

Interview With Yvone Maitin

J. This is Jane Latour, interviewing Yvone Maitin on June 22nd, 1995 at NYU. And Yvone is from Local 30, Operating Engineers.

So, Yvone, it's been five years since last we spoke and when we talked the last time, you were acting as a shop steward, you were working for the Port Authority. And what's changed in the interim? You were at 42nd Street.

Y. Well, I no longer work at 42nd Street. I am now working at the George Washington Bridge. You're correct. I was a shop steward at the 42nd Street bus terminal, and I no longer am. I was asked to, but I chose not to because,--you know,--it was ... it was an interesting experience. I actually enjoyed being a shop steward, to some degree,--you know,--it doesn't put me in another per-- ... put ... gave me another perspective,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And it's very much, I guess, on a certain level, very much like my experience being in the trades, difficult, but something I wouldn't change for anything. It's been a really interesting and really great learning experience. I chose not to work as a shop steward,--not to represent the workers as a shop steward this time,--for ... for a couple of reasons, but primarily because I felt that shop stewarding ... a lot of it was babysitting,--you know. The guys liked to complain a lot but really didn't want to take a stand,--you know? I'd take a stand for them. Then they would back off,--you know? They wanted me to do the work.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And no matter what I did, it was never good enough,--you know/--and I had to confront a couple of them about that. And I actually, when I left the 42nd Street bus terminal, I made a different ... another decision for myself: a career decision for myself.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Where I work now, I primarily work alone. I rarely see any of my co-workers except when I come to relieve the person that

J. Um-hum.

Y. has been working in the shift before me, so I'm a shift worker. And ...

J. You work at night?

Y. I ... Actually,--you know--we ... we've worked it out so that we could have, for the most part, a pretty steady shift, and for the most part, I work the midnight shift. So that was another change for me.

J. Um-hum.

Y. So I work mostly nights. I don't see the guys that I work around too much. I relieve the person that's been there before me, so the only contact that I have with my co-workers is in the few minutes that we report to each other what's going on;--what's happening;--what's not happening.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Occasionally, I do work during the day. Most of the time it's I have to work overtime, then I work a different shift. And most of the time, like I said, I'm working the midnight shift. And I made this decision to go into this place and to do this kind of work, and to work these hours very consciously. One of the things is that ... I ... I could have gone to a variety of other places.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And most of the other places where I would have gone to I ... I probably would have had to work with a watch engineer. And I'm not a watch engineer.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I'm a mechanic and ... But at this place, I knew that I was going to be able to have a chance to just work by myself.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And a couple of things. One was that I've known that, because I work alone, if there was any information that had to be given, I was going to get it. There was no way they were going to be able to avoid giving me the information,

J. Um-hum.

Y. because I'm on by myself.

J. Yeah.

Y. So whatever they tell Joe and Tony and whoever else,

J. Right.

Y. they have to pass that information on to me. However,--you know--it's like everything else in life. You give something and you ... You ... You get something and you give something up,--you know,--and that has been actual--that has been so in this job. When I worked at LaGuardia, which is where I started with the Port Authority, I was an apprentice. I was there for a little over three years. It was extremely impressive. I think I mentioned that the last time that we spoke. I had also said that I didn't get the training I felt that I should have gotten,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. I left there and I went to work as a ... was finally able to take the test and become a mechanic. I'm not going to explain all that again, 'cause I think I ...

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

Y. I told you how this process was the last time. I worked at 42nd Street. And actually,--you know--it was much easier for me there, because I worked around many black men primarily,--?? men,--men of color,--so that the race issue was not so prominent and primary as it had been at the airport for me.

J. Now, did you see a difference in the way they related to you as a woman? I mean,--was there still hostility, in terms of ...

Y. As a woman?

J. Or because there ...

Y. Yes, there were still problems,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. So one thing was taken away, which I didn't ...

J. Um-hum.

Y. The issue of racism was not so primary.

J. Um-hum.

Y. But the issue of sexism was still there.

J. Yeah. Because the women fire fighters have found that a lot of the Afro-American fire fighters, because they've experienced discrimination themselves, they've been less reluctant to visit it upon the sisters. And they've been ... made an allied cause with ...

