

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Carla Ricci

2014

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Carla Ricci conducted by Michelle Patrick and Robert Solomon on February 18, 2011. 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 Class of 1971 Oral History Collection Session One

Interviewee: Carla Ricci

Location: New York, New York

Interviewers: Michelle Patrick and Robert  
Solomon

Date: February 18, 2011

Q: Tell us something about your family background, where you grew up, number of siblings, where you fell in the ordinal position.

Ricci: I come from Wellesley, Massachusetts, which is just outside of Boston. I come from an old New England family. My family, I'd say by most definitions, was upper middle-class. My father was a banker, graduate of Harvard [University] and Yale [University], my mother was a graduate of Wellesley [College], and a homemaker at the time. I have two siblings, both older, a sister, and a brother. I am the youngest. I attended Dana Hall, which is a private boarding school, although I was a day student there at the time. Those are the basic facts about where I came from. Episcopalian, an ambivalent Episcopalian.

Q: Your parents ambivalent, too?

Ricci: Yes, it was much more a social thing.

Q: And your parents' political leanings?

Ricci: Very low profile, undoubtedly Republican. Although only in latter years I discovered my father was really raised as a Unitarian, and I think was far more open-minded and liberal than I realized, and helped shape that attitude in me. At least I hope so.

Q: How did you find out your father had been Unitarian, and more liberal than you realized?

Ricci: Mostly because of his attitude towards people. He liked people of all types, and respected them. When he was at Yale, he said, “I like the kids who are working their way through school more, somehow they seem to have a more exciting life.” I liked that. And I liked the way he treated people when they were having a tough time in their lives. He was always the one that quietly, either in person or through letters, or through money, helped support them through the rough spot. I love that in people. He was a caring man. He was very quiet. He was a very private person, so you had to watch rather than hear what he was all about.

Q: What was your mother like?

My mother was a difficult one, and to this day I really don't know what was going on with her. She was angry, she was frustrated, and during the bulk of my adolescence she was dying. So, I can't possibly judge her. She was very ill, and died in my senior year of high school, and it was tough.

Q: How did you cope with that painful, unrelenting situation?

Ricci: By studying. The one part of my life I could control was my academic life, and I give great credit to Dana Hall. It was a very rigorous girl's boarding school, and it was so rigorous that it never once acknowledged that I had a difficult home life. It simply expected you to work to your absolute capacity. You were never to be late with anything. You were trained to read, write, and think all the time. And emotions were in a separate category, and not to be dealt with or considered.

Q: And, you found that you were able to conduct yourself?

Ricci: Yes.

Q: Seamlessly?

Ricci: Seamlessly? Yes pretty much. I would go to school, and I'd go home. I'd be with my mother who was terribly ill, and also deal with my sister and the fact the she had a child at that point, a young child that needed basically babysitting every afternoon. So, I had a very busy demanding life. I arrived at Barnard [College] in the fall of '67 with that behind me, full of hope for a new and different kind of life.

Q: Hoping to be happy.

Ricci: Hoping to be happy, yes.

Q: I want to know what you packed with you, and I want literal and metaphorical—a favorite sweater, a teddy bear, a picture of your high school boyfriend. And then attitudes and expectations.

Ricci: Okay, well let's break that up into two things. What did I pack? I guess in hindsight—I guess it's significant I packed a stereo system, KLH—it was top of the line. I'm not sure how I got it, to be honest, it was an indulgence. I would have perceived it to be an indulgence, personally, but I think it must have been given to me by somebody. I'm not sure whom. And, one of the great pleasures of my freshman Fall semester was to walk down Broadway and go to a record store, and buy records from all over the world. They had world music in those bins, and I acquired them all, and in fact I still have them, as well as all the incredible music that was happening at that time.

Q: What kind of music?

Ricci: I'm still to this day a Peter Paul and Mary fan, Judy Collins, Joan Baez, and I was getting there, but that took awhile. I was more interested in more exotic kinds of music from around the world. I really wanted to make my world bigger than what it had been. I did go through that kind of an exercise, as well as I think really taking up the challenge that Barnard presented in its

orientation program, which they said, many kids can go through four years of college at Barnard, or Columbia, and their world starts at 116th, and ends at 110th. You can make it bigger. I wanted it to be much bigger. So, that's the kind of stuff I packed. Emotionally, I was trying to put away a lot of grief, trying to avoid the fact that my family was falling apart, as I left it.

