

Interview with Connie Terrell [Reyes]

J.L. Jane Latour on August 4th, 2005, interviewing Connie Terrell in North Bend, Oregon. I want to correct: This is Connie Reyes ... Okay. So let's hope for the best and go forward. So where were you born and in what year?

C.T. I was born in New York City, February 11th, 1948, the year that Truman desegregated the military. Actually, I was born .. I was born not in Manhattan but on what they call Roosevelt Island now where at that time there were hospitals. And since my Mother lived in Spanish Harlem she had to take a ferry over to Roosevelt Island. And at that time it was just all hospitals and insane asylums. (laughs) And I was born in a major snowstorm.

J.L. Okay. And when ... what were your parents doing for their occupations?

C.T. At that time my father was a printer on the "La Prensa" newspaper, which is the biggest Spanish newspaper and my mother basically worked in factories, garment factories. And both my parents were politically active. My father was an Anarcho-Syndicalist who'd escaped from Spain. You know? In fact, he came to America illegally which is why ... how he married my mother. They had this arranged marriage. And she was from Puerto Rico,--you know--being a citizen he married her even though he didn't have papers. And my mother was a Puerto Rican nationalist. In fact my whole family was very political.

J.L. So did you have siblings?

C.T. Yes. I have ... I had a brother and a sister. I now have another brother but he's ... he's the baby and he wasn't raised with us. I guess it was good.

J.L. And was the printing job a union job, at "La Prensa"?

C.T. At that time it was but during the McCarthy era my father was persecuted and they kicked him out of the country. They wanted to send him back to Spain but that would have been a death sentence 'cause Franco would have killed him, so a legal deal was worked out. I mean, I was very young. I was about five, but this is what I've been told,--you know--about that time period, that a deal was cut and they allowed my father to go to Cuba. He had to spend a year there processing his paperwork to then come back into the United States legally even though--you know--he was a Communist according to them (unintelligible) except he was an Anarchist. So--you know ....

J.L. Um-hum. Was your Mom active ...

C.T. ... and then he, once he lost that job--once he lost that job,--I mean, once he came back to the country we really almost starved to death. Once he came back then he, interesting enough because of his politics, he ended up working as a custodian for the Police Athletic League forever, because he was a really good carpenter and could fix anything. You know?

J.L. So was your Mom active with the Garment Workers or was she a member of the Garment Workers?

C.T. She was in the Garment Workers' Union. She was not active in the union. She was in the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. She was active in nationalist--you know--things.

J.L. Okay. So now you ... what kind of education did you get?

C.T. I went to Catholic school and public school, then City College and ... and--you know ?? college and then went--here in Oregon I went back to school and ...

J.L. Did you go ... did you graduate from City College?

C.T. Yes.

J.L. Yeah. What year?

C.T. 1973.

J.L. So you were already college educated when you went into the Carpenters?

C.T. Oh yeah.

J.L. What did you study?

C.T. Yeah, psychology.

J.L. Psychology. Oh goodness ??

C.T. Both history and psychology.

J.L. Uh-huh. So would you care to characterize your politics or is that too broad a question?

C.T. No. I'm pretty straightforward about it. (laughs) I spent a great deal of my life trying to overthrow the United States government. Organize. What do you do? Oh,--you know--it's what I could do. I consider myself--you know--a socialist and haven't changed my views. You know, I know a lot of people say: Oh, the older you get the more you change your views. No! No. I think that we live under a system that creates injustice just because of what the system is itself. It can't help but create injustice. And,--you know--most of--you know--the social ills and the horror that we live under ?? is ?? by--you know--a ten million dollar bed--you know--like Leona Helmsley did.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. When I was working construction she bought a ten million dollar bed. And I remember at the time we were all kind of talking about it on the jobs and it was like, Oh, Oh, who needs a ten mil--and ... How can you sleep (whispering) on a ten million dollar bed?

J.L. Yeah. Yeah. Apparently Leona can.

C.T. Yeah. Yeah.

J.L. So did you ... when you were growing up you said your Dad was a carpenter. Did you do any work with him?

C.T. Yes.

J.L. You did.

C.T. Yeah.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. In fact, because I was the oldest, in my father's view I was his helpmate,---you know--?? you do with the oldest son.

J.L. Um-hum.

C.T. And my brother was the youngest. He was the baby. So, yeah. In fact, every summer I would go to work with my Dad and we painted this gymnasium that was one of his little contracts that we had which--you know--when I think about it now much lead paint. You know? And I remember as a child, when I was working with my Dad, that at the end of the day we would wash our hands in turpentine and benzine which now they say is incredibly carcinogenic. And I used to love the smell of benzine and--you know--just wash my hands ...

J.L. Oh yeah. Got you high.

C.T. Not too much because it would give me a headache, but I .. I--you know--used ?? with benzine.

J.L. So what about working experience before you went into the Carpenters?

C.T. I had ... I'd started working .. My very first job, actual paying job, I did in the summer when I was twelve years old with illegal working papers which my aunt got who knows ... the woman was amazing. She was a floor lady, foreman, in ...

J.L. Your mother's sister?

C.T. Yeah. And she's really the ... I was--interesting family background, but I was raised more by my aunt than my mother because my mother really didn't stay around that much. She was kind of in and out of our lives. She was (inaudible) And so my aunt and my grandmother were the--you know--the actual ?? that ?? and so my aunt got these papers for me and I ... I was able to work--supposedly a sixteen year old--... there was no way that I even looked it. And I started working in the garment factory. First it was cutting threads and putting on tie ... It was .. it's all piece work. But before that when we were little, I remember my mother used to bring home these bolts of material that had these little--sort of like these little lace things that were sort of like .... it was these little lace pieces that got sewn onto lady's underwear,--you know--slips and things like that--that were decorative pieces and ?? I remember ...

J.L. Well, this is strange, very, but .. Okay. So

C.T. ... minority groups to get into construction. I used to go out with them and stuff so it was like ....

J.L. ... were you working with to get people into construction, Fight Back or ...

C.T. Yeah. I worked with Fight Back. I worked

J.L. RTP?

C.T. Yeah, all the groups. I--you know--I was with Workers Viewpoint organization at the time so it was a--you know--actually a Maoist, Marxist/Leninist organization, but mostly Maoist. And so there were all these building projects going on in our neighborhood, like ?? and

J.L. Was that still Spanish Harlem?

C.T. No, no, no. this is ... this is the Lower East Side-Chinatown--Chinatown.

J.L. Okay.

C.T. This was AAFI,--you know?--Asian-Americans For--whatever it stood for; I can't remember it now,. But really AFFI was ... was the front organization for Workers Viewpoint organization. Workers Viewpoint was our Marxist/ Maoist organization. Then we had this community organization that helped people find jobs. We taught English ... I taught English to garment--Chinese garment workers,-- you know--volunteering. We would do taxes. I was one of the people who was instrumental in organizing a huge, huge demonstration against the police. Remember when there was about-I don't know---I think it was about almost thirty thousand people demonstrate against the Fifth Precinct because they were brutalizing the Chinese community? I don't know if you remember that.

J.L. I wasn't in New York.

C.T. That was great. It was really fantastic.

J.L. So .. but there was a conscious effort to get some of those jobs for ....

C.T. For minority men;--

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. For minority men. Interestingly enough, for me the Marxist organization I belonged to were furious. They did not want me to go into construction. They wanted to or- At that time, you know how doctrinaire it was. It was like they ordered people: You go there. You do this. You know? And I used to kind ... I've always been the kind of person no: no, no, no, no, no. And one of the things I always used to say to people in a lot of the leftist organizations that I was around in: Look. We cannot offer working class people less democracy than the capitalists are offering. And if we're ... we're going to come up with this--you know--Bolshevik or Maoist structures, they will not

work in this country. It won't work with me. And-you know--that's a cult. If somebody's ordering you've got to leave and then .. there was ?? that, by the way, at one point. So (inaudible)

J.L. So how ... how did you get ... how did you decide to enter the Carpenters?

C.T. Well, I'd been going around with these groups--you know--as a liaison person,-you know--and demonstrating with them, getting arrested with them, and beaten--the whole nine yards, right?-and I .. I was looking for work. And I had lost my job ... I had been working in a day care center, and looking for a job; couldn't find a ..it was that time when it was just like a freeze in New York City, and I thought you know, I'm a damn good carpenter. You know? I mean, I was. I'd always fixed up my own apartments; knocked out walls---you know--doing all kinds of things. I grew up using tools; comfortable around tools. So I thought, why don't I go for a job. And when I made the decision that I wanted to do so, I talked to the people in my organization and they were just ... And then .. and then I started talking to my friends and everybody was against it. I was told things like--this is by Marxists,--I was told things like: Well, sister, this.. You know, you're taking a man's job away.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. (laughs) I'm looking, going: what the fuck are you saying. Here I am, a singer mother with two kids, and you're telling me I'm taking a man's job away? You know? And so ...

J.L. Okay. So I didn't even touch on that because ... so you had two kids. You were trying to support. Okay. I mean, I was assuming you were a young single woman?

C.T. Un-un.

J.L. No.

C.T. I've never been young and I've never been single.

J.L. Uh-huh.

C.T. Much.

J.L. Okay.

C.T. I've been raising children since the age of three,--you know--so I didn't know the meaning of what it is to be young. ?? You know?

J.L. So you had your first child when you were how old?

C.T. I got married at seventeen, after I gradu--well, seventeen and a half, after I graduated high school, and I had my son when I was twenty.

J.L. Okay. Yeah. So then .. So how did you go about getting into the Carpenters?

C.T. well, I--since I had been going out with these guys looking for jobs, I then said to them,--you know-the different guys from the organization: You know I .. I want to work in construction. I want to break into construction. I'm going to go out with you guys and I want to work. boy, talk about resistance. Here the guys I had helped the jobs and I said, well,-you know-why not? And they were ??

J.L. You couldn't possibly.

C.T. And so it took a very long time and finally what happened was a job came up that none of the men wanted, none of the guys in Fight Back .. Nobody wanted this job because it was only for one week. And I said I'll take it ?? You know--I don't care. And when I ... the day that I arrived on this job,-this is what I find really interesting is--the field supervisor on the job was thrown out and he was an African-American ?? man, and he simply said: Nope. Well, you can't work ? and he made me sit in the office. And I sat in the office and he was very nasty--very nasty. and ...

