actually a number of sort of pivotal turns, but maybe with respect to your education or your years at Barnard, is there something you would whisper in that seventeen, eighteen-year old girl's ear, when she started Barnard?

Kayman: To make that path a little straighter and a little [shorter]—to discover, in effect, what my *métier* was. I mean, I have some real regrets I didn't become a researcher sooner, because it takes a really long time to build a research career and, as a result of getting into it late, I'm not

going to accomplish as much as I would have liked to, in terms of getting grants or publishing papers, or anything like that. I would have liked to have been more productive, and I don't get to do that, because I didn't get my doctorate until I was fifty-three. That's when I finished, not when I started.

That said, I'm sorry that I was that confused, and I'm glad that I had the freedom to work it through for myself. And I don't feel that anything I did was a waste. I think it all contributed something. I mean the fact that I was a performer for all those years was useful for me as a scientist to the extent that I had to share my work at meetings, do presentations. I mean, I already had the presentation skills. I know how to handle the group dynamics and timing and all those things, because I was a performing artist.

One of the things I discovered when I was working as a performing artist was that in a way I was really too reserved and private a person to fully engage in it. There was a piece of me that was never quite going to invest, because I was private. I think that mostly we expect our performers to be total immersion people, and to totally overwhelm us with their emotional world, especially singers and, personally, people like singers who I find intrusive. You know, who sing very loudly and very sentimentally. And, you know, it's like, I like people like Theo Bikel and Pete Seeger, who leave you your space. I want the audience to come to me, and I want to respect their separateness as people, and I want them to respect mine, and I felt as if people wanted blood from me, when I was singing, and I didn't want to give them blood, and I didn't want to damage my voice and use it when I was unwell, and the audience just wanted more, more, more, and it's like, please [hands up].

So I kind of wish I'd understood that better or maybe I wouldn't have clung to that choice. Maybe in that sense my parents were right that it wasn't a good choice for me. But they couldn't explain it to me in those terms. They explained it in terms that made me feel bad, about myself, so I'm glad I explored it, have no regrets that I explored it, that I did it and that I did it for as long as I wanted to. And then when I was done with it, I was done with it. I have no desire to perform anymore. I would like to spend more time music-making and maybe something I'll be able to— not for performance—but for the joy of making music. And maybe there will be a way to be part of some kind of an ensemble, but we would be like a percussion community or something like that, and make music together. Because you really have to listen to each other, and be attuned, and that's why music is such a wonderful community-building kind of thing. In our society, we tend to be mostly passive—unless we're professional musicians, we tend to be passive music listeners. And sometimes so passive that we're just using it as background, rather than actually attending to it. I'm more interested in a more active engagement with music, and I think we as a culture are missing out a lot by not engaging with it more, so I would like to do that more, and I may have more time for that in retirement.

What would I tell the eighteen-year-old? Be true to yourself. Be true to yourself. Follow your nose. If you're curious about something, check it out. Don't spend so much time ahead of time thinking whether it will be remunerative, whether people will respect you for doing it. That's just crap [laughs]. And I think I believe that because I went through the crucible of the late sixties, and that has stayed with me and I think it's still true. My son calls me an old hippie, and I tell him, no, I'm not an old hippie. I'm an old freak. He doesn't know the difference. [Laughs] The

old freak was more political: hippies were more fashion statements. Tune in, drop out. I was really engaged with, “What does it mean for us to be social beings? How do we want to be social beings? How do we want to treat each other and other peoples and the planet?” Call that political, call that social, call that what you want, but it wasn't just—I sounded like, before, that you should follow your bliss but, hopefully, whatever your bliss is is also something that is satisfying because it is useful and constructive and pro-social, you know, I think, to be a part of. I realize, sometimes I think that the people who were happiest at Barnard were English majors, all of them, that Barnard was a good place for them, because writing is a solitary pursuit, and Barnard was really good for solitary people. And probably because the English department was strong for training writers. I think probably there are some professions where it really helps to withdraw a lot, from the world, at least for a time. I guess my feeling is that getting that balance right—between having the room of one's own and the socially engaged thing—and getting that balance right, and having both in your life, and having a whole life, that feels better to me.

02:21:40 Q: Well, that's fantastic. Is there anything else that you think we should mention, that you haven't had a chance to talk about in this interview?

Kayman: Boy, we went all over the place, and we spent a couple of hours doing it. No, I think we hit it.

02:22:02 Q: Great. Okay. Thanks very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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