Y. Well, actually,--you know,--when I went to work at the 42nd Street bus terminal, there was one guy who subsequently lost his job because he ... he got hooked on crack, but had been working for the Port Authority for many years, and he was very good at what he did. And he was not in my trade. He was a steamfitter,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. and ... and he was very good at what he did. And he did befriend me. And I ... when I needed some information, he never held it back,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. He was right there giving me whatever information I had,--helping me to think things through as a tradesperson,--and I really appreciated that about him. There was another worker who .. he ... this guy, he was Italian, and he gave me a really hard time, at first, and we had a big blow up, confrontation. And ... And after that, he was really quite friendly and quite ... quite forthcoming with information, if I asked him,--if we were alone. If we were around the other guys,--especially other mechanics,--then he wasn't quite so forthcoming. But if I caught him and there was just he and I working alone, and I asked him questions, he would give me information. No problem. And he also was an excellent mechanic. But most of the black men that I worked around were not mechanics, in terms of like a specific trade.

J. Um-hum.

Y. They were maintenance men,--

J. Oh yeah.

Y. which meant that they did odds and ends,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. whatever other jobs were left over that the mechanics didn't have as part of their trade.

J. Right. Um-hum.

Y. So in that way, I didn't get that kind of information. But they were--you know ... It was ... It was much, much less stressful

J. Um-hum.

Y. working in the situation. And also, there were a lot more women. I was more involved with the population of the people working there.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And when I say more women, I don't necessarily mean in the trades, but in the area;--

J. Yeah. Yeah.

Y. in the ... in the building that I worked in.

J. So the environment wasn't just, like, all males.

Y. Right. I wasn't working in the boiler room,--all men,--all the time. I was in the large environment. And also, the ... the community around. I had actually grown up in that community so I felt more comfortable. I was able to leave the premises during my lunch hour and--you know,--and get some reprieve,--a moment of reprieve. I wasn't stuck like when you work at the airport, it's--you know--in order to get out of the airport, you have to get a truck, and call a car,--a vehicle and get out. It's a longer distance. It's not the same kind of situation. So that really helped me to feel more relaxed,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and more able to do my job. It didn't give me a whole lot of training, but it made life a lot easier for me. And ... And that was really good. When I left there,--like I said,--and I went to ...

J. Well, when did you leave?

Y. I left in ... Let's see; I was there about three years, so probably '89. That's when I left.

J. Okay. Um-hum.

Y. And I went to work at the George Washington Bridge. And like I said, ... What had happened was, by the time I left the 42nd Street bus terminal, and I was really ready to leave.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I was ready to leave because I could see that I wasn't ... still wasn't going to get the information. And there are all (kinds of) reasons why I wasn't going to get the information, and many of those reasons stemmed from my apprenticeship,--you know. A lot of the guys resented that there, (that) I was a mechanic, and I didn't have the information they thought that I should have had,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and I was getting the same pay--you know--as they were.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And--you know,--under most circumstances, I might have agreed with them,--you know? However, I knew that I had fought really hard to get this job,--to stay in this job,--to ... to get to where I was at, and so I felt justified, and I didn't have a problem with them if they challenged me on my work.

J. Um-hum.

Y. But it was very stressful when I was asked to do something and I didn't know how to do it, and I wasn't going to get the information that I needed. So I figured if I went to work at a place where I was working alone,

J. Um-hum.

Y. I figured, whatever information they gave, they had to give me,--you know?

J. Right. You know,--this week I was at the Musicians Hall,--the Union hall. And they have there, practice rooms for the musicians, so they can just come there and have practice space for free,--which seems to me a great idea.