J.L. Do you remember what job it was? Where it was?

C.T. Oh yeah. It was on Cherry Street and it was ?? job--it was ... it was a nineteen story pre-fab concrete building. They brought the slabs,--you know-the walls ... it was something they were trying new and it's actually the tallest pre-fab building in this country, interestingly enough. So, yeah, it was that job.

J.L. Okay. So then did you eventually get to work on that job?

C.T. Well, what happened was I sat the first day and then--you know--all the calls ,and this and that,--you know--between the .. 'Cause the way ... the way Fight Back ... they way it worked back then to get a job, the minority groups would go out onto these job sites,--I mean, you were kind of picketing the job site and saying: You're in our community,-you know-and none of the jobs and none of the money is going to our community. And you people are coming in and making the money and going to the suburbs-right?-suburbs. The other piece of it was-you know---you know ?? incredible book ??--the other piece of it was that the settlement houses came and the community organizations, which were two political bases on the Lower East Side, were also part of this triangulated to force these ..to force ?? and to force these companies to hire minorities, so they were putting pressure on also. So I guess he must have done a lot of phone calling, da, da, da, da, da. So the next day I showed up and they put me to work. The foreman (laughs)--you know-had all my .. and coming in as an apprentice .. I mean, I wasn't in the union on that ?? job, of course, I had all my tools. I know how to use tools. The foreman handed me a broom.

J.L. Oh wow, a real statement.

C.T. Yeah. He hands me a boom and he says: Sweep up the shanty. All the men went off to their assignments and ?? sweep .. sweep out the shanty. Now, I knew what he was up to that way and some of the minority men would fall for this which is what they would do is give you no work. You did your time, collected your paycheck and you were out. And some guys thought: Oh great. I

don't have to bust my ass. Swept the shanty in five minutes, and I mean beautiful. Swept it, five minutes, went--you know--went to look for the foreman and I said: finished the job. He looked at me because he had expected me to go along with the game. Right? (inaudible question:

J.L. Well, let's ... let's do a little more.

C.T. Okay. Anyway, so he gave me some other little piddling ... he gave me another job,--right?--piddly job, like,--you know--it was ... it was .. Oh yeah. I was to, like, I was to bring boxes of screws--you know--?? screws to the men on the floor so I did that. Did it, boom, and I mean, super fast, ran, found the foreman (laughs) ??--this should be a sit com,--and I said, finished the job. What would you like me to do, boss. And he looked at me and he gave me another little silly assignment, ran, did it super fast, went, found him ... we did this little song and dance ... We did this song and dance from seven in the morn till ten when he gave up and he said--he looked at me,---and he was a little Italian guy ?? and he said to me: I guess you really want to work. and I go now? and he took me up on the floor and he put me with the assistant foreman, whose name is **George Rapp**,--and we're still friends, a wonderful, wonderful man--and he was up on a . on a .. on a baker, which is scaffolding that you stand on. Anyway, he's standing up there with this other young guy and we--I looked up at him and just go Oh my God, he looks like a Nazi (laughs) and,--you know--he jumped down, took one look--he looked at me,--right?--and--you know--and was dressed for work--you know;--I mean, I don't want you to think I was dressed like one ...

J.L. Right. No, no.

C.T. I didn't pull any of that. I remember a gal who did that and I'd just tell them right off the bat, ?? you'd better cut that out.

J.L. Okay.

C.T. Anyway, ?? Looks me over. The foreman said to the assistant foreman,--you know--put her to work and he goes: Okay,--you know\_ a tough, tough, tough, tough guy,--and he showed me what to do. So I got onto the baker with this young guy and it was really simple. You know? You were ... the black iron was already up and all we were doing was clipping the aluminum studs that go across where the ceilings would be attached to that. You know? It's not that complicated. It's just (inaudible)the strip and you're just working your way down. And then I did that for--we were doing that for ?? I believe, once we were finished doing the floor, and then George, who was the assistant foreman, is the one who started teaching me and showing me how to do the work on the job, and which is why we are like the best of friends. He's just a wonderful person. And the rest is history 'cause the company ... ?? was there for a week. Of course, when the foreman found out that I knew how to use tools ...

J.L. Yeah, surprised, yeah.

C.T. You know, first you're--you know--he was like, Well, and they offered me, instead of the job being a week, I ended up working with that company a total of three years.

J.L. And what was the company?

C.T. The name ...

J.L. It'll come to you.

C.T. It will. It will. You know ?? a lot of stuff right now. and so ... and they were great. I mean, I had a wonderful time. I have to say it: all the years I worked in construction---did have some incidents and things,-you know--but I always ... I had no problems handling it because I'm very tough and the men don't expect you to be very, very tough. And usually when you're dealing with male dominated industries or professions, men tend to be ??--you know,--especially mother, daughter, wife, ?? and whore 'cause those are generic. Right? And ??work just to draw (unintelligible) All these other projections that these men have are very useful--very useful, and--you know--and the good ... I know a lot of women object---and I'm a feminist, by the way; I'm one of the early--you know ..I was one of the ... who helped organ-- ?? A lot of women said: Well,--you know--that's derogatory to women if you're a mother ... We are mothering. That is part of who you are as a person and men respond to that positively. You know? It's a communication that's going on between people and they respond positively. But just also the fact ... and I had a really good sense of humor and I understood this world. I understood it and I understood that there would be ... Like when you're an apprentice, there's a certain period of hazing that goes on, not bad hazing, but--you know--in the sense that you get the dirtiest and toughest jobs. You know? Help, welcome to--you know-- blue collar work. And so,--you know--I didn't fall into any of the pitfalls and traps that were there for minorities, especially for women. And at the time when I went in I was the only woman working because I went in as a minority, not as a woman.

J.L. And what year was that?

C.T. Oh my God!--let's see--'7--'75, '76 ?? and so .. so I remember how I met Irene. She was like ... She was ... They were ... they had opened up the books---this is after ...

J.L. It was '78.

C.T. I had been there three years already, so I guess that makes it '75--right?--and by then I was already in the union school and all of that, 'cause that took ...

J.L. Because ...

C.T. That took ... It took me almost six months to break that barrier down 'cause they didn't want to let me in unless I could have a job.

J.L. Yeah. You were the first female. Right?

C.T. Right.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. Yeah.

J.L. And .. Okay. So ...

C.T. I got hired as a minority so I wasn't counted as a female 'cause they could---they would have loved to have double dipped in that one (unintelligible)And so .. But I, remember, I was going in .. I was older than a lot of the women who finally came in ??



really political,--you know,--which is quite a story; started the two organizations ... the first one was the United Carpenters and then there was United Tradeswomen,--

J.L. Um-hum.

C.T. Same name. (laughs)

J.L. Well, it's interesting because .. we'll talk about that. But United Tradeswomen had a lot of activity with the Carpenters. I mean, that was the most active group. Yeah.

C.T. Yeah.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. Because it was ... I'll tell you how United Tradeswomen started. We already had United Carpenters and then we started ...

J.L. Well, tell me first then, United Carpenters, but I think you should talk first ...

C.T. But the United Carpenters was me, Frank McMurray, Gaetano [Macaluso],

J.L. Okay.

C.T. John Hart ?? but I don't think you should put that in your book.

J.L. But, okay. So first .. Let's stick to one subject at a time, which is... You've got into the union so you ... did you enroll in the Apprentice Program?

C.T. After me working ... Yeah. After working, I think it was only about six months, I was--and I'd been trying to get into the union and I would go down to the union and they'd say no. and I said: Well, I have a job, bla, bla, bla. and I said: And I have a job. I have a job. And ... 'cause the way it used to work is you couldn't get a job if you weren't in the union and you couldn't get into the union --you know--being a Catch 22.

J.L. I know. Right.

C.T. But I had the job. And finally they let me into the Apprenticeship Program as a minority, again. And so .. Yeah. Yeah. And it was great!

J.L. And .. but you were taking the classes--Right?--in the Apprentice Program?

C.T. Yes. Yes. You had to go to school at night and you had to work. You had to have so many hours ... In the Carpenters Union if you weren't ... if you didn't do so many hours of work per year you lost--you know--you lost ... you'd lose your book be kicked out of the Union and, of course, ?? the school. So you had to have a minimum of a certain amount of work hours. And ...

J.L. So now tell me the United Carpenters. Did you start doing that when you were still an apprentice?

C.T. Oh yeah.

J.L. Yeah?

C.T. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, the whole point ... well, the .. the reason ... in the leftist organization that I .. I was in they felt that I couldn't do any organizing in the construction trades because it was so male dominated, white male ?? There's just no way .. You can't organize. And my argument was: If you're a good organizer you can organize anywhere. What the hell does that mean? You know? You're saying you can only organize in--you know ... I said no, and so wherever I was going to work I was going to be who I am, which is a Socialist and I was going to organize. You know? And unlike a lot of the people back then felt they had to keep their politics hidden,--you know--

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. ... and then kind of let people know somewhere down the road, I always disagreed with that policy because I know myself I don't like somebody popping something out at me. You know? If I've known you for ten years and now all of a sudden I'm like, what? What do you mean? What? You didn't trust me? That's ..that's not ... I've always .. I always thought at that time that was a very bad policy that a lot of socialist and Marxist organizations had. I was up front. I said if I'm going to--you know-if I'm going to fucking overthrow the United States government I'm doing it up front. Okay? Because my view was if ?? leaflet's newspapers,--you know--through building ... I mean, you certainly need that to build a mass movement (inaudible) That's another story. (laughs)

J.L. So United Carpenters: you, Hart, McMurray ....

C.T. It was .. Actually, it was me and Frank first got together 'cause Frank ?? so--you know-a socialist, and he wasn't in any organization--you know--like I was, but we started talking and I said, Yeah, we need to build something. And then he brought in John Hart and

J.L. Eugene Clark.

C.T. Eugene Clark. And I brought in Gaetano, who was in my Local ??

J.L. And your Local was ...

C.T. I'm going to have to write you some of this, but ...

J.L. 157?

C.T. That was in the German Local in Queens.

J.L. Uh-huh. In Queens? Okay.

C.T. Um-hum, in Queens. and so we got ... we started meeting and getting together, we came up with the name, we started writing the newspaper. And we were doing everything: writing the articles. I was the cartoonist. I wrote articles with the cartoons. We collated. We mimeographed ...

