

NYFAI -

Interview: Judith Chiti interviewed by Dena Muller

Date: November, 28, 2006

D.M. It is Tuesday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, we are at the home of Judith Chiti - Dena Muller doing the interview. I understand that you were an early board member of NYFAI. Is that how you first became involved with the project?

J.C. I first became involved because I worked as a grant writer at America the Beautiful which was a non-profit organization. Carol Stronghilos worked there too. We got to be somewhat friendly and she asked me if I wanted to go to a meeting. At the time, I think it was at Nancy's loft.

D.M. On Franklin Street?

J.C. No, she wasn't there yet. I forgot where it was. It was in Tribeca, but I don't remember where. She told me about the New York Feminist Art Institute. It hadn't opened yet but they were in the planning stages. She asked me if I wanted to go to the meeting -- there were about 40 women coming -- and so a friend of mine who was also interested and I went to that first (it wasn't their first meeting, just my first one) meeting, and that's how I got involved.

D.M. What was that first meeting like? What was the conversation, and the energy?

J.C. I have no idea?! None whatsoever, except for one thing. At the time, my daughter was a baby and I remember having spent a lot of time in playgrounds at that point, that I was really very bored with most of the conversation that went on in the playgrounds. Remember this goes back to the early 70s and so a lot of women were not even aware of the feminist movement at all. I walked in and there were 40 women sitting on the floor. But none of them were talking about their children or their husbands. This was such a profound relief that I was very impressed and very interested.

D.M. They were talking about . . .

J.C. Either art or education . . . the logistics of the school that they wanted to open. It wasn't the usual conversation that I had been hearing for a long time. I was very interested and then I met Nancy. I don't remember the specifics .. I'm very unclear and fuzzy about the details. The next thing I knew, I was involved.

D.M. What led you to become a board member?

J.C. At that time, the school wasn't even open yet. Nancy probably asked me at some point because I had gotten involved with the school. I was a grants writer – the fact is that the board members were all the people who were there, there weren't any other people.

D.M. Everybody stepped up to a leadership role . . .

J.C. There was nobody to lead. It wasn't a leadership role. There were only 10 people involved except for the board of advisors, but they weren't directly involved for the most part. .

D.M. Lending support to the cause.

J.C. Right, but everybody else was a board member. We all worked. It was a working board.

D.M. What kind of work did you do on the board? Did you do fundraising for NYFAI?

J.C. There wasn't much fundraising at the beginning. I did submit some proposals over the years to public and private sources. And then, there was the Ford grant.

D.M. Nancy had mentioned that, tell me about that process.

J.C. That was later on, and it was a really dreadful process because we knew Gail . . . ? She was somebody who worked at Ford at that time, and she had been interested in the school and so on. So, through Gail, we had access to Ford. We wrote a proposal and they were interested in funding us. One day, I don't know if they changed their mind, but they decided not to fund us. They had, in a sense, promised us funding. We went to lunch with the guy who was to be the decider on our proposal – on funding us. Gail and Nancy and I went to lunch with this guy Richard. He said he was going to fund us, and we went ahead and told him what we planned to do with the money, which was open the school and have full time classes, not just evening classes. Up to that point we had had only evening classes. And, we were going to institute a full time program. Judy Chicago came with us to the Ford lunch. I think he was impressed with her, but he was also totally drunk.

D.M. At lunch?

J.C. Yes. I don't know how much that influenced whatever went on.

D.M. He sobered up at the office . . .

J.C. I guess so. In any case, they turned us down, and we asked to meet with them for further discussion. We said we had taken their word, and made certain expenditures, and

they couldn't pull out now. They agreed to a meeting at the Ford Foundation Offices and we took Kristin Booth Glenn with us, who was on our advisory board, and at the time was also a judge. She is now the head of CUNY law school. They had a junior lawyer there. Nancy and I and Kristin went to ladies room and were laughing so that we had to control ourselves because she said, how dare they send a junior to oppose me. And we were just all laughing. At the time we had been warned not to confront the Ford Foundation about the broken promise and not to insist on getting the money. Many felt that this would not go down well with other funders. Both Nancy and I felt that it didn't matter, no one was going to fund us anyway, and we might as well get this money. Just do it. Let's insist, and that's why we took Kristin with us.

D.M. Sort of symbolic of the whole process to insist on a different way of doing things, right?