Y. Um-hum.

J. and considering that musicians have to work on their skills and keep them up to snuff. It seems to me that so many trade unions,--Unions that deal with people in the trades,--if they could help with the skills and provide hands on,--you know--some kind of back-up,

Y. Right.

J. in terms of the program. Is ... Is Local 30 doing any of that?

Y. Well, I recently found out,--'cause I spoke with a woman from, actually, Local 15,--and I just met her. I don't really ... I don't know this woman at all,--but she was talking to me about the apprenticeship at Local 30. Now, Local 30, their apprenticeship was actually conducted by some school in downtown Manhattan. I don't know the name of the school;--

J. Um-hum.

Y. maybe TCI? I don't know. I'm not really sure. But it was ... it was really ... it was being conducted

by a technical school. And when they moved out to ... to Queens, Richmond Hill, Queens,--they took on their own apprenticeship. But, in my opinion, they were ill equipped.

J. Um.

Y. They ... We had to buy books that were not up to snuff,--you know,--not in terms of the information that they had in them.

J. Um-hum.

Y. but one of the teachers himself criticized their books, because it had no index,

J. Yeah.

Y. so if you wanted to get information you had to go through ??

J. But in all this time, they haven't ... they haven't done anything to ...

Y. Well, this is what I found out. I'm getting to that now. So at that point,--you know,--it was a really, I think, terrible apprenticeship. It was primarily geared towards people who had already been in the trades for many, many years,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and to prepare them to take their license exams. So it was a three year program to prepare these men to take the refrigeration license and the watch engineers,--stationary engineers test. And they ... they had classes specifically for the test, but they also had these classes to prepare them for it,--and they had no shop. I recently found out that ... that they really revamped the whole program, and now have shop

J. Um-hum.

Y. at the ...at the Hall, at Local 30. And the apprenticeship is much better. And I'm really glad, and I'm really happy. And ... And I'm ... And a part of me feels kind of sad and somewhat resentful that

J. Um-hum.

Y. it wasn't there when I needed it,--you know?

J. Right.

Y. And at this point, I've been in this trade now twelve years, and I've made many different decisions about what I'm going to do and where ... and what direction I'm headed in. And one of the things I've decided that I won't do is that I will not go back to school

J. Um-hum.

Y. to learn this trade again, because it was so difficult working full time and ...

J. Um-hum.

Y. around men all day long, and then having to go out to the end of the world,--as it seemed like to me,--

J. Yeah. Yeah.

Y. to go to school, two, three, four times a week,--you know,--two ... for three or four hours, around men all day ...

J. And you met up with the same resistance.

Y. and ... and to meet up with the same resistance with ... with an apprenticeship that was appalling,--you know,--too. At this point, I feel that when I go to school,--which I am going to school,--I'm going to school to do the things that I want to do,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. what interests me, and what I want to do when I eventually retire from this job.

J. Um-hum.

Y. 'Cause I'm not leaving my job. I was thinking ... I considered it for a minute, but I decided against it.

J. Um-hum. You were thinking about it last time we spoke.

Y. Right.

J. Yeah.

Y. So now I go to school, and I go to school actually for something totally different.

J. What are you studying?

Y. And I've found many, many women are doing the same thing,

J. Uh-huh.

Y. especially women that have been in the trades for as long or longer than I have. I'm going to school for body work,--you know,--massage and ...

J. Oh yeah.

Y. and I've ... herbal work,--working with the herbs and plants, and that kind of stuff.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I really enjoy it. And I like it,--you know,

J. Um-hum.

Y. but I'm not planning on leaving my job for it,--you know.

J. Yeah.

Y. So ...

J. It's for the future.

Y. it's for the future, but I ... I'm going to school, and I enjoy going to school. And I don't have ... I don't meet up with that resistance when I go to school,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. The teachers want me to get the information.

J. And it's a ... it's a healthy thing. It's a ...

Y. Right. And I've gone ... Actually, what's interesting is that I know many, many women that have been in the trades for ... and most of them,--you know,--of course it's going to be the women who have been in the trades for a long time,

J. Um-hum.

Y. because the new ones coming in are trying to learn their trade,--you know?

J. Right.

Y. So it's most of us that have been in for eight years and over,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. that I have found and I've talked with, that are ... many of them are going into the health field;--many of them!