Q: When you say that, you mean emotionally?

Ricci: Emotionally and legally. Legal relationships were changing. My father was widowed at that point, but soon to be deeply involved with a wonderful new woman; a woman he ultimately would marry. My sister was getting divorced, and my brother was getting married as well. So, there was a lot going on at home, so when I went home, it wasn't the home that I remembered, it was turbulent, and took a lot of adjusting. Barnard was my new home, and a little stability for at least a couple months would have been helpful, but as we all know, in the Fall of '67 things *were* stable for a month or two, and then phew.

Q: Repeat that in case my voice went over. All things were stable—

Ricci: All things at Barnard over the Fall semester, 1967, were relatively stable. As an institution it had been in business for a long time, it had its policies, and we knew the rules. They were clearly laid out, and that was fine. Then that November things started to change.

Q: What was your first recollection of that change, and the culture shock?

Ricci: I think the first culture shock, or just the cultural shift for me was to get to Barnard, it was late September, I remember that school started late, and I was so impatient for it to begin. It started late, we got the classes going, and then it seemed like everybody left. Of course it was the Jewish holidays, but I didn't have a clue. I didn't know everybody had gone, and then everybody came back, we got back into the groove again. Then things like Linda McClair's story started to spill out into the newspapers, and it happened to be a very big deal. I kept on going exploring Columbia [University], and there seemed to be a lot of political agitation there. But, having the background that I did as an adolescent back home, I really wasn't aware of what was happening politically in the world in the same way that I think our kids might have been. Politics were taught in school, but were not talked about at the dining room table. My father was busy; torn between becoming president of his bank, taking care of my mother's downward spiral of disease, and I took my turn taking care of my mother, and taking care of my sister's child. My brother was away at college during those years. So, I came to Barnard really having to learn a lot and being ready to learn.

Q: Speaking of Linda McClair, do you remember what your attitude was towards her situation?

Ricci: I thought it was great.

Q: That she was living with her boyfriend?



Ricci: Yes, I could not see what the big deal was. I thought it was great.

Q: Now, you come in, and you're dealing with this awful grief, and you've always dealt with it academically. Did you continue to deal with it academically—September, October, November, December?

Ricci: Yes, I dealt with it, but I was going downhill.

Q: Tell me about it.

Ricci: You can tell that academically, now that the pressure to get into college was off, and also the structure of a really demanding school. In my high school years you were expected to be in a certain spot at a certain time, doing a certain activity every single hour of the day. When I got to Barnard we had classes maybe eight hours a week, and the rest of the time they didn't care where you were, and that took some adjusting to. And also the fact that you can't pack away grief that easily. It was lonely, and difficult, but I got through. Also, the enormous good luck of in the Spring of my freshman year falling in love. That was a great blessing.

Q: Was that when you fell in love with your husband?

Ricci: Yes.

Q: Oh, that's wonderful.

Ricci: It was. Yes.

Q: What were your expectations? What had your expectations been in terms of romance and dating?

Ricci: Well, it didn't escape me that when I was looking at colleges to apply to, there were the seven sisters as a way of organizing my choices but a number of them were single sex and in remote campuses. At Columbia the ratio of men to women at Columbia was about eight to one. And it was in NYC. I said, "Those are good odds." So, I could go to Wellesley like literally all the women in my family used to do. I applied, and I was accepted, and I said, "Never in a million years," and went to Barnard because it was different. Also because I knew I'd have the opportunity to meet something called "guys," and I did. I met lots of great guys, and I married a great guy, so it worked out as I'd hoped.

Q: Had you anticipated that you would become sexually involved pre-marriage?

Ricci: Well, it came with the baggage of my sister, who the older I get the more I realize that women who are a mere five years older than us, grew up in such a different time, because they didn't have the [birth control] pill, they did not have control over their bodies, but they had the sexual desires. In my sister's case she got pregnant before being married, and that was

enormously disappointing to my mother, and caused a great deal of wrath during those last couple years. My sister greatly disappointed my mother. So I came in with that kind of baggage, but with the pill I said, “Okay, that’s not going to happen to me. I’ve got the pill, this is not going to happen to me. I can have some more choices.” I had the advantage of falling in love, so I was able to experiment with sex in a way that’s probably the most positive way possible, as I think back on it.

Q: Your husband was the first man that you slept with?

Ricci: Yes.

Q: That’s amazing, and magical.