Side Two

J.L. Okay. So talk. So you were telling me about Carpenters.

C.T. Yeah, United Carpenters. We were in existence about--ask Frank; I'm sure he's got the dates better--about two years before ... and the way United Tradeswomen was formed was there was me, Irene, Lois Ross, Cathy and I think ...

J.L. Zadoretzky?

C.T. Yeah, Cathy Zadoretzky. I think that was it. We were ... we would get together for coffee at a coffee shop and, of course you know me, I was pushing us: Well, you know, we need to have an organization of tradeswomen because there's so few of us in each of these trades that to form a Carpenters group is not enough,--you know?--meaning to--you know--make it United Tradeswomen so it's the women that we knew that were in--you know--plumbing and electricians, and so on. So that's how that one came about. You know? We knew that we were too small to ...

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. And I ...I really did feel it was important that we have a women's group separate, even though--you know--like, I could have said, well, let's--you know--just let's all be in the United Carpenters. Right? But I really felt that being ... and it really comes from a fundamental belief that I have which is that women empower women. Men are wonderful and they allow us and they can be encouraging and all that, but women empower women. ... really strong political, but also--you know--emotional support systems for all the women, too, 'cause we were all very isolated. You know? Sometimes you'd be on a job and you'd be the only woman. In fact, for most of my career in the trades I was the only woman on a job site. Every once in a while when a couple of us got to work together it was like, Oh my God!--you know?? voices. You know? I don't know if Irene's ever told you the story of how she met me. She came onto my job site, she was looking for work, and I just, like, (exclamation) this is great! You know? I must have scared her. So it was just so fantastic. And I just felt to really continue building the political momentum to get more women in the trades, 'cause I--you know--for women to be in the trades and succeed in the trades it's so ... there's such a wall against that. You know? And I felt without some political clout--you know--what little gains we had--and we had teeny, tiny gains; right?--would be wiped out. And that's turned out to be true. You know?

J.L. Right.

C.T. That's what's happened. I mean, there are fewer women in the trades today than there were when I was in the trades. You know? So and it's ?? but a lot of it has to do with economics too. Any time there's an economic down turn or shakiness the first people to be kicked out of jobs--you know--is women and minorities. So ?? the last hired, first fired.

J.L. So United Tradeswomen ... Well, United Carpenters became Carpenters For a Stronger Union or .. It was basically the same group. Right?

C.T. Yeah. yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

J.L. Okay. And so which do you feel like talking about first?

C.T. Whatever you want.

J.L. What was the ...

C.T. To me it was the same things.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. I was organizing. I was organizing from my perspective. I never ... I was up front with everybody. I'm a socialist--you know--I'm from workers ?? organization so I didn't--you know--mince words.

J.L. The Carpenters ... Well, those years that you and Frank and everybody were doing this work, that was the years of Teddy Maritis and then his ...

C.T. Um-hum. Teddy Maritis had--let's see--okay .... we were in existence for, I think,...

J.L. Was Teddy still alive?

C.T. Yeah. He was still alive, but then I remember, he disappeared. You know?

J.L. Right. But you were organizing during that period?

C.T. Oh yes.

J.L. When it was pretty clear that it was mob nominated and ...

C.T. Oh, absolutely. There was no question.

J.L. Yeah, no question. Yeah.

C.T. It was the mob and the mob was moving into different Locals. See, like, 608 was the Irish Local.

J.L. Right.

C.T. So the mob didn't have its foot hold in there. But the mob did take over the District Council because of Teddy Maritis. It's like they got their ?? there'd been locals where they had a strong mob ... then they wanted to come into my Local, which was a Queens Local, mostly German. I remember when they sent--I'm trying to think .. You know who would have this guy's name? The RICO Act people.

J.L. Oh yeah.

C.T. In fact, they have a lot of tapes of me because they had tapes and videotapes in my Local's business office--in my Business Agent's office. So I know for a fact that there's a tape of me refusing a bribe because the RICO people called me in one time to ask me if I'd be willing to testify against the Mafia and I told

them to go fuck themselves. They wanted me to wear a wire and pretend to be with the Mafia. Can you imagine! And I told them to go fuck themselves. I said: Yeah? You know, a month from now you'll be in bed with these guys and will I? ... No! You know? and also the ...

J.L. What was the Business Agent? Who was that?

C.T. Walsh was his last name, Bob Walsh, I think it was. [Robert Waller] I'm not sure. Anyway, he was cutting a deal. He ... Okay. Our Business Agent thought that, ha, the power in the Carpenters Union is going to be the Mafia. Right? This is what's happening, and he moved to align himself with them--he's ... I mean, he's dead now 'cause he was pretty old--to align himself with that. And they sent this guy,--I'm trying to remember his name. He actually threatened me once I refused a bribe, and he came from--I'm trying to think ?? Local. Frank will have all this stuff. Frank is like ?? records and stuff. Frank will be great 'cause you'll get a ton of stuff from him. Anyway, he was ... went from the Mafia Local into our Local, and it's, like,--you know--one of these guys that--you know--has never done a fucking day's work. I mean, if ... if you want, take a look at my hands.

J.L. Okay.

C.T. See those?

J.L. Right.

C.T. Those are permanent calluses.

J.L. Uh-huh.

C.T. No matter that I do I can't get rid of them.

J.L. 'Cause you are ...

C.T. This guy: manicured nails--you know,--the three hundred dollar shoes ... I mean, like,--you know? So he ... so he was sent into our Local to try to ... And so I was fighting against that. We were actually demonstrating. What we were doing is we were agitating against the Mafia. We were doing research. We were finding out that they were stealing from our pension funds; that they ..that they sold the Carpenters' Home in Florida,--you know?--it was all this land and it was a retirement home that ... for millions of dollars. Poof! The money was just, like, gone and there were no checks and balances. In our union the union leadership could dip into any accounts that they wanted. It's like ... It's crazy. So we were writing, doing research, finding all this information out and writing leaflets, handing the leaflets out on mobs. We would ... we would slip copies of our leaflets under the door or through the mail slot of the District Council. (laughs) We would always slip them copies of our paper "On The Level" every time it came out as we handed it out. It was a lot of fun. You know? So ...

J.L. So what ...

C.T. I guess it was around this time and we were--you know--we were threatened. They actually tried to beat up Gaetano. They had sent rulings to my Local to supposedly to beat me up. But John Hart sent from 608 IRA goons and our goons were bigger than their goons so it was great 'cause he's got ... When I went to my meeting, I mean,--you know--when I went to the meeting these

two guys came up to me: they were like, six-five,--you know--red-headed--you know--(exclamation) two mountains,--you know,--and-you know--they introduced themselves. You know? They just ... they didn't tell me their names but they had their union cards and so ... 'cause you cannot get into a union meeting without your card. Right? And they came up to me and said,--you know,--Hart had sent us. We're here. And I went, okay. No other conversation.

J.L. No need to ...

C.T. These guys are serious business. Right? And so I went into the meeting. These guys came in ... they each sat on either side of me so the big one--you know ... My business Agent, the jerk, started stuttering. He used to stutter when he'd get really upset. And he was, like stuttering and spitting and saying: well, people from other locals shouldn't be here--you know?--'cause everybody knew what was going down. You know? It was like, yeah? Okay. What are you going to do now? After the meeting you're going to beat me up? Well, take a look at these guys. Let's see how it's going to end. So that didn't ... I didn't get beaten up. And I did have ... I did bring a case against my Business Agent, which I won.

J.L. this is Walsh? [Waller]

C.T. Yeah. I won. I won against the union, actually.

J.L. Uh-huh. And what was that case?

C.T. The case was that my Business Agent had come up ... I was working on the 59th Street Bridge and he came ... I had been handing out leaflets, just the normal, my normal stuff that I had always done. This was the one questioning where moneys were ... that moneys were disappearing--all over money--right?--and he came up to the job site and he brought over my Business ... my Shop Steward who was .. My shop steward was also kind of like a bent nose criminal type person. I had worked with him before he was a Shop Steward and he had told me--you know--how he'd gone to jail for manslaughter but really he had been doing a job. You know? He'd gone into a bar and killed a guy and ?? nickel manslaughter. And this job--this guy who was in my local was now my Shop Steward. I guess he got a little favor. And my Business Agent went up to the Shop Steward with me and he ... He says: Did you ... Have you been handing these out? And I said: Yes. He knew I had. You know? I used to even sign my stuff. Right? And {laughs} he told the Shop Steward, he says: If she keeps fucking around you throw her off the bridge. You hear me? You throw her off the bridge. And I looked at him,--I'm smiling,--I'm going, Okay. So lunch was called. I got off the job,--you know--went down off the bridge, went to the pay phone, called my labor lawyer and right then and there did a deposition,--you know--told him what happened. He says: I'm taking a deposition now.

J.L. That you were threatened ...

C.T. Yeah, by my Business Agent ...

J.L. And do you remember who your lawyer was? It wasn't Burton Hall, by any chance?

C.T. Yes.

J.L. Oh, it was.

C.T. Burton Hall, yes. I'm trying ... I was just about to say he was wrinkled and scruffy and he slept in his office and he was always ...

J.L. And he had big blue eyes.

C.T. Yes. He was wonderful.

J.L. ?? Yeah. Right.

C.T. And he took the deposition, we brought the case, went to court and we won.

J.L. And what did you win?

C.T. What I wanted. You know? "Cause they thought I wanted money. Fuck, I was making good money. I didn't want money and I told them I don't want any money, 'cause they said, Well, how much do you want?--their lawyer,--the union's lawyer. I says: I don't want any money. I want an apology from my Business Agent from the union floor and a statement by the union that we are allowed free speech, allowed to give out leaflets. We are allowed to print our newspaper and hand it out on any job site.

J.L. So did you get that?

C.T. Yes! Yeah! Oh God, you should have seen when he had to apologize to me. It was like ... It was so wonderful! It was just very good.

J.L. And it was at a big union meeting?

C.T. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah, and it was packed--packed. And the whole point of that was for the people not to be so afraid. I mean, so many of the men were so intimidated by the fear of goons, by the fear of being beaten up, by the fear of being killed,--you know--which is--you know ...

J.L. Right.

C.T. The bottom line. What you're being threatened with is death. You know? I mean, I remember when the Mafia killed two guys over a mango. I mean, it was, like what? And this is ... I was working at ?? ...

J.L. How long ago?