J. Um-hum.

Y. I know a woman gardener on my job that is ... when she's left the job and is going to school to become a nurse,--you know? And I know many women that are going into the health field: physical therapy, bla, bla, bla, on and on. So people ... So they're wanting to help, and they're wanting to do things, but they're moving out,--out of the trades. And ... And a part of me thinks that it's kind of sad, and a part ... and because I know where ... what I'm doing, I under-- ... totally understand,--I totally understand why,--you know? And it's ... And I don't find women feeling like they've wasted their time.

J. Um-hum.

Y. That's not the issue,

J. Um-hum.

Y. or that ...--you know,--regretting what they've done. That is not ... That doesn't seem to be the issue. The issue seems to be, at this point, moving into something that they feel good about, or that we feel good about, and into something that we feel that we're not going to have to fight so much to get whatever information we need to get, that we can become experts at what we're doing,--you know. And it doesn't seem to be an issue of our leaving men's jobs for women's work. That doesn't seem to be the issue for us. It seems that, at least for myself, moving into something that I've kind of fallen into through the ?? through the back doors,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I've kind of found myself trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and was taking classes that--you know--I thought I would enjoy, and finally realized, well,--you know,--this is what I really want to do. This was what I'd like to do,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. and so, moving myself in that direction.

J. You have a son, and you had mentioned that ... You expressed the difficulty of trying to--you know,--it was so hard when you working and going to school in the apprenticeship, and you hardly ever saw him? It was ... How has that been with you and the night shift? And is your son still at home? He must be around eighteen now?

Y. No. He's actually twenty-four years old,

J. Oh, he's twenty-four!

Y. and I'm a grandmother now. (both laugh)

J. Oh great! Oh wow!

Y. He's married. He's in the army. He lives in North Carolina. He doesn't even live in New York any more.

J. Oh. Uh-huh.

Y. And ... And we went through a really difficult period,--you know. There was a little time there where we didn't even talk with each other. He ...--you know ... There was a ...

J. Was that because of the hard ... because you were away? Or was ...

Y. I think that was part of it,--you know,--and part of it was his own feeling--I believe that in his own feeling of breaking away from his mother and ...

J. Uh-huh. How did he feel about you being in the trades, and what you had gone through? Did he feel pride?

Y. I ... I think that he ... I think that he felt proud of it, but I also feel ... think that he was resentful of it because I was away so much.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

Y. And it was very difficult for him going through those teenage years a lot on his own,--you know,--a lot on his own. And,--you know--I was ... ??

J. Did he understand that ... the economics of it; that you ??

Y. Yes, he did.

J. Yeah.

Y. But,--you know--it was very difficult to--even though he did, on an intellectual level, understand it, emotionally, it was ... he didn't care. It was--you know--it wasn't like that. It was very difficult for him.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And ... And it was difficult for him because, during that time, the man that I was living with,--I don't know if I mentioned this the last time,--the man that I was living with was also resentful, and he and I broke off.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And then, another girl friend that I was with was really ... I was very close with also became resentful, and she and I broke off our relationship. So ... And ... And both of them rejected him,--my son,--as well. So he didn't have me, because I was working and going to school, and he also didn't have this man whom he had been very, very close with

J. Um-hum.

Y. for about three or four years, who just walked out of his life. So, and then I think he blamed me. So all of these things were in operation during that time.

J. Um-hum.

Y. It was a very difficult time for the two of us. But we've been able to work a lot of that through and we have a pretty good relationship now,--you know. He really understands,--you know,--why and ... and who I've become. And he's ... It's real interesting 'cause I--you know,--he and I, we've had our ... we've had our differences, and big arguments we've had, he and I. But,--you know--recently he came to New York, and I was really angry at him, something that he did. And then, we spent a few minutes together, and ... and he was talking,--you know,--and I was listening to the things that he was saying, and I realized that it was going to be okay;--that he was going to be all right, and that ... that he really was my son. And ... And what I mean when I say that is that, not just my son biologically, but my son, the person who grew up in my home, under my, I guess, tutelage as a parent,--you know?