[Crosstalk]

Q: Do you remember your first friend at Barnard?

Ricci: I think Priscilla Lundin filled that role in a very important way for me. But having said that, she was busy, and I was busy too. We were friends, and could have become closer but she left for Yale after her sophomore year. And then I became greatly and happily distracted by being in love with my soon to be husband. Priscilla and I, however, have been enduring friends throughout many, many years now.

Q: And how did you deal with those minus eight hours that you were given to wander around aimlessly?

Ricci: I did wander around aimlessly a lot, trying to find my way. I explored the Columbia campus and I explored Barnard. Then I got on the subway, and I went to museums. I guess I soaked the up the city has much as I could. I remember getting on busses on Sundays and going up and down the avenues on the Sunday bus, and just watching Manhattan out the window. I'd go all the way down to the very end of the bus routes, coming back up the other way, just to take in the city. I was also crazy about dance. I had been introduced to dance in high school by family friends. There I was in Manhattan, I would say four nights a week I was going to different dance companies around town, dragging my friends, and if they didn't go I would go on my own.

Q: So, you didn't mind getting on a bus, and traveling all over the city by yourself?

Ricci: I wasn't crazy about it, but it was important to do, and it was far better than sitting and twiddling my thumbs back in the dormitory.

Q: And when you and Priscilla sat in the dormitory, and didn't or did twiddle your thumbs, what did you do, and what did you talk about?

Ricci: I honestly don't remember times like that. There wasn't a lot of that for me. I did have a group. I was in a single room, which in hindsight, I regret. There was a group, what do they call it, suites? Where they have four girls—

Q: Yes, suites.

Ricci: And I can't remember. I can remember sort of schmoozing with them. Another member of our class was—I think it was Kathleen Parthe—I got to know her for a while, and then she and I had a falling out where she wouldn't speak to me for a long time.

Q: Do you remember what it was about?

Ricci: I think this was my junior year. I arrived early, and there were two single rooms side-by-side that we had chosen, and the rooms got switched. I think it was probably me finagling the room that I preferred, and she was angry, and she wouldn't forgive me for that. So, that was a friendship that fell apart, unfortunately. —Sorry Kathy—my loss !—And I didn't have the skills or maturity to deal with interpersonal conflict. But, at that point I was either working hard in classes, or on the weekends heading downtown to be with Russell, who at that point had graduated from Columbia, and was living downtown in a rented room—a brownstone, while he was going to NYU [New York University] Medical School. So, I think I dealt with turmoil at Barnard by leaving it, and coming back to class.

Q: Tell me when you met Russell again?

Ricci: I met him in freshman year.

Q: But when exactly freshman year?

Ricci: I'd say the end of February—yes, the end of February, because my Spring vacation—Columbia was in absolute uproar, and we were comparing notes about what would we do for vacation. We were very much a couple I would say by April or May—

Q: Just as the revolution was starting.

Ricci: Right.

Q: You had a partner.

Ricci: I had a partner, yes. We could go back to his apartment on 110th, and watch Johnny Carson on his TV—which was a big deal, to have your own TV—and watch what Johnny had to say about what was happening at Columbia. It was one way of understanding; humor helped to understand what was happening at Columbia at the time.

Q: What was your understanding of what was happening at Columbia at the time?

Ricci: That is a good question. There was a great deal of feeling—anger, frustration, hope, expectation, all swirling in circles, all at the same time, all interconnected, and I just couldn't make sense of it. I think it's a trademark of many Barnard women that I've met, more so the women than the men at Columbia, that everybody had an opinion, and they were quite certain of themselves. I was quite certain I was confused. It was too much to take in, it really was. But I wanted to take it in, I wanted to think about it. I wanted to *try* to understand, and to this day I think I'm still struggling.

I had Mark Rudd in my modern American history class. I remember him. It was such a very, very small classroom, about the size of a small living room—a seminar room, somewhere on the Columbia campus. Why it was there, I don't know, but I took it. We marched our way through the first world war, and with Depression, and then around the Depression the Spring vacation kicked in, we took a break, and Mark [Rudd] disappeared. Only recently I discovered where he disappeared to. While I was going to the Bahamas to catch up with my family for Spring vacation, Mark [Rudd] was in Cuba on a student tour, to see what the revolution had done to Cuba. And when he came back, he was clearly busy doing other things, but I didn't know that at the time. I just knew suddenly he was the leader of a very important part of what was happening at Columbia, but not the only thing happening at Columbia. Back at my Barnard dormitory room I woke up one morning, and this is like the morning after a collection had been taken up and down the hall to help some member of our class get enough money for an abortion. That was sort of interesting for me. The next morning I woke up, and I heard a girl screaming down the hall,

like just screaming in anguish, because her brother had just been killed in Vietnam. It was haunting. I can hear her grief today.