J.C. One of the things that they objected to was that the board members were also faculty and working members. This was not their setup, their usual board setup. And, of course this is not a conflict of interest issue, it's just not the way they do it. So they insisted we put more board members on who were not faculty or working members of NYFAI, which we did. At the meeting with Ford, we just held firm and said we had spent the money, we had done certain things – advertisements, booklets, etc. In the end, they did give us the money.

D.M. How much was it?

J.C. I don't remember. Several hundred thousand.

D.M. That's a good size grant to get started.

J.C. But there was one problem, they put in stipulations that almost ruined the whole thing. They said we had to have an art show -- a big expo, which we wouldn't have done because it was a lot of money. We had to spend it in several ways that wouldn't have been our first choices.

D.M. And to prove to them that it was spent that way.

J.C. Yes.

D.M. Were there other things besides the art show that you can remember were stipulations?

J.C. I don't remember, but there were certain stipulations like . . . we had to do this, we had to do that, and it wasn't the way we wanted to do it. But, either we got the money with those stipulations or not. But at least it paid for some of the things we wanted. So, we took the money and that was that..

D.M. Did they send Ford's people for sight visits – did they observe?

J.C. Oh yeah.

D.M. They paid close attention to what you were doing.

J.C. Yeah, but that's normal. That's not unusual. But, I had an experience. I was teaching "Critical Thinking" at the time and the woman who came, who was an artist -- whom I will not name – she was sent by Ford to observe my class, and she could never get it through her head that this was not an art class. She just simply couldn't. And she sat there half asleep like this. It was horrendous.

D.M. She expected it to be a studio class. . . .

J.C. I have no idea what she expected but later she spoke to me and said, "Where was the art?" And I said that we apply critical thinking to art. But this is critical thinking, it's not an art class. She didn't get it. She didn't give us a bad write up, but she was really offensive to both the students who felt very uncomfortable with somebody sitting like there half asleep. I found it offensive and stupid. So, that was another little glitch .About five years later, it wasn't any sooner than that, a very close friend of mine – an artist - was running the art department at the University of Arizona at Tucson, said to me that. . . she interviewed somebody from New York for a job, and asked me what I thought of her. Of course it was the same artist who had visited my class for Ford. . And I indicated that, in my opinion, she shouldn't be hired, and told her of my experience.

It was a most satisfying moment. You rarely get an opportunity like that.

D.M. Right, and word to the wise. That's why you're always careful about relationships. You never know. Were you involved with NYFAI until it closed?

J.C. Yes.

D.M. Since we're talking about finances and complications with the Ford grant, what do you know about the way that NYFAI closed?

J.C. I wasn't as involved towards the end but I know from Nancy that it was financial issues, but it was also a tax audit which was insane, we were a nothing school, with a

nothing income. It was absolutely crazy, and it went on and on and on. Finally that's why the school closed. It was just too much. But I have no idea why they should have given that kind of a tax audit to NYFAI. On the other hand, I don't think necessarily that it was anything conspiratorial because that's what they do with poor people. It shouldn't come as such a shock. It did to me at the time.

D.M. One of the best ways to generate tax revenue is to . . .

J.C. Right now they're certainly scrutinizing lower income much more than higher income.

D.M. Self employed people and . . .

J.C. Yes. That's all I know.

D.M. Was the Ford grant renewed or how were funding sources gotten into the future?

J.C. Really we didn't have that many. The school opened much before the Ford funding from a ten thousand dollar grant that Nancy had gotten – this was even before my time - it was to open the school. Then we had the Ford one, but we also had money people paid for classes. I don't think there was any other grant. We did apply for a number of them. One of the things that I did, but it never worked out, --- the school opened in 1979 officially, although it was in the planning much before --- and there was the fundraiser that Louise Nevelson came to, and that was a big deal. Then the school opened in '79 with the 10 thousand dollars and the fundraiser. At some point while the school was running, we realized we needed money. It was not easy in the 70s to get a grant for a Feminist institution.

D.M. Yeah, I'm sure. It's not easy today how could . . .

J.C. Well, it's a lot easier today than it was then. You can play around with the words, and it depends on what you're doing, but art and feminism, was a lethal combination. There were many, many women's organizations that had started up in New York and we were all competing for grants, which seemed crazy. I thought, this is really stupid, we should go as one organization, get together and split the money. I called all these organizations, at least 6 or 7, and they all sent representatives and we had a meeting and I explained that I thought if we formed a group thing we could apply for grants together..