J. Yeah.

J. And because he was ... I was able to see that he could extrapolate ideas of what was going on around him and come to an analysis and be clear about the focus, and what the issue was,--you know? And when I saw that, it just really ... something inside of me really kind of relaxed, and I said, He's ... He's going to

be all right. You know,--he's going to make his mistakes, and I'm not always going to agree with him, but he's going ... going to be okay. He's not,--you know ... He's not lost;--not a lost ... a lost person like ... like I feel that a lot of people in his generation are,--you know--really at a loss,--you know. There's a lot of really, madness going on with this young generation now.

J. Um-hum.

Y. But he seems to have his feet--you know--firmly on the ground, and his head,--you know--a brain in his head,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and ... and be clear. So I was very, very happy with that. And ...

J. Good.

Y. (laughs)

J. You ... Speaking of children, the Women's Committee ... You were especially interested in dealing with the ... the child care issue, even though it wasn't an issue for you, at that point,

Y. Right.

J. but you wanted them to deal with it. And what's happened to the Women's Committee, and have they ever dealt with that?

Y. Well,--you know,--it's very interesting,--you know. (laughs) I have to laugh, because it was ... it was not really very nice. I ... I ... That was something that I really felt was important. If the ... the Union were ... was bringing in all these women,--you know,--but it was all a facade,--you know,--'cause they brought in all of these women, and many of the women ... And I don't know ... I don't know,--you know,--sometimes, I think that they might have done this on purpose to some degree,--you know. There weren't a lot of ...

J. So they could break it.

Y. Yeah. They brought in a lot of women,--excuse me,--and a lot of women of color and a lot of women that had children.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And then, they didn't provide them with any way to be able to go to school and have child care.

J. Right.

Y. And so, eventually, a lot of those women dropped out,--you know? And they were ... We had a Women's Committee going, at that time. And I ... I'll tell you, it's really interesting because--you know,--you work eight hours a day,--you know--as an apprentice in a non-traditional job, and then you go to school two, three, four times a week for three or four hours,--you know,--and you're in the same situation around these men, and you have a family. And then, there's the Women's Committee. And so, we had a difficult time really getting them to come to the meetings, especially the women who were apprentices at that time.

J. Um-hum.

Y. A couple of them came, but not many.

J. Um-hum. The Union had given you space. Right?

Y. The women had ??

J. And there was an issue of getting space off ... off campus so

Y. Well, it was an issue for me. I don't ... I don't ... I think there were a few other women that--you know--wanted it off, but they weren't ... they weren't ... I don't remember them being ... feeling as strongly about it as I did,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah.

Y. And so, I kind of let it go, 'cause I didn't want to press something that I felt people weren't ready for. But,--you know,--it's really ... it's six of one, I guess, and ... and ... and half a dozen of the other on some level, because here the Union was offering us this space, which--you know,--seems like a really nice

J. Supportive ... Yeah.

Y. and supportive thing to do,--you know. But also, there were so many things that they weren't doing that, for me personally, I didn't trust them. And I felt that it was more important for us to get something going on our own first;--establish something for ourselves first;--before we even made that connection with the Union,--you know? Or . I mean,--but some other women didn't agree, and I can ...--you know. It's difficult for me, even now, to be able to formalize an idea about that,--you know,--and to take a stand about that. Because, on the one hand, I could understand that. But me, by nature, I'm not a very trusting person. That's just my nature. So it was very difficult for me to ... to separate between what is my nature and what really

J. Uh-huh.

Y. is the reality,--you know--about ... about that ... that situation in the Union hall. But the Union hall also did seem to be a place,--a good place on some level,--because the--I mean,--the other women that were apprentices had to come there. What makes it difficult is that the ... the women were all over,--you know:--

J. Yeah.

Y. Queens, and Bronx and Brooklyn,--you know--

J. The five boroughs.

Y. Staten Island,--you know. They were everywhere,--you know,--and our jobs are everywhere.

J. Yeah.

Y. And so, it makes it difficult for,--after eight hours of work and apprenticeship and--

J. Um-hum.

Y. you know,--all of your other responsibilities,--to come to a meeting. And then, many of the women that had already finished their apprenticeship,--you know,--you go to school and you work, and you do this for all these years, and when it's over, "I don't want to go to another anything, any place else, unless it's going to happen in my house or around the corner,--maybe,"--you know?