C.T. Scrap metal from big job sites

J.L. Okay.

C.T. And they get a lot of money. And two construction workers were taking some for themselves,--you know,--the scrap metal, and the mob threw them off the building. You know? so that was ...

J.L. Um-hum, an experience.

C.T. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was ... it was ???

J.L. So what kind of a response did you get from people when you won this case and they had to apologize?

C.T. Oh, the guys loved it. The guys ... they ... A really good response. I mean, the guys thought it was great. You know? A lot of people were just--you know--very wow! And they were just amazed that we were able to agitate against them and speak against them from the union floor, in the paper, and not one of us got thrown off anything, and the only one that they tried to hurt was Gaetano and he beat the crap out of the guy, which was fabulous! Can't ??like that. (laughs)

J.L. He's solidly built ??

C.T. Yeah. Oh yeah.

J.L. And he's a fighter.

C.T. Well,--you know-it's not a good idea to attack people who have got--who are very strong and who've got tools. (laughs)

J.L. So you're ... what do you think the impact of CSU was on the union?

C.T. I think the impact was it actually helped bring about the receivership. I think that that really was our main impact because--you know--we never got really, really big. I mean, we did have--you know--people come in and--you know--but we never got to the point of being, like a mass movement within the Carpenters Union. So I think more what we were doing is--you know--kind of like going after them and I think we are part of what helped put them in receivership 'cause we were doing some pretty damned good research.

J.L. Um-hum. The receivership didn't happen for a long time. Right?

C.T. The receivership happened--let's see: Teddy ?? was killed and ?? disappeared. And then I think went into receivership ... I think it was about three years after that.

J.L. After Pascal McGuinness.

C.T. Yeah.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. Yeah. Yeah. And then,--you know--there was that shooting--you know--with ...

J.L. Johnny Hart. I mean, no, no, O'Connor. I'm sorry.

C.T. Yeah. Yeah. And that was the Chelsea ?? and the mob--you know--fighting ...

J.L. Yeah, the Westies.

C.T. Because basically the Westies and the Mafia were fighting for control of the District Council and really what they were fighting for was access to the cookie jar because there were no rules about--you know--keeping track of the money: who had access to these moneys. You know? And so that was what that battle was about--you know--?? You know?



C.T. But I think--you know what affect did we have? I think that would--you know ... Frank may have a different opinion, but I do think that that was one of the things that I think ... we did contribute to that,--you know-by agitating and by researching and writing and exposing,--you know?

J.L. I have a question about the strengths or limitations of CSU. But, I mean, obviously, I mean, the built-in limitation is that it's not something for everyone. Everyone's not willing to stand up in a mob-controlled union. But ...

C.T. I think that's the main limitation of all organizations. Look at people today. I mean ... You know, it's very hard, and personally I don't recommend it (laughs) as someone who does do it. It is difficult to stick your neck out and to be the middle person or the one person or the small group of people to stick your neck out at a time when you know it's going to be chopped off. You know?

J.L. Um-hum. Yeah.

C.T. But the reality is, mass movements don't really come from the sky. They come ... You know, there's all these little things happening before that and finally--you know--boom. People think mass movements are just, like, one day everybody makes sense.

J.L. Yeah, gets fed up. Right.

C.T. No. No. No. Like Solidarity. If you study Solidarity, I have to applaud them. You know? But I think our limitations were precisely that, that--you know--it was asking people to stick their necks out in a situation where it wasn't a question of losing your job. It was a question of losing your life. You know? That's what you were facing. You know? I mean, that was the reality.

J.L. I know from talking to Frank over the years that one of the things that he talks about is the small number of women who did .. Of course, there were a small number of men who did it also, but very few women took part in the CSU activities. And do you want to speak directly about the experience of the women with ... I did ... You know Barbara Trees?

C.T. Yeah! Yeah!

J.L. Yeah. And you worked with her?

C.T. Yeah.

J.L. And she's another brave soul who stood up.

C.T. Yeah. And again, for the women, there were they were in a super, super difficult position because there were so few of them, they were trying to come into this really hostile industry,--hostile to them; co-workers being hostile to them,--and then jump out and wow! You know? I was able to do it because I walked in with an organization behind me. I walked in with Fight Back. I walked in with Workers Viewpoint organization. You know? I walked in with an entire history of activism behind me so--you know--so I had ...

J.L. So you already had connections that you could talk to and get support from and not feel like you were just all by ...

C.T. Absolutely. Absolutely. I didn't go in alone. I did not ... I don't feel I went in alone. I had this whole community of people, my tribe--my Socialist tribe. And, by the way, I started in the Young Lords and then I went to El Comite.

J.L. Uh-huh.

C.T. And then, from El Comite ?? Workers Viewpoint Organization. And it's interesting that I helped build El Comite and I helped build Workers Viewpoint Organization. They started out Hispanic groups. But for the women, they were really in almost an impossible situation. And so I think that's why--you know--a lot of the women ... And that's why I thought a women's organization, made up of all tradeswomen, which would give us numerical numbers,--you know--

J.L. Right.

C.T. More than we had individually in our trades, and then we could really address the real issues for women...Because--you know--Carpenters for a Stronger Union really was focused on the Carpenters Union--cleaning up the union. That was kind of like the main thing. And it really wasn't going to address women's issues. And I thought those were important which I why I did that. You know? So I think that's really why there wasn't ... But women did participate. Irene did. You know? A lot of women came.

J.L. The United Tradeswomen: talk about some of the things that were important to you about the work you did with UT.

C.T. Well, I think what was wonderful, we organized the first conference on sexual harassment before it was even being called sexual harassment. We also organized a conference where the original Rosie the Riveters were able to come and speak to us. You know? And we organized conferences on women in non-traditional employment and, Oh, it was wonderful! These women, they were like,--you know--in their seventies. They were like ... Oh God, they were fantastic. And we also participated and helped in organizing a conference of women in non-traditional jobs in California, in San Francisco, and out of that conference ... one of the things that we voted on was to ... for women in the trades to take a stance against nuclear proliferation and nuclear war. And we did that. I mean,--you know--because these were diverse women, politically diverse. You know? Not everybody ... You know, people think everybody .. it's like a monolith. No, it's not. In fact, I think of all the women that I knew in the Carpenters Union I was the only Socialist,--you know--hard core ... (laughs) I expect to get arrested any day now. I won't be .. Well, you know that happened to the radicals of the '30's. They were being put in jail in the '50's. A lot of people don't know this 'cause they think of the Hollywood Ten.

J.L. Um-hum.

C.T. No, no, no, no. It was little people that were losing their jobs and being put in jail and all they had done was sign petitions back in the '30's. So ?? going on there. But so we ... and then out of that conference, when we took the position against nuclear proliferation, we were invited by the Soviet government to send a delegation of women--you know---of non-traditional women to go to the Soviet Union to stand for peace. And I went ... I was invited to go on that. We went in 1984--yeah, 1984. And I remember asking the Russian people, ?? the Oh, committee that was organizing, if it would be all right if I could take my kids with me. You know? I mean, I was going to pay for them, of course. The Russians paid for our going. And finally

they gave me permission. Then a couple of the other women did it. "Cause I thought this is an incredible opportunity. I mean, I'm never going to go to Russia again. You know? And so we were there for three weeks on this Peace Exchange and my kids got to see the Soviet Union. And it was very interesting. And, of course, when I was there ??--you know--these people need a Revolution. (both laugh) Oh yeah. I was never a Stalinist. You know? ?? You know? In fact, I ... I constantly kept telling people until socialism can offer more democracy than capitalism, working-class America's never going to go for this.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. I mean, and you can't be running around talking and writing like a nineteenth century Bolshevik, (laughs) which we did. God, I remember that. I remember leaflets ... One of my favorite phrases we used to see ?? this is Maoist. This is not Lenin: "running dogs of the capitalist class." (laughs)

J.L. Right. Yeah.

C.T. We actually talked like that. Do you remember talking like that? I don't know about you.

J.L. There's an expression that will go over well in the bar. (laughs)

C.T. I mean,--you know--it's like is it .. Here's other terminology that we used to use. I mean, I actually have found it in my journals and I laugh and laugh and I go, Oh my God, lumpin proletariat. Okay?

J.L. False consciousness.

C.T. You know? I mean, this jargon that we were just screaming out. But I ... in fact, I thought that United Tradeswomen did tremendous pioneering ?? on consciousness nobody else was doing.

J.L. Right. And they got hundreds of women to participate.

C.T. Absolutely.

J.L. And there was a real momentum and ...

C.T. Absolutely. Absolutely.

J.L. And it played a really big role in women's lives. What about its role in your life?

C.T. United Tradeswomen? Well, for me it was kind of a ... what it gave me ... It vindicated the fact that you can do political work anywhere. You know? It doesn't matter where you find yourself, do what you set out to do, and I was going to do that. And the other thing it did is that because--you know--I'm a feminist, it gave real emotional support. I mean, there were days--you know--you would be on the job and you'd get home from work and you'd call--you know,--I'd call Irene and it was like, (roars. You know? and (roars again)--you know,--just vetting; just able to call somebody who knew what you were going through. You know? So that was just so important. And it was my social base. You know? These were my friends. You know? These were my women friends. And what I said to you earlier--that women empowered women. And--you know,--kind of an interesting

thing ... I come from a very long line of very dominant women. You know, I know that people have the view that Latin women are, like, ...

J.L. Subservient...

C.T. That's in the movies. It's a scam. It's not true. I mean, when you really get to know Latin women they run their families like this. I mean, serious--It is a ... It's a patriarchal society. It's also a matriarchal equal ... In fact, I remember doing a paper in college on that. Anyway, I was very happily surprised to find out that one of my ancestors was the founder of--and I didn't know this until I went to Puerto Rico and started talking to my family; this was in the ... '89. Right. They've written a biography of her. Ana Roque was the founder of the Puerto Rican Women's suffragette movement.

J.L. Oh.

C.T. And she also was the first woman to publish a women's magazine-- political magazine--for a suffragette. She bought her own printing press, had herself trained--had-you know--by buying the press--somebody teach her how to use the press. And her daughter was the first woman to vote.

J.L. Wow.

C.T. And by the way, women in Puerto Rico were able to vote before women in America, and she named her daughter America Roque. Yeah. Her name was Ana Roque and she's one of my ancestors. It was kind of cool. You know? It's like, wow. That's ... that's great to know that because the women in my family, even though they ...