D.M. Like an association of women's organizations.

J.C. Yeah. Rather than compete with each other for the few grants that there were, that it would be better to do it this way and then we could decide how to split the money.

D.M. How was that received?

J.C. Very well. There was only one problem. It got so bogged down in territorial detail that I realized that it was never going to happen, and it didn't. It was . . . who would answer the phone?, who would do this?, who would do that? Whose name would go here? It was useless.

D.M. After working for A.I.R. Gallery for 7 years, I understand exactly what you're talking about. I was also the board president for Women's Caucus for Art so I know how these organizations . . .

J.C. I was so appalled.

D.M. People get obsessed with their infrastructure.

J.C. They get obsessed with their territories; it's more territorial. Not only their infrastructure, but it's like whose going to do this and how am I going to . . . I found it very discouraging, because we all would have gotten more money, and that's the way to get money.

D.M. If people could see the big picture.

J.C. Ever since then, when I had that immediate experience, I realized it's useless in a certain way. I don't know why, but this is how people seem to be. After the last election, I wrote online, I wrote to the papers and so on that if all the progressive organizations could get together and say that they will never vote again even if they have to stay home for the better of two bad choices. That way, they could have an influence on who gets selected. But they'd have to have started in 2004. If they could do have done that, it would really make a difference. I certainly didn't want to vote anymore for the lesser of two evils, I said, but my vote doesn't really matter, however, if a lot of the progressive organizations got together and said to the Democrats that you're going to lose your base – one that you never paid attention to – whether it's black organizations, progressive organization, etc. - if they could all get together, than you have a voice. But I knew that was never going to happen, and it never did. My experience with these women's groups which were much smaller really taught me a lesson.

D.M. They should have been galvanized. It's interesting. It seems like a particular challenge for feminism because our culture broadly is so interested in individualism and pushes this idea that you have your freedoms, your rights as an individual and feminism is emphasizing this collective effort and . . . .

J.C. Well, I don't think feminism is . . . .

D.M. Right, it is espousing this value system; the individuals who are involved really struggle to embody. It's really complicated.

J.C. Look, what happened with the Civil Rights movement, what happened with the Women's movement, was in a sense the same. You always hope that you're going to change things. And things did change for women and for blacks, I'm not saying that it didn't, but it never changed things to the degree that one wanted. What happened is that the group fighting for equality would adopt many of the worst traits of the other group and vice-versa. Men became much more interested in their appearance. Men were suddenly wearing pink shirts and getting their hair dyed. And women continued to obsess about their appearance. In fact, women today are more interested in their appearance today than they were then. And men are also more interested in their appearance. It seems as if the "oppressed" and the "oppressor" groups do not both become "better," they just become more similar and this is seen as part of equality.. Women still care about getting facials, but now men get facials too, that's where the equality is. And the same things happened with Civil Rights. I remember that the Feminist movement at that time was divided between those that wanted to be like the majority, just to get their fair share of the pie, and those that wanted to change the pie. They lost. And, that happened in the Civil Rights movement also.

D.M. It's true, so you saw that at NYFAI, so there was also that split between . . . .

J.C. Not at NYFAI, but in the women's movement definitely.

D.M. So that effort to get a broader funding base for the school didn't work.

J.C. Not at all.

D.M. Were you involved in the Women's movement already before your involvement with NYFAI? Were you an activist?

J.C. Up to a point. I wasn't doing anything specific, but I would join certain things. I got very involved with NYFAI. Before the Women's movement I remember having a

discussion with my brother, his wife and my husband. I said to them that women were just as oppressed as blacks, and they looked at me as if I were insane. I must be out of my mind, deranged, if I could say such a thing. So I always had this thing going. It wasn't new, or that I had discovered something. I was always like this as far back as I can remember. Gloria Steinem said that she had always felt uncomfortable when seeing certain movies, but couldn't articulate the reason. And I read this and said "Oh my god, that is absolutely true!" I always felt uncomfortable with the same thing. That's why I'm saying it went far back. The movies always showed the independent woman finally finding happiness by giving in to her husband or her lover or whoever. . I never knew exactly what was wrong with it but I felt very uncomfortable

D.M. This is a whole other conversation, but in a lot of ways we're back there in that place with popular culture right now.

J.C. To some extent.