J. (laughs)

Y. "Maybe I'll go." And as a matter of fact, I just finished talking about that, when I went to a meeting that they had at noon,--when did they have this?--Tuesday? Tuesday, I believe, they had the meeting.

J. Was it like a support group, or ...

Y. It was supposed to be a women's ... starting a women's coalition of some sort. (at NEW) I... I don't remember. ?? paper and find it, but ... And it turned out ... I got there a little late, 'cause I had a doctor's appointment, and it turned out to be kind of a support group, and kind of wanting ... trying to figure out direction for the women ... for the women there. And there were only a few of us that had actually been old ... older tradeswomen.

J. Um-hum.

Y. There were many, many young ...

J. There were the people who are in training.

Y. Right.

J. Yeah.

Y. The .. the apprentices.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Primarily that's who was there.

J. Yeah.

Y. And they spoke about ... And the issue came up of mentoring,--you know. And the ... the thing that I raised raised was that, look,--you know,--mentoring has been something that has ... an issue that has been raised since I was an apprentice twelve years ago,

J. Right, 'cause ...

Y. and we've never been able to get it off the ground.

J. I know that New York Tradeswomen,--Barbara Tree's group,--did a nice little brochure about it. But that's,--you know,--it's just so hard to ... to talk about it, okay?

Y. Right. Right. And so ... And ... And it's not just ... It's not just us,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. If ... If you look, as tradeswomen, ... I mean,--I don't know. Maybe in San Francisco, at one time, they really had a good thing going on with the women, and the women in the trades, and it was really very strong, at one time. I haven't heard a lot about them lately. I don't know what's going on with them.

J. Um-hum.

Y. But here in New York, we've never really been able ... And Philadelphia, I think, was another place where they had a good thing going, but I ... I'm not sure what's happening there either,--you know? But in New York, we've had a few starts,--;you know,--with United Tradeswomen and New York Tradeswomen lasted a couple of years, and then disbanded and fell apart for ...

J. Um-hum.

Y. because of all kinds of internal contradictions that were ... that were ... that was happening that was not dealt with,--you know,--a convergence of forces,--you know,--timing,--you know,--personality clashes, egos,--just all kinds of things that--you know .. There's not one thing or one person that you can actually point to for why they didn't ... it didn't work. But when I was at this meeting on Tuesday of New York tradeswomen and they raised the issue of mentoring, the issues ... the thing I said was that, look,--you know,--this has been an issue that has been raised over and over;--something that we've been talking about getting started for years,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. for years. And it seems to me that one of the things that needs to be done is talk about why ... talk about why it doesn't work? Why hasn't it worked? What is the issue ... What are the issues that keep this kind of thing from being able to get up off the ground,--you know? And ... And I believe that it's much bigger than just us,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. because it goes into not just us as tradeswomen,--you know,--and us in New York Tradeswomen, but us in ... in ... in NEW or any of these groups in particular ... in particular. I believe that it ... it goes also, into what happens with us in ... in the Union,--you know,--with us and our jobs;--with the ... with the objective reality of our work and our school, and--you know,--and the resistance in the trade,--you know,--and peoples' ... what happens as you develop and as you move along, and you get to that place where you just say, "I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to do this like this,"--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. "I'm ... I've ... I've put in my dues. And now, I'm going to take the time to do what makes me feel good,"--you know? I like going ... Personally, myself, I like going to my ... my massage classes. That makes me feel good.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I get something back from it,--you know. I--you know,--I do enjoy,--you know ... A couple of times, a couple of the tradeswomen have gotten together to ... to form like, not ... not groups in particular,

J. Um-hum.

Y. but something that I see ... I did see that was very successful was a network of phone calls,--you know,--"and let's all get together for ... for a, like a party at XY restaurant. And let's just all meet there,"--you know.