#### Tape Two

J.L. This is tape two, interviewing Connie Reyes on August 4th, and we're hoping for the best. So, okay, so talk about the strengths and limitations of United Tradeswomen, Connie. What do you have to say about that?

C.T. Well, I think--you know--given the history of our country--you know--any group that is trying to improve peoples' lives is going to be seen with hostility. It just is. You know--because anything ... we're the only country that I know of, historically speaking, the only country that's had a Red Scare before there were Reds. You know? I mean, I think we've created the Red Scare thing. And I'm not talking about McCarthyism. I'm talking about in the eighteen hundreds when the ... when you had a lot of the utopian Socialists from Europe, in this country there were people--you know--woe! These are the ?? of the devil. These are utopians we're talking about being bad for the country,--you know--?? back there.

J.L. So given the political or the apolitical or the ...

C.T. I think there's a real hostility in this country. Historically there's always been that. And then,--you know--the real hostility towards women world wide and then, of course, ?? here, I ... I think United Tradeswomen is a miracle and it was amazing what they got accomplished. And I would say that--you know--the only limitations, if you want to say ?? limitations, was the limitations exposed by the larger society that----you know... It would have been great if we could have been a mass movement, but part of the issue was that we were tradeswomen ...

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. And that again was going to limit us to where we were and who we were.

J.L. There was a lot of ... because I have the papers that some of the women donated to NYU and I've gone through them. And there was a real effort to work with other women's organizations in New York, and there was even almost ...

C.T. In fact, the sexual harassment conference was done in conjunction with other groups. You know?

J.L. Uh-hum. Right. So--you know--that's a hard thing to do, once again. But ...

C.T. Well, when you ... You know, the dominant ideal and the dominant philosophy of our society is always the idea and the philosophy of the ruling class, whatever that class happens to be? ?? capitalist structure. You know? and it's very---it is absolutely an uphill battle fighting that. Look where we are today, and not just women in the trades but this whole country where we're at. I mean, it's unbeliev--For me, having grown up in the '50's, I'm ...there is no question in my mind. It's like, Oh, we're in another McCarthy era. You know? But now it's instead of being a Communist under your bed that you were supposed to be afraid of, ah, now it's anybody who's un-American. Oh, therefore they're terrorists. If you're attacking President Bush you're ... I mean, people are being arrested for ...

J.L. Well, since you're talking about the time, I mean, that was a fairly exciting time even though--you know--the '60's was more exciting in terms of organization-organizational activity, but the '70's was still ... there was a lot of activity going on. I mean, compared to now it was ...

C.T. Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. We were .. It was a time of movements. Right now I think we're in a time of fear and people are just ... Now people are moving ... there is movement. I was saying to some of the women that I know in Women In Black, 'cause we stand there--you know--we stand silently but we kind of--you know--chit chat with each other. And I was saying, 'cause there was one lady who was ... didn't have the experience of demonstrating ??

J.L. And you do that once a week?

C.T. Yeah. Every Friday ... every Friday in front of the big sign that says WELCOME TO BANDON, there are these ... there's like ...usually there's about ten of us. There's like these ten old crones, that's how I describe us ...

J.L. You hardly look like an old crone. (both laugh)

C.T. I got my Clairol. Anyway, and this lady who was with us and she didn't have that experience ?? Like, she's feeling disheartened ?? going: Oh, there's so few of us. I says: Oh--I was standing with her,--I says: Honey, let me tell you, that every anti-war demonstration I went to in New York City against the Vietnam War there was about seventy of us and people were looking at us like we were nuts. You know? Like, who are these kookiest. You know? This is in the early ... this was in the '60's. It was in 196-- ....

J.L. One of the first--just to get your history straight here,--one of the first demonstrations that I know was the World's Fair. Was ... that wasn't the World's Fair demonstration, because people were protesting out there?

C.T. We ... the first demonstration I went to which was very, very small, we were in Times Square

J.L. Okay, Times Square ...

C.T. And we were, like, marching around there and people were just kind of ... But it was around the time of the World's Fair and stuff. But it--you know--like, okay. And the way I joined the demonstration was I met this girl when I was visiting ?? who ended up being my future husband, at Fort Dix. He was stationed at Fort Dix. And I was taking the bus over from--you know ... and this girl was going to see her brother and---you know--these boys were hearing about the Vietnam War. And she started telling me about--you know--there are people who really are against the War and I said, really? And I thought, Oh, that's great. I hadn't heard anything,--you know?--'cause at that time **IndieMedia** didn't ... and that's how I got into it, from the girl riding on the bus.

J.L. Um-hum. but so .....

C.T. And then, though, within a few years (rushing wind sound)

J.L. Um-hum. Right.

C.T. You know? Of course, some people will say that the demonstrations had no impact on ending the War

J. Well, I wouldn't ...

C.T. And I don't agree with that.

J.L. So we're talking about that time and that ... I mean, there was even a women's movement, even though it wasn't like which is what you think of ... You know?

C.T. Oh, and I was part of that.

J.L. Right

C.T. I was--you know,-I was in the women's movement; demonstrated with them,--you know,--lots of different demonstrations; spoke at different conferences for them ... In fact, I remember they asked me to speak at Radical Econom--it was the Radical Economists conference on Martha's Vineyard of all places.

J.L. Oh wow. Yeah.

C.T. I was like ... I'd never been there. And Esperanza Martel,-I don't know if you know Esperanza; she was a very big activist back then also and she was in the El Comite ?? and in fact, the FLAN came out of the Comite. I knew some of the people who broke off from us and decided to go in that direction and we were saying--you know,--don't do this. Don't do this. This is not right. This is the right thing: organizing, organizing--educating and organizing; getting people to wake up--right?--and see what's really happening. But--you know--taking matters into your own hands is ?? wrong. But I knew who those people were.

J.L. Um-hum. Yeah.

J.L. So, well, speaking of demonstrations, Connie, were you at the Tradeswomen's demonstrations. There were two.

C.T. Yeah! Yeah!

J.L. Yeah. So tell me about those.

C.T. I was at all the demonstrations. I helped to organize all of them. You know? I have ... Actually, 'cause all this stuff is packed up,--you know--having moved to the country and, look back at my calendar,--you know--the little calendars that we kept in our purses--Oh my God! Oh yeah. I was a member (laughs) 'cause I had .. I was raising two kids and you know--very involved politically and working full time. And now I don't have ?? to do any of that.

J.L. And working at a hard job.

C.T. A very hard job; a very hard job. But I love the work. I really loved the work. I'm very physical. You know? I've always been a jock so it's--you know-- so that part was really cool. I really liked it. But you can see--you know .. I've got scars and stuff ?? I fractured this wrist and all the body has bruises.

J.L. So were you able to ... Well, first of all, I want to hear a little more about the demonstrations because I have suggested ... And,--you know--one of the things that's happening now with tradeswomen's organizing in New York City, they're talking about the debate about whether or not to go out on the street and organize; I mean,--you know--and bring their message to the job site or bring their message to ...

C.T. Absolutely.

J.L. And so... what was that like and what did that accomplish and what ...

C.T. I don't think there's any choice. You have to bring the message to the street. You have to bring the message to the job site. You have to hand out those leaflets. You have to talk to people,--you know,--when you're sitting in the shanty ... I was always talking to the guys,--you know?--no problem about it. But again, remember, I'm coming in ... when I came into the union I was coming in from these organizations: Harlem Fight Back, ??--you know,--so the guys were a little bit, Oh,--you know?--what's going to happen? What's she going to do? You know? (laughs) So I was coming in not alone. I never felt that I was alone.

J.L. Right.

C.T. And I wasn't coming in, I didn't feel, from a position of weakness--you know?--looking for a job. No, just from ... really from a position of strength. But I also feel that we were more fulfilled then. Women had more hope. And we had more strength because there was a women's movement. You know? There was ... There had been the anti-war movement. There had been the civil rights movement. There had been all of this social ferment;--that's a good word: ferment. And so I . I would say for the women who are debating this, hey, I'll fly back to New ?? Hey! Take the streets. Hand out the leaflets. Put the word out there. Keep standing up, keep standing up, keep standing up because, if nothing else, look:

Look at the history. We're all still alive. Democracy didn't kill us. I mean, if they didn't kill me, don't worry. They're not going to kill you. I mean,--you know--we were totally outrageous.

J.L. Yeah. But, I mean, what ... what does it do to present your position in a public way by ... What did that accomplish for you? What does that do?

C.T. Number one, what it accomplished I think is, it did educate, number one. Number two, it empowered us. It empowered us. And we went ... for instance, the women,--you know,--United Tradeswomen ... the conferences we did with other women's organizations. Honestly, I believe it's from us from that root, that later on you had the awareness and the consciousness of--you know--sexual harassment on the job. We were the first to talk about it. We were the first to--you know--actually have conferences on it. And,--you know--when the Anita Hill hearings happened we were one of the foundations--we were actually one of the foundation stones for peoples' outrage about it, because people were outraged. Even the media was outraged at what they were looking at. Weren't they? So, honestly, and not just United Tradeswomen, but all the women's organizations that were agitating at that time. Because if we hadn't existed first, no one would have been outraged at what happened to Anita Hill. It would have just been same old--you know--business as usual. Right?

J.L. Yeah. Yeah.

C.T. So that was ... Personally that's a major accomplishment. And it's like .. Okay. In some ways I would say the benefits that women have now--because they're getting eroded really fast, okay,--but the idea that young women today--right?--who go to college and their view is everything is available to them. That didn't exist when I went to college! How about when you went to college?

J.L. Abso-- .. I said to a woman doctor the other night who's head of the Psychiatry Department at this hospital in Eastern Washington, I said: and so what about the gender .. You know? How do you see it as a woman? And she said: I don't look at the world that way. And I said: good for you. Because--you know--in my lifetime that you don't have to. You know?

C.T. Exactly. Exactly. And here we have a generation of women who have been raised to believe that they are entitled to opportunity. I'm of the generation where you couldn't get a bank loan as a woman. You couldn't get a credit card by yourself as a woman. Okay? So there have been real positive changes; positive improvements. But, like, Susan Faludi wrote in "Backlash," let me tell you, the forces of people in darkness, the Republican Party. I don't throw the Democratic Party in there. I used to, but they're such weenies.

J.L. Well, you know, since you brought up Susan Faludi and ...