D.M. Pushing that same storyline over and over.

J.C. No, the women now have more equality. It's the values of both men and women that are not the way I would want.

D.M. The underlying values in our popular culture.

J.C. Yes, we do have more, just like blacks are able to do things they weren't able to do before, but it's the values of the culture that undercuts everything. So if that's what you want from Feminism, to be equal, you've come a long way. But if this culture is not what you like . . .

D.M. We're supposed to change the culture.

J.C. Right.

D.M. Let's talk about some of the other projects you worked on while you were a part of NYFAI. You mentioned an exhibition that . . .

J.C. Art Expos. I have a booklet let me get you one.

D.M. You worked as a curator on this project.

J.C. Right, and I wrote the essay.

D.M. Was this part of satisfying the Ford grant? But it turned out to be . . .

J.C. It was very nice, but we wouldn't have done it, it was not our priority. We had to spend a lot of money on it. It was very nice and I loved it but that's neither here nor there. It didn't further the school very much.

D.M. You said it didn't further the school very much. It didn't get enough coverage or attention or bring students.

J.C. No, no, no.

D.M. Were you involved in the early gala, the first founding party?

J.C. Yes.

D.M. Were you involved in planning that?

J.C. I don't think I was involved in planning it, but I was there.

D.M. The people I have interviewed talk a lot about that being a pretty spectacular event.

J.C. Yeah, it was very nice. I think that's just about the time that I got fully involved.

D.M. So you were also an instructor in the school.

J.C. Yes. I taught critical thinking. I taught one course several times and it was to art students. I had had a lot to do with artists, I worked in the art department at Hunter for 7 years. I knew a lot of artists, we had lots of discussions and one of the things I never bought into was that critical thinking and art don't mix. I think critical thinking is part of what you do as an artist. We went through the process in all kinds of ways.

D.M. Contemporary art is all problem solving.

J.C. Well, it's not only problem solving, the whole process goes back to what you think intuition is. Intuition is critical thinking on an unconscious level. If you come to the wrong intuitive conclusion it's because you feed in the wrong information. Somewhere internally it's still doing critical thinking. Another thing, having known enough artists, we went through their process, I was very curious because I don't paint or sculpt or anything, but I had a very good friend who was a wonderful artist, Ralph Humphrey, he explained to me that he would get a whole vision of it but the minute he put one stroke on the canvas it was very hard for him to go on. It was always a matter of feedback. He would do something else and then he would look at it. It was a process which really did involve critical thinking as he was doing it. I didn't think it was antithetical to art, and I didn't think necessarily that artists needed to be unreasonable people. That was bullshit.

D.M. It's part of the myth of the art market.

J.C. At Hunter, where most of the artists were male, I cannot tell you how strong that myth was. And they were very famous. The myth was unbelievable. The chair of the art department, whom I knew very well, was a wonderful sculptor who unfortunately was an alcoholic, which again was permitted. Not for the women though. The few women artists there, if they were alcoholics, that was unseemly. But many of the men were irresponsible in all sorts of ways.

D.M. We expect artists to be flighty. . .

J.C. And crazy . . . male artists - only male artists. It was interesting to me. This school (NYFAI) was not just about art, it was also about feminism. I thought, one of the things that everybody needs (men or women) is critical thinking. It is a very important part and since I was good at that, I taught that.

D.M. And you pushed for that to be part of the curriculum? It wasn't that you were invited to teach it?

J.C. No. No, I was a part of planning it. I also taught a very wonderful class "Women to Women." We invited women politicians, economists and so on to address. Which was great because we got a larger overview.

D.M. And again helping artists to step out of that isolated world of the studio.

J.C. It doesn't mean . . . you are an artist about something. It's very rare to be really isolated. There have been artists and writers like that but not many. Most of them have to have something going on that's in their vision.

D.M. And some community to be a part of.

J.C. It was really wonderful; we had some wonderful women. I mainly taught critical thinking and we did a lot of different things. Some people, even there, couldn't get past the figurative. And couldn't see, whether it was figurative or not, what elements went into a good painting. So I made them turn the painting upside-down so you lost the figure. I had them give me a critique.

D.M. Of the different activities you were involved in: fundraising, curating, teaching, is there one you found more rewarding than another?

J.C. I liked all of them.

[Pulls out 2 brochure/ announcements] Nancy and I did this.

D.M. These were the two different projects that she mentioned to me. This was . . .