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

Y. And people get together ... And,--I mean,--this has happened a few times.

J. And it's fun.

Y. And it's fun, and we eat, and we're at a restaurant.

J. You trade stories.

Y. We trade stories, and some ... And we would talk about things,--sometimes about trades,--but oftentimes, about things absolutely not related to the trades;--about our own personal lives;--making con-- ... touching base with each other,--you know;--hugging a woman you haven't seen in years: "How are you doing? What's going on?" Maybe she has a story;--maybe she doesn't. And ... And a lot of the women are women that have been in the trades for years,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I ... And it's very ... to me, it's very interesting, because there's a different thing that happens when you've been in the trades for a long time,

J. Um-hum.

Y. as opposed to those people that are coming in new,--you know? There are different issues,--you know? And you look back and you can ... and you know that some of that stuff where you have to go through, because you have to go through it, to learn it and know it in the gut,--you know? But after having gone through all of this, I, personally, can look back and ... and ... and I'm ... I shared this, actually, with one of the guys that I work with who I really like, who actually went through, not--recently; not too long ago,--through the same apprenticeship that I went through, and he's totally mortified. This guy is a professional carpenter;--came to work for the Port Authority;--was pushed and prodded by his father to join a trade,--a different trade,--and this ... this trade came up,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. and he joined the apprenticeship,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And he went through the same exact apprenticeship, with the same people, that I went through, with no shop. And this was not too long ago, so they,--when this woman told me that ... that Local 30 changed their apprenticeship, it had to have been

J. Recently.

Y. recently,--in the last two or three years,--you know? Because, I think, three years ago, he finished his apprenticeship. And he was totally mortified, because he felt totally unprepared to do his job,--you know?

J. Um. Yeah.

Y. Took the test ... Took the test;--was able to pass the test, but he feels like a moron, as a mechanic,--you know. And when I talked with him, I said to him, "Well, sometimes, when I have problems, I have XY friend who is a stationary engineer. I'll call him. Do you have anybody to call like that?" He's a man. He doesn't feel that he has the right to call another man and tell him, "Listen, I don't know my trade. Can you be my partner? Can I call you if I have a problem?" So he doesn't have that,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. But we made a connection,--you know,--and he is a real fighter, this guy,--you know? And I ... recently, I said to him... You know,--he's got a real fiery kind of personality, and I said to him, "You know,--I have come to learn, in my years of being in the trade, that there are some struggles that I will fight, and there are other struggles that I'll just duck and get out of the way and let it just pass me by, because I can't take them all on,"--you know?

J. Um-hum.

"I can't take on everything,"--you know? "I have to pick and choose."

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I said to him, "And I'm telling you this because I want you to know that if you fight with the boss about getting a brand new kitchen, I'm not ...--you know;--I'm not going to ... I'm not going to say no, but I'm not going to be in there" rah, boom, bah. Yeah!--you know. We want a new stove. I'm not going to do that, because it's not an issue for me. I don't cook here,--you know. If I want to eat, I eat at home or go to a restaurant,--you know. I bring my lunch to work,--you know. But I think that you're right. They have a ... They have a kitchen at the other ... on the other side of the facility,--on the New Jersey side,--and we should have our own. And if you want to fight for it, go ahead. No problem. But if you want me to fight with you on an issue, I'm telling you that the issues that I will fight for are bread and butter issues,--you know? If it's going to mean my job,--if it's going to be my pay, and if it's going to have something to do with my life,--you know? If it's dangerous for ... for me.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Then, I will stand there and I will fight with you for those things,--you know? And I've made that decision for myself in being in this job. Bread and butter issues, life issues. All the rest of those issues, I don't want to be bothered 'cause I'm doing something else,--you know?