So there was a lot going on. There was a lot to take in.

Q: Did you participate in any way in the strike or the teach-ins?

Ricci: No, I didn't. It was just too overwhelming. I do remember going to the roof—was it Reed? I think Reed is on the corner of Broadway and 116th, and there's a flat roof, which is great, because we were on the roof overlooking the Columbia campus. I remember it being full, packed, like New Year's Eve in Times Square. We could see the students at Columbia packed in there too—and then there was a line of people moving from across the campus—there were vans all around the perimeter of the quadrangle—police vans. They had been there for a day or two, I think. I was looking out in this gridlock of students, I could just see the tops of their heads. Then we saw a line of TPF—Tactical Patrol Force policemen just pushing, pushing, pushing the students out of Columbia quadrangle, all the way over to Butler Library. Just pushing them off-campus, and off onto the streets, and sealing the campus. So, did I participate in that? No. Did I see it? Yes.

Q: Did you have emotional reactions?



Ricci: More confusion. More a sense of, this is bigger than what I understood, and that something wasn't quite right here. I think about that time, as I watched Barnard, and I watched Columbia deal with this crisis, part of me started getting interested in running institutions in a better way. [It] probably led to my career decision later in life.

Q: Which was?

Ricci: Was to go into higher education and administration. There had to be a better way. And, I think there are better ways, and that the next ten years saw a lot of American higher education become much more in tune with what students were thinking, and trying to help them work in partnership.

Q: Where did you work in higher education?

Ricci: I worked at Harvard. I had an interesting couple of jobs there. I worked at what was called the Radcliffe Institute, and they had received a substantial block of funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to study the role of women in health care. So my job was to develop some curriculum that would go with that. In doing that, I got linked up with a new course called Health Care at Harvard, which was an undergraduate course to introduce undergrads to what health care was by drawing on Harvard's best faculty from across all the graduate schools. That was a fabulous experience. I worked for a Harvard professor who was coordinating that process, because at that point Harvard was dealing with the fact that—I think it

was seventy percent of their incoming class declared themselves pre-med, and Harvard said, holy cow, what the hell are we going to do with all these people? And their job—through this health care class—was to give them a broader sense that you could be a physician, but there were other things that you could do that would be meaningful in health care. So, my job was to structure that curriculum, and recruit the faculty, and get them in place and in tune with what undergrads wanted to hear. That was a great opportunity for me to meet lots of people. I developed a program for the Harvard undergrads to visit health care institutions and it was very popular and successful.

I also worked with the coordinator of that course, who, about a year or two after that became the President of Tufts [University]. He liked what I had done, and recruited me to come and work at Tufts. So I started running the grants office at Tufts, putting ideas and money together with faculty members, with the support of a very ambitious globally-thinking university president backing me up, as well as the rest of the team that he assembled. I ended up being the Associate Provost for Research there after about twenty years. So, that was how I think I ultimately dealt with what was happening at Barnard and Columbia.

Q: Did you find yourself—and feel free to say no—but several people have said that they were emotionally adrift at Barnard, that Barnard didn't make an attempt to reach out emotionally to its students.

Ricci: I think it's absolutely true. In hindsight I can imagine that the administration was in deep shock over losing control, and it did. What could be more emblematic than the place being taken over by students? They lost control—it was very embarrassing, and very public. I suspect it was very hard to select a student body at that point. Number two was the fact that I think it was split. There was some that were very pro-student and some that were quite anti-student. I think the undergraduates were largely neglected. There was an enormously incredible teachable moment that went by, and I think that's too bad.

Q: Going back to your background, and Dana Hall, and then coming to Barnard, had you ever had much exposure with non-White peers?

Ricci: Zero.

Q: None growing up?

Ricci: Nope.

Q: None at Dana Hall.

Ricci: Two or three members of my class, but I never met them.

Q: And Barnard, no?

Ricci: No.

Q: Did you ever go on in the course of your life to make a close non-White friend?

Ricci: Not as much as I wish I could have. So, no.

Q: And what do you think the impediments to this cross-cultural friendship might have been?