C.T. By the way, I read her entire book. I know most people said how many people have read that book. I read the book.

J.L. Good writer. Good writer, but a depressing subject. You know?

C.T. And a little too long...and the book was too long.

J.L. Yeah. Yeah. It's a big fat thing. But important point because--you know--I just interviewed a woman historian in Harlem for this book and she made



a point that I think is so important, which is that the left isn't really--has sort of .. is not making real efforts to connect to white working-class men. And,--you know ... and now here's somebody who actually has done real organizing on the job, connecting to ...

C.T. I was told I couldn't and I did.

J.L. And you did. And-you know--going ...I mean, this is ....

C.T. A little Puerto Rican socialist woman!

J.L. I mean, the whole--you know--drive towards the Republicans; toward conservatism, and the whole backlash against a lot of our--you know--gains. And so do you have anything you want to say on that subject?

C.T. Well, the left abandoned truly, I think ...

J.L. The working-class ...

C.T. The working class! I used to even say this. I said: Listen, the working-class isn't the Lower East Side of New York. America is white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. And if we're not reaching out to these people, you're not having any kind of movement. And one of my favorite things to say to them: We can't be running around like nineteenth century Bolsheviks here. You know?

J.L. Right.

C.T. And the revolution didn't work in Russia either. Look where they are now, 'cause they used to get real mad at me. I said, well, no. I think that the reason so many working-class people have gone to the right--and--you know--you've got to take the long view and look at history--(inaudible) I mean, the working-class in Germany voted for the Nazis because they thought ... the Nazis were telling them we are National Socialists. We are for social reform. We're for day care. We're for jobs. We're for--you know--home and family, bla, bla, bla,bla. Right? Here you've got the Republicans--you've got a classic .... giving the same message to the working-class. We want to give you security, safety, family, family values... Do you know who the first people to quote family values, to use that term? The Nazi's; family values.

J.L. Wow.

C.T. That term. It's not new. I know everybody thinks it's new. No, it's not true. Joseph Goebbels came up with it, a brilliant man. A brilliant monster, but brilliant. and so working people are looking for some way out of their terrible situation that they're in--which they are in. Right? We've been in a twenty year,--and I mean it--twenty year speed up,--okay?--jobs ... fewer workers to do the same amount of work,--right?--over and over and over again, being paid less. Here in the Northwest,--okay?--loggers used to get paid more money,--and it's a very ...incredibly dangerous profession 'cause you ...when I first moved here I saw so many young men with missing arms and legs and ??--you know--wow! What is this? You know?--were paid better in the '70's than they are today. In the 1970's they were being paid. Okay, a choke setter. It's a very dangerous job. This is the guy who sets the chains that pull the logs. You know? If that thing breaks you're dead.

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. People have been decapitated by choke setters. It was terrible, terrible. In the 1970's they were being paid between fifteen and twenty dollars an hour. Today in 2005--and with more of a speed up,--right?--'cause they're using littler crews--smaller crews,--they're being paid nine dollars an hour. You know?

J.L. Yeah. Yeah. Right.

C.T. And so working people are looking ... they want something. You know? And along comes the Republicans and religious right and they're saying to them,--you know--we're for family values. We're for--you know--the father earning a good living and the mother staying at home and taking care of the babies, which is great if you want to do that. That ... I have nothing against that, by the way. But they're not getting that. They're just getting the bullshit and they're being, I mean, royally screwed--royally screwed. You know? The average working person in this country has no medical benefits ...

J.L. Um-hum. Right.

C.T. and their children have no medical benefits.

J.L. So what about on the question of backlash against ...

C.T. On the question of backlash against women is because the avail ... Remember, the views of the dominant ?? is saying: Oh, our economic woes, our social woes are all ... it's because of feminism. It's because women have taken the good jobs and that's why men cannot support their families and that's why you have such a high divorce rate. Or that's why you have so much--let's see--what are the social--promiscuity ?? Oh, the evil--you know? And it's funny 'cause they want to look for a scapegoat. Who are the scapegoats ?? Who are the scapegoats in society?

J.L. Minorities, women ...

C.T. Women and children and minorities. In a society,--and this has been historical; I don't know if this is genetic with human beings but the weakest groups are the ones attacked the most, are the ones penalized the most, are the ones who have to pay the most. I mean, its people in the ghettos who pay the highest rents, not people--you know--on Park Avenue. A person on Park Avenue is actually paying less for furniture than the person in Harlem. I remember when I read that in *The New York Times*.

J.L. Remember that book, "The Poor Pay More?"

C.T. Yeah, The Poor Pay More. And have you read the book "Nickel and Dimmed?? I love it.

J.L. Oh, two hundred pages. It's brilliant. It's the best.

C.T. That's why Faludi should have made her book much smaller.

J.L. Yeah. Yeah. It's fabulous. So I wanted to ask you now about the question of obstacles for women organizing in the trades today.

C.T. I think they're the same obstacles that we had in the '70's but it's worse because at least in the '70's there were movements,--you know?--and there was still ... there was still the belief, and I think the hope, that--you know--

that there was a possibility of change; that there was a possibility of reforming ...I mean, one of the arguments I used to get into with Frank...he didn't believe in reforms. He felt that if you were a Socialist you should never, never go for a reform because reforms fool people into thinking that the system will work. And my argument with him was like: so what you're saying is we should let things get really, really miserable and that's when people rise up? No! Fight for reforms because in the process of fighting for just human decency, people will wake up. Because when they see they're not going to get it, even when they get a crumb, eventually when a person gets a crumb they want another cookie.

J. They want another ...

C.T. They're going to fight for another crumb,--right?--and then for another one. So I think it's actually harder--much harder,--especially since there is this view now that women don't really have to fight for women's rights 'cause we already have them.

J.L. Right. Yeah.

C.T. Yeah? Okay. You know, women are making less now than in the '60's in terms of male salaries and female salaries. We're actually ... I forgot what the statistics ... I know you can look this up. But there was this statistic about how much a woman earned and how much a man earned. And if the man made a dollar, the woman I think, at that time, was making like forty-four cents; something like that. I've heard it's actually worse--the ratio now is worse. (laughs)

J.L. So now I want to talk about ... a little bit about assessing your career. And what year ...

C.T. 1987.

J.L. Okay. You left in 1987.

C.T. But I didn't leave ... I didn't let go of my book. I was attending union meetings here when I first came here. I kept my book until ...

J.L. And did you do any work as a tradeswoman out here?

C.T. Yeah. Yeah, I did. I worked on a fish plant here. But I didn't know how to drive and my ex-husband was driving me back and forth and I realized that, that wasn't going to work,--you know--and that was going to be a problem. And so, yeah, I was ?? building a fish plant over here ??

J.L. What led you to leave?

C.T. Well, actually, what led me to leave the trades was actual physical illness, that I couldn't--you know--continue doing that work. I started to have--you know--issues with ... we thought I had cancer. I was having cancer biopsies and it turned out I didn't. I just got tumors. But I had--you know--I had to have surgeries and different things like that. So it was really, like, my health. I was starting to have health issues that were like, Oh, this is--you know ?? And then what I was doing was I was self-employed and I was--you know--buying a house and renovating and then selling it, so I was still doing the trades but not in that level. You know? Because when you're working it's go, go, go, go, go, go, and so I was doing carpentry. And it was great because I taught

myself with videotapes ... 'cause I'd never installed ... I mean, I worked in construction in New York, high-rise building, -right?--so I had never built a wooden house. I had never put in a composition roof. So I would go (laughs) I would go to the hardware store and buy these tapes on how to do this stuff. And I'd watch the tapes and take notes,--you know--to learn how to install a roof and--you know ... Now in school we had framed out a wooden house and a basement which is part of graduating. You have to do this, but it's still really different. You know?--you're still--when you're actually learning ... 'cause all the framing I'd ever done had always been in metal. So now I'm using wood, which is great, but it's so much ... it was learning--it was really learning this kind of carpentry, which I had not done, and it was lots of fun. I really enjoyed that. And I did that till 1994 when I decided to go back to school. And the reason I stopped doing that is because of the situation with my ex and he ... the marriage fell apart,--you know?--so that's ... that was that.

J.L. So you went back to school. And so how do you compare your two,--you know--your life ... Is there any comparison that you can make between your life as a tradeswoman and your life as a psychologist?

C.T. Absolutely. Absolutely, because I think that my experiences as a carpenter and being in the trades absolutely makes me a damned good therapist in--you know--in every way. In every way it has shaped and formed my life. I think that the people that I met, the stories that I heard,--you know--because one of the interesting things having ... I mean, I went into the trades I had already been a counselor--you know--and working in a women's clinic, eastern women's clinic ?? gone. But it was like, people want to tell you their stories. You know that, that people want to tell their stories, which ?? storytellers. And to me it was wonderful that I learned so much. I learned so much about life, about people. Because here I was working with white males, which I really hadn't had that much access. You know, when you grow up a minority kid in New York it's interesting how kind of isolated you are. Right?

J.L. Oh yeah. Uh-huh.

C.T. And was able to ... and ... have friends; I mean, be real friends with these even and learned so much from them. And they were wonderful. I loved their stories. They were wonderful, wonderful people. And I knew this in my heart--I knew in my heart that no matter where you are you can ?? no matter where you are. No matter where you are you can speak your truth, whatever your truth is ??--you know,--and people will hear you as long as you're speaking your truth, and that it is true. You know? And talking about **E. D. Lang** [radical psychologist] --I don't know about that one.

J.L. So well, I wanted to get your thoughts on affirmative action and--such as it is. But, I mean, it's really--you know--so changed, so .. but--you know ....

C.T. I remember **Bakke**. (laughs)

J.L. Right. Yeah.

C.t. I remember Bakke ?? like, Oh my God.

J.L. I found a copy of that in Burton Hall's papers, the whole decision--Bakke decision.

C.T. Yeah. Yeah.

J.L. So do you have anything to say about, first of all, the contributions of affirmative action.

C.T. You know what? How about this one.

J.L. Okay.

C.T. Fucking Clarence Thomas would not be where he is without affirmative action. You know? That pervert is on the Supreme Court because of affirmative action so that might be an ...