J.C. Organizing a political weekend and it was great; it was spectacular.

D.M. The title is “Political Consciousness- Political Action.”

J.C. This was just after Reagan had been . . .

D.M. So the point was to talk about politics.

J.C. That’s right, because the politics were very important, just as they are now. What’s going to happen to women and artists is really influenced by politics. “The political is personal,” is not just a phrase, it means something.

D.M. I’m looking at the titles of the events: “Report on the Right Wing”, :”Healthcare”, “Image of Women in Media”, so it was very focused on politics and social issues with art as the underpinning. Who attended the event?

J.C. That’s right. Lot’s of people. It was very well attended.

D.M. It went broader than the NYFAI student body and faculty?

J.C. Yeah.

D.M. It was a lot of work to organize?

J.C. You bet. It was a lot of work but when it finally happened it was spectacular.

D.M. Was there a committee of board members that worked on it together?

J.C. I don’t even remember because truthfully Nancy and I did it. There may have been a committee but I don’t remember.

D.M. There’s always the few people who do all the work, right?

J.C. Nancy and I were less flakey and we were both goal oriented. If we were going to do this, we were going to do it.

D.M. That’s my experience with Nancy; I definitely understand that.

J.C. It was very funny, and I won’t mention names, but I think I and four others or three others were working on a mission statement at some point, because people would always ask for a mission statement. It deteriorated into . . . “I think this” . . . well and “I think that” and I thought, this could go on for a century. So, I finally said, “Let’s just get a mission statement. We don’t have to make it the bible. We can change it, let’s just get it down. So, one of the women involved in NYFAI got up, and she said “I’m leaving.” So, I said “Why?” and she said, “You’re too goal oriented.” And I said “You bet.”

D.M. Is there such a thing when you’re building an organization?

J.C. All we were doing was writing a mission statement. But, that's where a lot of that crap came in. Where you had to endlessly debate things. But Nancy and I weren't like that. She was much better at having patience...and still is.

D.M. I actually remember Nancy saying to me, once, that her experience with NYFAI taught her that the feminists kind of make decisions in a circle, make decisions by consensus. That no one in a leadership role, gets nowhere, there are times when . . .

J.C. That's right. Nancy and I talked about that very much.

D.M. She's given me that advice in WCA and things like that.

J.C. Yes, you can't do it that way. It doesn't work. It shouldn't have a hierarchy by title, but by area of expertise. .

D.M. Just skill sets.

J.C. Yes. But if you're good at grant writing, everyone can have their say, up to a point, then the "expert" should go ahead and use the ideas that work. Whoever is good at something, that's who should be in charge.

D.M. Right, that's logical.

J.C. I'm very logical.

D.M. But there are strategies applied to the classroom; to change the traditional classroom environment where the relationship between teacher and student was not traditional. Did you find those things effective, feminism being applied to the classroom?

J.C. Up to a point. Let me put it this way, I taught at New Rochelle, but in my classroom, I was not the traditional teacher either. Students had their say, and I listened, but I still made the decisions. Sometimes, we would sit around a table and everybody would gripe. I had a nun in one of my classes and we were talking about abortion. It was never . . .

D.M. Where you were the Socratic professor up at the front.

J.C. There were always a lot of discussions, disagreements and so on. And it was harder there only because you had a different range of students. They were just out of college. I would ask them to write a critique of either a painting, a television show, a Broadway show,

D.M. At New Rochelle?

J.C. Yeah. And, one of them wrote a critique of Dallas, the television series. And I thought, what do I do with this? How do I get it across to her . . . because I didn't want to

say to her, are you kidding? It was more of reminding her of what goes into a critique and how she critiques this. And, reminding her of what you were supposed to get from something. You didn't get students like that at the Institute. So, there was a slight difference.

D.M. They tended to be older, more . . .

J.C. Older, a little more sophisticated.

D.M. Clearer about what they wanted to do.

J.C. Yeah, and they were feminists whereas, in New Rochelle – some of them were married and some weren't- but it was very interesting. My last class, and I taught there for a long time, every semester, students would gather for an informal discussion and complain about their marriages.

D.M. And you said one of the things you enjoyed about the first NYFAI meeting that you were a part of was how that wasn't a conversation. Did that always continue through your time there, that you always found that environment?