Ricci: A number of things. Numbers, for one. Most of the situations I found myself in were overwhelmingly White. Number two, I don't make friends that easily. I'm a fairly private, quiet person, and that was just the reality. I hope it wasn't based on prejudice, and I think that it wasn't—much more likely social awkwardness—but it's hard to untangle those things. It was quite an adventure for me just to venture out into different White ethnic groups, for example. For me to marry into an Italo-American family was probably a big thing. It was certainly a big thing for Russell to marry into an Episcopalian, Brahmin, Boston Brahmin kind of thing. These were steps in and of themselves.

Q: Were yours and Russell's families supportive of your marriage?

Ricci: Yes. Did they have reservations? I'm sure they had some concerns, I'm certain, but they were supportive. We were good kids, [it was] hard not to like us. Also, I don't know about you, but when you see young people in love, it's an irresistible package.

Q: Do you remember that Martin Luther King was killed about three weeks before the strike?

Ricci: Oh, absolutely. It was devastating. I remember exactly where I heard about it, like all of us did. I remember returning to the city, alone, after that trip to the Bahamas, getting out of Port Authority, and stepping out on to the avenue and wondering what I would find.

Q: What did you find, do you remember?

Ricci: Yes, I remember very well. It was a warm night. The city was very quiet. It was like it was chastened. It was very quiet, very subdued, shocked. It was very hard.

Q: Like after 9/11 [terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001].

Ricci: Yes, I'll never forget. I also was so impressed by this quiet. It could have been something else.

Q: Did you come to Barnard with an attitude towards the war—pro, against, confused?

Ricci: Confused.

Q: Did that attitude ever change? Did you ever develop strong beliefs, pro or anti-war?

Ricci: I think I understood the human cost when I heard my classmate screaming down the hall.

I think that told me what it was about.

Q: Did any of your friends—your close friends on campus—were any of them living in fear of being drafted, and sometimes doing odd things to avoid being drafted?

Ricci: Yes, they were doing odd things. A bunch of them were in medical school, which I don't think they would have chosen if it hadn't been—it was a surefire way of avoiding the draft.

Q: That's interesting, no one else has said that I didn't know that.

Ricci: Oh, yes.

Q: What about the second strike, the 70's strike, the anti-war strike? Were you a part of that at all?

Ricci: I think I understood it better at that point. I was ironically trying to take modern American history again. First one never got past the [Great] Depression. I think we got up beyond World

War II in the second go-around, and everything was shut down again. I understood more about picket lines. I understood more about teach-ins. I understood more about Cambodia, and Kent State [University shootings]. How politically active did I get? Not as much as I wish I could say I had, but I understood it better. The light was dawning finally, but it didn't lead me to an enormous amount of action at that point. I was, on the other hand, very preoccupied with the fact that in my junior year I was getting married, so I was a newlywed.

Q: When you came to Barnard, did you come with the expectation that you would leave with a husband?

Ricci: No, in fact, I think because of my circumstances, my adolescence was hell-bent on getting into college. A) Surviving what was going on at home; b) getting into college, and quite frankly whatever happened after college I just never thought about it. I literally didn't think about it.

During college, I got preoccupied with other things, because there was plenty to think about, and I didn't think about what I was going to do after college until about ten days before graduation.

Q: You were married, so you knew that part.

Ricci: I did know I wasn't going to sit at home—

Q: That was my next question.

Ricci: But I did not know what I was going to do. I had spent the last two years of college in American studies, which I loved. I absolutely loved that. I love history to this day. And I love a multi-disciplinary approach to it. I think it's the only way to understand anything. But, it wasn't the only thing I was interested in. What I did know for sure from my adolescent years was that I loved animals, and I wanted to be a veterinarian. So I did all of the veterinary pre-vet stuff, which is the same as pre-med, all the basic sciences. It's a fairly rigorous and demanding approach to getting through the last two years of college. I even took a semester off to go and do something else I wanted to do, which was to ride race horses, which I did.

Q: You rode race horses? You exercised them? I'm assuming you were not a jockey.

Ricci: I was not a jockey. That was a space of one semester, but yes, I went to Florida. I went to Ocala, which is where the Kentucky stables take their young two year olds down to Florida to break them, and train them for racing. And, I did that for a semester. I loved it for a while, and then I realized, no, actually college had its merits. Then I returned. I also spent some time at a veterinarian, after I had done all the pre-vet stuff, and discovered that I do love animals, to this day I love them, they're a very important part of my life, but I didn't want to spend my time with sick animals. It breaks my heart. So I said, okay, I'll be an animal owner.