#### Side Two

C.T. They ain't going to college. They are not ... of the poor Blue-collar guys, they don't go to college here in the Northwest. So absolutely. I believe in affirmative action and it needs to be done better and more than what we're doing--than what we used to do. You know,--you know--here's what I find fascinating. When I was growing up there was a philosophy or an idea--let's put it that way--in the air, the either--whatever you want to call it,--that poverty was created by bigger structures: by government, by industry, by big business. Okay? Now it's like we're back in the nineteenth century, in Dickens' times of if you're poor let's put you in debtor's prison. It is your fault you're poor. It is the choices you make. You're responsible for your poverty. You're responsible for where you're at right now. It's like taking a per--it's like taking a human being out of context of the society they live in and the time that they live in and it .. I get so upset when I hear--you know--these--you know--these commentators on the radio. And by the way, I do listen to the right wing radio because most of it is right wing. I remember a year ago on Thanksgiving one of the right wing commentators here in Oregon was talking about: Yeah, these welfare bums and they want to go and get their free turkey and ... it was, like, the most pernicious .. I mean, just ... and I'm listening to this guy ?? listen, I'm going what has happened? When did we go back to that nineteenth century mind set? What happened to the War On Poverty? What happened to knowing ... Moynihan ... Moynihan wrote this incredible paper back in the early '60-'s on how poverty was created in New York City; how banks red-lined neighborhoods and created bombed out building, the banks not the people who were being blamed for it. So I think that--you know--we're living in a time where the brutality, the naked brutality against the working class in this country is just wow! I mean, truly ... We're not going back to the '50's. We're going back to the eighteen hundreds. We're going back to a time where if you don't show up--you know--what was the saying: If you don't show up on Sunday don't come ... come out on Monday. Remember those sayings?

J.L. Yeah, [don't] come back on Monday,--right?--for the Irish. Yeah.

C.T. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, we are at a time where--facts, these are facts,--where women are so frightened--you know--and the economy is so bad that they're allowing themselves to e sexual--sexual harassment is alive and well, for a fact--facts. These are facts that, I mean, and I think it's ... You know, I--empirically I can tell you what's going on in my town where I know what's going on. Okay? I've had women come to me and tell me horror stories. Okay? and Clarence Thomas,--let's get back to Clarence Thomas, the little affirmative action guy, was one of the instrumental people, along with Anita Hill, of decimating the Labor Department so there's no ... You know, my sister is a labor investigator for the Labor Department and she said it's amazing--you know--

J.L. In Washington?

C.T. No, in Orlando, Florida.

J.L. Uh-huh.

C.T. She's amazing. I love her. And she says we have no power, and she says, I just kind of pretend that I have power and I scare these people. You know? She says: Really I have no power.

J.L. Yeah. Yeah. There's no enforcement.

C.T. And she said ... No enforcement...and she said in Orlando, business owners literally are treating workers like slaves-slaves. My sister was very instrumental in that big law suit against the Taco Bell where they were ... they were having the employees punch out--this is something that used to be done in the garment factory,--punch out and you stay and you don't-and they weren't paying them overtime. (laughs) You know? ?? Wal-Mart's--you know,--the new world order. So I think that we're in a very tough time, but it's also a time of opportunity--okay?--because history repeats itself. And as the fist comes more and more out of that velvet glove ... and you can lie to people and you can tell them you're for family values and bla, bla, bla, bla and all of this,--you know-and like Bush does and the Republicans do. The bottom line is when a man--when a white man can no longer feed and clothe his family, from that point--right?--that is the most dangerous man in the world. Okay--that, not--you know--the ...--you know,--not the--you know--the socialism; No. that is the most dangerous man in the world, just like these young men who are strapping bombs to themselves and blowing themselves up. And I know people who go, Oh, terrorists are evil. They're the devil. Right? ?? Let's back it up here. Where did this person come from? How did this person come to that moment, that time and space. Right? Okay, let's step back a little bit. Oh gee, hmm. Our government in collusion with these oligarchies and these fiefdoms in the Arab countries, in collusion with them are totally creating an impossible situation where there is no hope, no chance of opportunity, no job, nothing. Well, what do you think is going to happen? You can't take an oppressed people and then think that they're never going to do anything about it. They may ... You know, people may take oppression even for years-okay; eventually they rise up, even if you're the most oppressive state on the planet. Spartacus rose up against Rome, the absolute most despotic ... boom. Right?

J.L. Um-hum.

C.T. So I do think this is a great time of opportunity too because as especially as this pernicious and illegal holocaust we're committing and perpetuating against young boys and girls of America, boys and girls of Saudi Arabia. It's that simple ?? eighteen and nineteen.

J.L. So to ...

C.T. And if that goes on people will wake up. You're already .. You're hearing parents ... did you see that thing on Sixty Minutes where there was this woman who was ....she was a jobs counselor and she was rah, rah, rah, my country. Yes, we got to go. Saddam Hussein, 9-11 that whole ... she bought ... She bought the lot. And in fact, she works in Detroit and she was somebody who always encouraged, as a way out. The military to her was like good.

J.L. Well, there was a woman like that in Michael Moore's movie.

C.T. That's her. That's her. That one of the ... she was on Sixty Minutes also.

J.L. Oh, okay.

C.T. And ...

J.L. I didn't see her on Sixty Minutes. Yeah.

C.T. And she ....

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. Her baby died, Oh ??

J.L. Um-hum. Yeah. So what about your thoughts on women in the skilled trades now, I mean, the importance of it as a ...

C.T. I still think that it is absolutely essential for the higher paying, blue-collar jobs to be open to women. I was able to get, which is why I went in. I went in for the money. You know? I know some women who had other--you know ... No! I wanted to provide my children a middle class life style.

J.L. And you were able to.

C.T. and I was able to. I was able to buy a house. You know? I was able to send my children through college. I did all that. I did that with what I earned. In fact, on the jobs, when I would go on a job and guys go, well, you're taking a guy's job--you know,--there would always be that initial--you know--getting tough .. I mean, after I was in the trades for a lot of years everybody knew me so it was like, ha! They didn't have to go through that. But then I'd come in and the guys say: You're taking a guy's job, I used to look at whatever guy would say that, I said : Oh honey, hey, if you're willing to support me to stay home and support my kids I'll sign on, on the dotted line. Hey, I won't have to come and bust my ass here. Great! Come on. Give me your paycheck, babe. They'd go ?? And I'd go: I'm here for the same reason you're here. I've got two kids. I want to support them. I want to give them a better life,--you know?--and sorry I have ... I don't have a Poppy to support me. But if any one of you guys in the crew wants to sign on you can support me. I won't sleep with you, but you can support me. (laughs) I used to have a lot of fun. You have to have a good sense of humor. You know?

J.L. Yeah. It goes a long way.

C.T. And be fast on the uptake. I ...

J.L. Um-hum. Um-hum.

C.T. One time, I remember, on one job ?? where a guy was like, Oh, you can't do the work. You know? We're going to have to carry you,--you know? And he was going on like that and he was just--you know,--some guys would just get into their thing. Right? And I go: No you don't and I ... we were all in the shanty and some of the guys already knew me. And I went up to this guy,--and this is

really easy to do, of course,---and I--I've got to show you. This is so cool. Right? I went up to him,-right?-and maybe he was a little bit taller than me,--you know-about like five seven, five eight. Right? I went up to him and I went like this, put my arms around his legs and I did a dead lift--which is easy to do, by the way,--and I walked about four steps and I put him down. And I says: I think I can carry you.

J.L. (laughs)

C.T. It's a visual aid,--you know?-and ... because I could do the work, and .and I did. You know? They only knew I was very fast. I was very good. In fact, ask anybody-any of the men who very worked with me and they'll tell you.

J.L. Okay. So what about organizing now in terms of the women and--you know-'cause you've been there and although you're a little distant from the tradeswomen's movement, but what words of advice do you have?

C.T. Basically, is talk to each other, talk to each other; meet with each other, meet with each other; socialize with each other--very important and just keep doing it. I mean, it sounds stupid and simplistic and sometimes you feel like, Oh my God, we're never going to make it. Yeah, because ... and some of the young women today may look at me and say: Well, Gee, you guys failed. You know? We're still kind of reinventing the wheel in a way. And I'll say no, we didn't--okay?-because when we came in that door was solidly closed. There are little racks in that door now. At least people are willing to say, yeah, there are women in the trades,-you know,-not a lot, but it's not like when I got there ... in my day,-Oh my God, I'm so old (laughs) That's so great, we get to say in my day, horse and buggies .. the idea of a woman being in the trades was just not even an idea. And the left was against it, the left! You know? Progressive people were actually against it along with the white guys ... You know, here's the interesting thing. Here are the progressives and here are the--you know--the white union guys who don't want anybody in there and they're saying: Yeah, no women. These two groups of people saying yeah, for different reasons, but actually a similar reason, interestingly enough. They both felt that the jobs should go to minority men. Well, the white men wanted the jobs to go to white men but the progressives were telling me it ... the job should go to a minority man. ? Interesting.

J.L. And that's still alive?

C.T. Oh, I think that that particular little maggot is still alive and well. You know? There's so many ideas which are so toxic-right?--maggots throughout history,-you know?-from medieval times on and from Roman times, Victorian times, and here we are--you know--having to, like, sort out--you know--what do you really believe, because in all of us we've got all this programming and we're not even aware it's in there. You know?

J.L. Right.

C.T. and then you're acting on it or you're--you know-or it's being said to you,--you know?--and they're either trying to make me feel guilty for thinking I'm entitled to a job just like everybody else who's supporting children. You know? And I had the kids so I had--you know-kind of a ... and they were my ... by the way, my children were mine ?? Why I went in that direction because I ... I really didn't want to raise my children in poverty,--you know--(inaudible) I wanted to just give them,--you know--a better life.



J.L. Where are your children today?

C.T. My daughter lives in Portland. She's married. And my son lives in Yokohama, Japan and he's been in the Navy for ten years and he's getting out, he says, and ?? figure. I mean, he's not in any risk of going to war maybe because of his specialty. He's a computer programmer and he works specifically on nuclear guidance systems on nuclear subs.

J.L. Okay.

C.T. So he fixes the black boxes.

J.L. Your daughter, does she ...

C.T. And she's a member of NOW.

J.L. She is?