J.C. Yes. But it's less now. There are more women who are involved in more things. You don't find exactly the same boring-ness. You find more women who are politically involved, who are . . . or about at least the same ratio as men. There are a lot of boring men, there are a lot of boring women, but they're not more boring.

D.M. Did you find that your time at NYFAI changed the way you were working in other settings? Are there things that came out of conversations at NYFAI, or were there things that you took back to your classroom at New Rochelle? Did it change your way of working?

J.C. Not that much, because I was suited for that. But, I would say that it did raise my consciousness of sexism whereas maybe I wouldn't have seen it as clearly. I've always seen sexism, but maybe it made it clearer.

D.M. Made it easier to articulate.

J.C. Well, and also I think I saw it clearer. I may not have picked it up in certain instances. I was also getting older, I was getting more politically astute, so it's hard to say.

D.M. You had mentioned what Gloria Steinem said of feeling "just something is wrong" in the movie, so did it help take that . . . ?

J.C. Well, that was before NYFAI.

D.M. Maybe NYFAI helped moving beyond just feeling it and starting to be clear . . .

J.C. I was very clear by the time I got to NYFAI. As I say I was always a feminist, even when there was no such word.

D.M. As a general question, what was the most important aspect of the experience at NYFAI, thinking about it now?

J.C. When I was at NYFAI, I was raising my daughter, my husband and I had split up, money was not easily attainable, and I worked at several jobs. I got up at five in the morning and I did editing of children's books, then I would go into New York and work to translate brochures for the public from technical English into understandable English.

D.M. Where were you living at the time, you said you had to come into the city?

J.C. Here. (NYC) Then, I would go up to New Rochelle and teach a four hour class twice a week and come back at midnight.

D.M. So you were spread pretty thin.

J.C. So I was really insane.

D.M. Your daughter was in school?

J.C. Yeah, and I had to hire somebody to come after school. But besides all the jobs that I had just to make enough to live on, I was also working at NYFAI. It was a rather strained schedule, and yet, as I look back, it was probably the best time of my life. I've thought about it many times, why? -I didn't like coming back at midnight and stuff like that - but for one thing, I think it was a time when I believed in change, I believed we could change certain things, and I was part of it. I was part of doing something to change things. And I was interested in both art and feminism, so that was wonderful. After that, when that sort of died out, I've never felt that change was going to happen, and I still don't. I think that made a difference and I think that's why it was worth the struggle - which it was for me personally - because you felt you were making a difference. And you felt that between the Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-War Movement, the Women's Movement, there was really going to be some change. But that didn't happen.

D.M. Not to the fundamental culture.

J.C. No, and not only that, in many ways the culture is worse now than it was then. There's less of a sense of community than there was then.

D.M. Isn't that the truth.

J.C. And that's really awful. I mean, nobody really gives a shit about people, whether they're starving or not starving, the schools are terrible, the colleges are out-priced. It's terrible! So all of this, did not bring about many good changes that were needed. Yes, there is some good change, I wouldn't want to go back to then, but. . .

D.M. Individuals have more access in some ways but the fundamental culture is . . .

J.C. Worse than it was, much worse than it was.

D.M. So it was a hopeful time, the years that you were there.

J.C. Yes.

D.M. Looking at the sense of community and friendships in the studio and the classroom, would you say that there are either collegial professional relationships or strong friendships that remain out of the times there?

J.C. Well, Nancy and I remained friends, and Darla, but I don't think I remained really active friends with others, but . . . I liked a lot of the women.

D.M. And was that the environment in the school? Did you find in the classroom and at meetings that people were open and welcoming and that was generally the tone?

J.C. Yeah, but that was true of New Rochelle too.

D.M. It wasn't necessarily a defining factor.

J.C. No.

D.M. What would say is your current involvement with feminism today? Did working at NYFAI become something that for the rest of you're life you've . . . ?

J.C. I'm still interested and I will still do whatever I can but no, it's not active. And there isn't any active feminism going on today.

D.M. It's kind of hard to be an active feminist when there aren't . . .

J.C. You can be a mental feminist and you can write articles or letters or whatever that never get published or printed anyway. There's no outlet for it in the same way.

D.M. So, on that note, I think one of Nancy's main interests in this project is documenting the history of NYFAI and also thinking a lot about its legacy. I know she wants for it to be remembered in all these various ways, from the teachers, the students, the administrators, everyone's honest stories of what it was about; but also to preserve that, to have some kind of impact if anyone was ever to research it or learn about it.