Q: That was my next question, what skewed you away from—



Ricci: That skewed me straight away from it, but then it left me graduating from college without a clue about what I was going to do next.

Q: Except that you were going to do something.

Ricci: Absolutely.

Q: It was never envisioned that you would simply be a stay-at-home mother?

Ricci: Not watching my sister, no, and not watching my mother. She didn't like being at home, that was very clear. But, she grew up as a young woman in the 50's. She didn't have any choices at all, or so it seemed, nor the financial necessity to drive her into the different part of the world. So she was unhappy at home. My sister was miserable at home. It didn't look like a viable option. So I wanted to do something, I just didn't know what. And I will give Columbia a lot of credit for providing some career counseling in that last—

Q: Columbia not Barnard.

Ricci: Columbia not Barnard, that provided me some very valuable insights for me personally on what I might want to do. That was very helpful, and I'm very grateful to them. Saved my skin.

Q: Do you remember the first Earth Day?

Ricci: Yes, I do. I thought it was an absolutely wacky idea—Earth Day? And for God’s sake, with all the other things that we could be thinking about, it seemed like the least likely thing to endure. And yet when I look at it now, I say, oh my God. It was yet another thing that was beginning, overcoming inertia and getting into lift-off. It was just another thing that was happening—everybody sitting around on the green grass, and thinking about nature, that was the extent of it.

Q: Do you remember it as being a little goofy?

Ricci: Yes, absolutely goofy.

Q: At what point did you become aware of the women’s movement?

Ricci: When the pill arrived.

Q: So, that would have been—

Ricci: ’63, ’64.

Q: At what point did you become aware of the ways in which the women’s movement might affect your life?

Ricci: About the same time. Once I knew that I could take control of when I could become pregnant. I could choose to have the life that my sister had by accident. I could choose when it happened. I had control over that. I could sidestep the arguments that my father had about women who worked. As a banker he was always annoyed that tellers would get pregnant and then leave. Well, now I could control that. So the doors seemed to be swinging open in front of me. Also I just had too much drive, and too much energy in me. I just knew I was not going to be at home. And I didn't stay home.

Q: So your attitude towards the women's movement was relentlessly positive?

Ricci: Yes, a Godsend.

Q: That was one area in which you were not confused.

Ricci: Correct. I remember reading the first issue of *Ms.* magazine, and thinking, "Oh my God, that's it. I didn't state it, somebody else is speaking the same stuff." That was enormously helpful. There were just things that happening that reaffirmed my notion that the range of choices had become much broader and wider, and exciting. It was very energizing.

Q: At what point did you become aware of the gay and lesbian community?

Ricci: That—I was completely naive until probably after college, although I remember being in a high school situation where there were two young women in a travel group that I was involved with who enjoyed taking baths together. I thought, well, that's different, [laughs] but I never really put the whole thing together until much later. As I said, I must have been clueless.

Q: Upon leaving Barnard you had certain expectations of adult life. Did your adult life conform to those expectations?

Ricci: Yes, that it would be different than my mother's life, or my sister's life. That I would be secure. I expected that. I've been very, very lucky. That's been the case for me, in many ways. Marriage, professional, growth, children, housing, finances, it has been very secure. I'm incredibly blessed in all those things. I didn't expect that it would be professionally quite so challenging, that the world of work didn't open its arms and welcome me. I was after all starting my career at Harvard, which was probably one of the most sexist and ambivalent institutions I've ever experienced.

Q: At what point did you make the shift from the education administration to the documentary filmmaking?

Ricci: It wasn't first higher ed[ucation], and then filmmaking. I did twenty-two, twenty-three years in higher education, and then got caught up in a very painful process called downsizing in the early 1990's. The president of Tufts died, and his senior management, and the new president

came in. The new president just basically cleaned house, and every single senior woman was forced out. Many of the senior men survived. It was very interesting and kind of shocking, and also very upsetting, for sure. It coincided at the time when my children were quite young, and my husband was traveling a great deal. So, it was easy, and okay, and justifiable for me to go home for a while, and I did. It was a huge adjustment for me, and in hindsight, it was well worth it. It was good for the kids, it was good for me, but it wasn't easy. Then coinciding with that, I also started to paint. So for about ten years I took care of kids. I had a lot of pro-bono consulting work with Boston area institutions, heading up major committees for major institutions.