C.T. Yeah. My daughter's a feminist and I would say my son is a little bit more conservative. You know? He didn't only have my influence. He also had, and my daughter also had her-their father's influence and they're Cuban very conservative Republicans. (laughs) But my son I would say is progressive. You know? He thinks this government is an abomination and Bush is horrendous. You know? But I would say he's more Democratic; he's more ?? But pol--but they grew up--both my children grew up in the movement, I mean, going to demonstra-- ... they burned ... One time I was really sick and I ... I couldn't go to a demonstration in Washington and they wanted to go--We want to go!--so I sent them with my friend 'cause she was going with her son. And when they came back they were so happy 'cause they had burned the president in effigy and they had a won--this was ... oh, this was a demonstration against apartheid in South Africa. so they had such a good time.

J.L. So does your daughter know about you and your role in ... as being a tradeswoman and breaking down doors for women?

C.T. Oh yes, sure. Sure. My kids--you know--they were ... 'cause they grew up--you know---

J.L. Right.

C.T. meetings at the house, and they grew up and our house in Queens was also like a place where people who were coming into New York City to speak or anything would stay with me 'cause I had the place. I mean, we had--this is great,--we had staying at one time we had English coal miners who had come to speak to the leftist groups when they had the big strike

J.L. When they had the strike ....

C.T. In England.

J.L. Right. Right.

C.T. and the English were hiring ...

J.L. That was in the '90's.

C.T. Yeah, and the English were hiring American consultants to bust the unions, the English companies. Remember that?

J.L. Yeah. Yeah.

C.T. Yeah, yeah. So we had those guys were great but God, could they drink. I don't drink so it's like, wow! And they were still standing, great guys. I did cook for them. I had Chris White who was ...

J.L. Oh, I know Chris White from the Laborers.

C.t. You know Chris? Yeah. He stayed at my house when he came to speak about what was going on up there. And ended up working with his best friend from high school on my job. Alan is his best friend and Alan was talking one day about his friend from Alaska, 'cause Alan was a miner in Alaska, and I said: well,--you know-I've only met one Alaskan. So I'm telling him a story about the guy and I didn't mention his name. And then Alan says, yeah, my friend Chris. I said: that's so weird. The guy who stayed in my house, his name was Chris, Chris White, and Alan says: My friend is Chris White, Labor ... in a Laborers Union? Was he a Laborer? He goes: Yeah. And they shot him up ... And so he stayed at my house and by God that man can eat too. I mean, I made a huge pot of rice and beans,--you know-Puerto Rican food .. He says: Well, we're like that. You know? We like to eat.

J.L. Yeah. Well, speaking of Chris White and the Laborers and your union, the Carpenters, what I ...

C.T. Yeah. I let go of my book about-when did I let my book go? I think it was in '9--'94 'cause I felt like you know,--I'm paying ... unlike the ... One thing I do like about the Teamsters, which we don't have and we should,

J.L. get a withdrawal.

C.T. Yeah. The teamsters ..... No. the Teamsters let you freeze your book and then you don't have to pay dues any more if you're not working. We don't do that so it was costing me like about ... it was almost four hundred a year and I just felt what am I doing.

J.L. Right. Right.

C.T. I've still got one of my books inside.

J.L. So the ... unions, I mean, one of the big problems with the industry that you were in New York is the corruption which really--you know---to use the word undermined the mission of labor as a ...

C.T. (laughs) Oh my God! Oh my God, yeah.

J.L. Having come through that particular fight and what are your thoughts on that?

C.T. Well,--you know--corruption in the unions is like the corruption on Wall Street and the corruption in the White House. This is a corrupt society and we do have--you know ... there's corruption and there's corruption. The orruption in the Carpenters Union, they were just stealing the money and they were behaving like goons.

J.L. Um-hum.

C.T. The corruption in the Teachers Union was more subtle and more hidden but it's still corruption. You had unions ... the leadership of the unions in this country, they're not for the workers, they're not for the labor. They're not for building unions.

J.L. Perpetuating their positions.

C.T. Yeah. They're in to jump into bed with the bosses. To me, the most classic example of that was the Traffic Controllers union. They were a very conservative union and they were rabidly, rabidly behind Reagan.

J.L. Ronald Reagan.

C.T. I mean, man, I don't want to get disgusting on your tape but they were definitely like, let's get in bed with you,--right?--total Reagan whores. Right? That's the first thing I ever did. I was like ... when I watched that he ... that truly should have been the wake up call for all labor.

J.L. Right.

C.T. They should have opened their eyes. They didn't. I mean, that was one of his very first its--you know--??

J.L. Right.

C.T. You're gone.

J.L. I have to ask you because I'm doing a second book and the subject is the reformers who worked with Burton Hall and I've been interviewing all these people.

C.T. Oh yeah, Burt. Loved him. Yeah.

J.L. So what do you have to say about the late, great Burton Hall?

C.T. Oh, he was wonderful. What a curmudgeon. He truly, truly, truly stood with the working guy. He stood there. And he made the sacrifices that were required, which he did. You know? He sacrificed ... If you really think about it he sacrificed his financial well-being. You know? I mean, I met Burton when he was living in his office. You know? And I walked in and I went: Are you living in here? He goes: Well, I stay here sometimes. I said: you're living in here. I don't believe you're living ...

J.L. Yeah. He had a place in Staten Island but he used to live there a lot.

C.T. Yeah. And I was like, Oh ... and ...

J.L. Now did you meet him when he was on Liberty Street or up on Broadway, south of Canal? Do you remember which office: Because he was down by the World Trade Center and he left when they were already ... they had the big--you know ... So that's why he had to leave down there. Anyway ...

C.T. I think it was Liberty Street the first time in his office. Anyway, he was funny, smart, crazy as a coot but incredibly, incredibly, incredibly ?? I mean, that was my experience with him. I don't know what any one else is going to say but this is ... this is what I encountered.

J.L. Pretty universal.

C.T. He--you know--was ... and it's like, for me having him it was like ..You know the old saying you don't go into a gun fight carrying a knife? You know? And having him on my side it was like. I knew when I went into the fight,-and I knew who I was fighting 'cause I had never had any illusion. You know? You're dealing with organized crime,-you know?

J.L. Um-hum.

C.T. An arm of the government (laughs) when they need them or when they want them. And having Burt, it was like I knew I had real high fire power. You know? It was like that. It just ... It made you feel strong. It made you feel--you know-like, yeah, Ill kick your ass. You want to see my gang? both laugh) ?? take a look. I had Burt. I had the IRA---you know--little organizations. It was very nice.

J.L. Yeah. And you had Fight Back. We haven't mentioned James Haughton but he's still going at it. Yeah.

C.T. Haughton? Oh my God. Really? Oh my God! Tell him I said hello. He might actually know me more by Consuelo 'cause a lot of people call me Consuelo. You know? But wow, good for them. Yeah. Well, you can tell him I'm organizing here against the War 'cause I'm in Women In Black and--you know-and continuing that. And before Women In Black,-before we had the chapter of Women In Black we were demonstrating against the war before the war started and we had kind of a Bill Of Rights group. But most of the people were not radical. And me, I am. And I always say yeah, that's my point of view and--you know--(inaudible) because what's the bottom line really? What is the bottom line? And Pedro Albizu Campos said to us: Look, you cannot be oppressed ??? I mean, it's in Spanish,-- you know,--?? in Spanish. But it's--you know-----

J.L. That idea. And James Larkin, the great Irish revolutionary, also said something. He said: it was about-you know--the ruling class and so it was they're in their position because we're on our knees. Rise! Rise! You know? It' ... it's a beautiful quote. I just can't imagine-you know-remember it exactly. But ...

C.T. So another quote that I really like and it's going on in my mind which was-and it's from Eleanor Roosevelt--which is: No one can demean you without your participation.

J.L. That's right.

C.T. And that's a fact. You know?

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. If we stand ... and a lot of times--you know--I mean, when you're young you think it's Oh, it's always a question of fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting. No. ?? stand. You're being yourself. If you say no to any kind of tyranny, including your own, by the way, 'cause there are little tyrants living in our own heads and we beat the crap out of ourselves: you're not good enough ?? You know? If we sand up to tyrant wherever we find it-if we stand up ...

stand up however we do it. It doesn't always have to be the placards and the big banners. You know? Sometimes it can be as simple an act as refusing to get up from your seat on a bus.

J.L. That's right. And you know, when ... hearing you speak about that, I mean, I think the tradeswomen--the individual tradeswomen on the job by their many, many acts, they're standing up.

C.T. ?? Showing up every day to work; by--you know--doing the job--just doing the job. I mean, I was able--the reason I was able to organize was because I earned the respect of these men because I did the job. They didn't carry me. You know?

J.L. Yeah.

C.T. I did the job. And I had--you know--a track record, not like ... I do want to tell you I didn't start working like my first day on the job--you know--and start handing out leaflets. No, no, no, no.

J.L. Yeah. Right. No, no. I know that.

C.T. No. My first day I was there ... I mean, of course they knew I was a radical; there was no question about that, because they'd seen me come in with Fight Back. (laughs)

J.L. Right.

C.T. So it's not like--you know ... but not ... It was .. I was there to le-- .. I'm a first year apprentice. Learn the job; get into the union. Once I was in the union, hey, then I started organizing. Then,--you know--I started doing more. You know? So just showing up to work ... I even,--you know ... Like, sometimes the most heroic thing, seriously that a human being can do is just show up.

J.L. Right.

C.T. And sometimes the most heroic thing a human being can do is not show up for work and say, No. I don't get ... so it can go either way. So I think that we are heading toward another time of upheaval and movement because the bad guys aren't giving us a choice. They never do. You know? They squeeze you and squeeze you and squeeze you and squeeze you until you go woe, hey. You know?

J.L. ?? do something.

C.T. And I think that we'll see. Once we're in Iraq five or six years .. You know, already it's happening. Kids are saying I don't want to go. You know?

J.L. Right. Right.

C.T. And ...

J.L. And the military families are organizing, not enough. But there's still a lot ...

C.T. I ?? I think,--you know--I think that there are interesting ?? and I ... I sort of hear it on the news, there are a lot of fathers who were in Vietnam who are saying to their sons don't go! This is a lie.

J.L. Right. They ... they know.

C.T. You know? And these aren't political guys, by the way.

J.L. That's right.

C.T. I'm not saying these are guys who've done the ?? thing. No, these are guys who went, did the thing ?? straight up,-you know?--and they are saying ..--you know,--they're trying to talk their sons out of it and when their sons go they're .... One father who's here in Coos Bay whose son went into the military, died in Iraq ...

8-30

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