J.C. Well, the climate is not, maybe someday, but it isn't today.

D.M. Is there was a message from that time, or from your experience at NYFAI that you would want feminists or anyone from today to understand, what would that be? Is there a lasting impact, the legacy of NYFAI?

J.C. Yeah, but I don't know how you can say that. I think that NYFAI was also a product of the time, that the times change, things get to be different. Right now there is nothing culturally that I find inspiring, and if the times change to where it is . . . look, whether it's the Women's Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, or any movement, it's incremental. They had a big Women's Movement long before NYFAI, but they got the right to vote. It becomes incremental. I don't know what the next increment will have to be.

D.M. Right, unfortunately, we need another concrete challenge.

J.C. Yeah, you know what I'm saying?

D.M. I do know what you mean.

J.C. So, I don't know what the next increment will be, but whatever it is, all of the organizations including NYFAI will have played a roll in getting to the next increment. That to me is the biggest legacy that I can see aside from individuals who were touched by it. I'm sure there were artists touched by it, who were given opportunities, but I'm not talking about that, I'm talking in terms of a movement. It would seem to me that you were part of that increment. I don't know what the next one will be.

D.M. Well, it's the language of the waves of feminism. We talk about first wave, second wave, third wave.

J.C. It's true, and think about it in terms of . . . every movement didn't start in the fifties, there were other movements prior to that, but it's always in increments which is why you never get what you want, because it's not up to that yet.

D.M. And it means that you don't necessarily see the impact in your lifetime, that the rolling process.

J.C. That's right. You contribute to that process because if you got up to here, the next one will not be about women being allowed to work, it will be about something else. It will be cultural, which has never happened.

D.M. What do you mean by cultural?

J.C. Meaning that even though women can now hold positions, I don't care if you like them or you don't like them, you have Nancy Pelosi, you have Hillary Clinton; these are women that wouldn't be in their position.... I don't know if the next increment has to be the way the culture looks at men and women. Not only in the workplace, but also in the family. We've had some change but not really. it's like the culture has remained, in a sense, gender separated.

D.M. Really strong definitions of what gender roles are and equality means adapting . . .

J.C. Even though it's not in the way it was . . . but the fact is, as has been written fifty thousand times, women come home from their job and do the housework. And men don't stay home to raise children, and they always talk about women and raising children, and women and raising children, and women and raising . . . You heard about an odd case of a man doing it, but it's an odd case.

D.M. But, he gets a lot of congratulations.

J.C. Right, and it's noted. Maybe the next one will be those gender roles becoming diffused. I don't know, I have no idea. But, we're not there yet. So, I think the main thing is to think that one contributed to that wave, which will bring the next one, if we ever get rid of these people in Washington.

D.M. Is there anything else that you want to say in closing?

J.C. I still think that whatever it is, it should change the pie because it's not isolated, the women's problems are not isolated from the blacks, from the poor. They're not in isolation. There's always groups like that; and until you have a different sense of equality and caring, it's not going to happen. I wouldn't want to be a woman who gets everything culturally but the blacks should be suppressed. Well, who the hell wants that . . . or the poor should be. That's not what it's about.

D.M. And, it's all so entangled.

J.C. In many ways.

D.M. That our effort to separate it out and treat those like separate issues is ineffective.

J.C. Because it always really goes back to what is right and what is moral . . . and they're all moral issues. Until we have some morality in our culture,

D.M. And our current leadership pulls us farther and farther from that, it doesn't even want to consider that question.

J.C. Well, the fact is that, I don't think the democrats are going to . . . they'll do a little better, but they're not going to do much better. And nobody will do much better until they have public financing for campaigns. That to me is the core of everything that's wrong . . . because you can't have certain people running because they can't raise the money, you can't have certain things passed because they're beholden. It's the core of all that's wrong in government. If they did away with that, things would change. I would rather do that than any of the issues because I think that's the core of it. Nothing will change without it. It will go a little better, a little worse, a little better, a little worse, but you can't change the government unless you stop being beholden to corporations.

D.M. So, that needs to be the next movement.

J.C. Well, that would be fine with me. It's not easy, that's a hard one.

D.M. Our conversation naturally covered most of the areas of the questionnaire, so thank you so much for taking time.

J.C. Good. It was my pleasure, I haven't thought about a lot of these things for a long time.