Q: Capital campaigns?

Ricci: Not capital campaigns, but for example, I was the head of the Public Policy Committee for the YWCA [World Young Women's Christian Association] in downtown Boston. I was head of the Vision Committee for Historic New England, which is also a big deal. I was the head of the Nominating Committee for Wellesley College Research Centers. That kept me busy, plus the kids, plus painting. And the painting I love to do, it's very good for me. I've learned a lot. Talk about a learning experience. I learned as much from painting as I did from a year or two at Barnard in terms of discipline, craft, planning—it was really striking to me how much I was getting out of it. But after a while, I was sitting in there in front of those paintings thinking, “It would be so cool if I could make the painting move.” Then if it had some sound to go with it, and before I knew it I was doing video stuff, and that led to making films, almost by accident. It started [with] these little oral histories, and then oral histories are great, but they end up being a

stack of videotapes that nobody listens to. Then you have to go and pick out the best stories. Then they're better if they have some animation, and then they're even better if they have some visuals. And then you have to stitch them together with a narrative, and before you know it, you have a film. That was how it happened, it was by accident, but a very happy accident. I find it demanding and challenging, and a gateway into making wonderful friendships along the way.

Q: Your parenting of your children, would you say it was different from the parenting that you received from yours?

Ricci: Yes, absolutely.

Q: In what respect?

Ricci: I think I have been as interested in their feelings as in what they are doing, and that's a huge difference. I like to think that they're the beneficiaries of that. They've grown up to be two really terrific kids—very good, young adults. I'm very proud of them.

Q: What are they like?

Ricci: Well, let's see, Matthew's twenty-seven, he is in Union Theological [Seminary]. He's thinking about getting ordained. I'm not sure he's going to be a conventional minister or priest of any particular type. My guess is he'll carry it forward into making good things happen, probably

outside the church structure, but who knows? He was an outstanding actor as an adolescent, and went to Syracuse [University] Drama for a year. So I suspect that will play itself out. I can see him being in the media. I think if anybody could make the three great religions of the world understand each other better—that would be a great gift. So, maybe he's heading in that direction. Katie my daughter, is age twenty-three, and she is a Wash[ington] U[niversity] grad, majored in art history, then discovered that maybe she wanted to do something different; went back and did all the sciences, and is now headed into nursing school.

Q: Also at Washington University?

Ricci: No, she'll be starting at Mass[achusetts] General [Hospital] this coming May. They're just good, balanced, thoughtful, incredibly articulate, very opinionated young people, and I'm thrilled to be their mom.

Q: I have a feeling that the sense is mutual. Has there been anything about your adult life that has been a shock to you?

Ricci: Yes, I think it's worth mentioning, for sure. Infertility—that was a shock. It had always been our generation's assumption that you could get pregnant, in fact the biggest fear was that you would get pregnant. We spent a lot of time thinking about avoiding it. Also that we were encouraged to delay having children so you could professionally get your feet on the ground, and that meant many of us didn't start having children until our thirties. Then fertility drops, and in

my case wasn't present. In hindsight I could say, well, was it attributable to taking the pill? No, not really, there's not much data from that. I stopped taking the pill so I could use an IUD [intrauterine device], because pills weren't safe. Little did we know that IUDs were even less safe, and in fact are connected to infertility. But that was a shock, the pain of infertility is very real. It took us five years to go from trying to get pregnant, going through infertility treatments, still not having it work, then thinking about adoption, getting the adoption worked out—that's a five-year cycle. That was hard. That was a surprise. I'm happy to report I have the best kids.

Q: Were you able to take your children home from the hospital?

Ricci: Yes, I was there the day they were born.

Q: That's the luckiest way. Any child you take home from the hospital is your child.

Ricci: Yes.

Q: Your current political leanings—are you political, apolitical, mildly political?

Ricci: I am very liberal, enough to get myself into hot water all the time with friends, family. I know how blessed I am by the political changes of the 60's, and it's my job to make sure they don't disappear. That's why I was at Planned Parenthood last week, making sure that there was support on the street for the demonstration in the city that I live in now. I like to think that I'm



there to support candidates that really have been able to fill the hopes that we had, and still have, and have achieved in so many ways. So yes, I've become more political as time has gone by. The confusion cleared after a while, and I was able to see that these changes needed to be made.

Q: At this point in your life, your early 60's, are you in flux, or are you at a stable place? Are you looking forward to making any changes, fearing any changes?

Ricci: Yes, I have a sick husband.

Q: I'm sorry.

Ricci: That's a problem.

Q: And you care for him.

Ricci: Yes. It does hurt. He has Parkinson's [disease], and it's a slow moving, difficult disease. We've been very blessed with having five years of him being in very good shape. But, there were changes, and we all know what happens.

Q: But every day people are working on improvements to the medication, yes?

Ricci: Yes, but there have been really no breakthroughs for twenty-five years.

Q: You've been lucky before. You could be lucky again.

Ricci: Yes.

Q: If you could go back to September of '67, and tell the girl that you used to be a little bit of advice, what would it be?

Ricci: I think there are the messages of go out, have adventures, don't leave your family behind, they may need you more than you realize. Draw them into your life if you can, share the journey. You'll need them when you get out of college. Learn as much as you can. Don't take anything for granted. A lot of people have worked very hard to give you the choices that you have. I think that would be it.

Q: So, is there anything that you would like to speak to that I haven't covered, or anything that you addressed that you'd like to expand?

Ricci: I don't know, why don't we do a one or two-minute break, and let me think about that. You were asking me if there was anything else, you know what's going to happen, this always happens to me, I'll get out on the sidewalk, and I'll say, "Oh, shoot, there was something else I wanted to say."

Q: You don't have to rush away.

Solomon: What's going on in your mind right now?

Ricci: I'm trying to think of what it is. Why don't you turn it off until I think of it.

[Interruption]

Q: We were talking about Carla's exposure to friendships, and collegial relationships with non-White peers. And, she just remembered—

Ricci: Let me rephrase the question slightly, because you were asking if I had collegial relationships now. You had asked me earlier whether I had friendships with people. I certainly have excellent, in my opinion, collegial relationships with people, faculty members of color at Tufts. I had to. They were some of the most dynamic people on the faculty, and often pushing for reframing the curriculum. When you want to do that, you need money. They would beat their way to my door, because I was sort of the gateway to outdoor funding sources for them. So I was privileged to know them, and they were wonderful, wonderful partners in changing the curriculum from Western Civilization, to a World Civilization paradigm. At the time, that wasn't easy to do. It cost a bunch of us a lot of political capital with the administration to make it happen, but it was worth doing. So I was very happy to do that.

I also had, through one of them, the great privilege of working with Harry Hampton, filmmaker, for whom I have nothing but the highest respect. He was the man who created *Eyes on the Prize*. To give you a sense of how extraordinary he was, is to say that he crippled by polio as a young man, a man of color in Boston, and wanting to make films at a time when many people weren't making films. And he put together a film company. *Prize* is formatted as a series of episodes and hired individual producers for each episode. That allowed for individual expressions of filmmaking talent for each segment of it, which I thought was, from the get go, an extraordinary model.

The other part of it was, he believed that the biggest and best sources of information about the era were the people who actually lived it. As a scholar I have enormous respect for that. Then the best part, from my point-of-view, was that once the rough cut was done, and when I look back on it, they weren't rough cuts—I wish my rough cuts looked like that—he would invite all those people back in to watch it. He would stand at the front of the room and he said, “Okay, first of all, thank you for coming, thank you for being part of it, and now please tell me do I have it right or not?” Then he would let it roll. As a person role modeling a craft, I can't imagine a better teacher. One of the best things I liked about him was that when he first met me, he said, “So, who are you, Carla Ricci?” And I said, “I am a person who likes to make change happen,” and he said, “I am too. I guess we're both dangerous.” He was a good guy. It was an honor to know him. So I'll leave it at that.

Q: Thank you. Anything else you want to say?

Ricci: No, I feel better now.

Solomon: Can I just ask a question? What's next? What are your future explorations regarding the filmmaking?

Ricci: Right now, I think like any good filmmaker, I have around six or seven ideas. I'm trying to decide which one to go for next. I can tell you one thing, it's going to be short. The film I just finished was two hours. That's a lot of work. The next one will be short. I've done a couple web site-based films for the Nature Conservancy, and I'm waiting for the current one, the Carolina film on PBS [Public Broadcasting Service], which hopefully will go up fairly soon. So I really don't have a good answer for you, Bob, that's a big mumble. Probably, the best answer is, "I don't know."

[Laughter]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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