J. Yeah.

Y. I have a life outside of this,--you know?"

J. Right. What about health and safety issues there, at the George Washington Bridge?

Y. It ... It's ... It's very interesting. I find that ... One of the things is that there've been a couple of

scares People have had scares around asbestos,--you know,--and we've had people come and test these things, and no problem,--you know. We don't have any asbestos. So that's been one of the issues that we've not had to deal with.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Working at ... at the George Washington Bridge,--where I work right now,--one of the drawbacks from that job is that I don't do a lot in my trade,--you know. I work mostly at night. I'm mostly a trouble shooter. If there's a big problem, they call me. I go. If I can fix it, fine. And if I can't fix it,--and this is true within the Port Authority in general,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. they've contracted so many of our jobs out that ... that if something doesn't work, you don't fix it. You call the contractor. The contractor comes in and he fixes it,--you know. So that, I believe, was a part of our job way before I came to work for the Port Authority.

J. Um-hum.

Y. That is also one of the things that I do miss about working at the airport. Because, as oppressive as it was, the one thing that I liked about it was that I didn't get to work around a lot of the equipment, but I definitely got a chance to be around it, to see it,--you know,--and to see people working on it;--

J. Um-hum.

Y. and, occasionally, to work on it myself,--you know? And so, the diversity of the equipment

J. Um-hum.

Y. was interesting;--was an interesting factor for me,--you know. The problem was, was that I was not getting a lot of work to do on them, 'cause they had me,--in like I said, the last interview,--me and this other woman,--who was also an apprentice,--working together all the time: sweeping, moping, dusting and painting,--you know,--and--you know,--just kind of being flowers there,--you know?

J. Yeah.

Y. But where I work now, there's not so much diversity. And also, not just that there's not so much diversity, but there's ... the nature of working rotating shifts,--working on my own,--and also what the Port Authority has done in order to save money,--and this goes across the board in any job,--people have ... They've been ... They've been,--you know,--as part of what happened with, I believe, the ?? NAFTA,

J. ?? Oh.

Y. where they ... where the jobs are going across the border,

J. Um-hum.

Y. because it's cheaper for them to get the labor there done, so peoples' jobs are moving out. Well, the same thing within the Port Authority and many, many large organizations,--which is subcontract it out to the

lowest bidder,--you know? And ... And it's also the same thing like what's happening in this ... in that (??) thing,--you know,--that's going on right now?

J. Yeah. Yeah.

Y. where they contract it out ... And I tell you 'cause I hear this all the time,--they contract the job out to the lowest bidder. Right? Right now, there's still an opportunity for ... for many of our corps, 'cause I hear it all the time, "Oh, minority contractors,"--you know.

J. Uh-huh.

Y. Now, that is being faded out now. But there's still enough of them around where I hear many of the guys saying, "Oh that job, they did a terrible job, because they get these minority contractors and they don't know what they're doing. And bla, bla ..." The minority contractors, they're kind of changing color now, because minority contractors can also be Eastern European contractors,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. "They don't speak English. They don't know what they're doing. ..."

J. Indian.

Y. Yeah.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And the thing about it is, is that,--you know,--if you bid to the lowest bidder, then they're going to get ...--you know. They're going to do the same thing that you do and that I've seen many mechanics do,--you know. It doesn't work, you kick it. It starts moving, it's okay,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. You take it. It doesn't ... It's not ... You put a little crazy glue on it. Okay. It fits. It looks good, even if it doesn't work, it looks good,--you know? So you get ... you're getting our minority contractors, but you're getting contractors where you pay them,--you know,--the bare minimum, well then, they're going to give you the bare minimum.

J. Um-hum.

Y. You know what I mean? But ... And it gives many of my workers an opportunity to be racists,--you know,--to put the blame on the other worker and not have to look at what the real problem ...

J. Instead of looking at it like workers, which is to say the lowest bidder, and it shouldn't be subcontracted out anyway. Is there any kind of opposition going on that you see, in terms of ...

Y. Well, I'll tell you,--we just finished signing a contract ... Well, we're not, maybe not say that. We signed a contract about two years ago. We went without a contract for about three or four years. And when they gave us this contract, it was horrific. It was a horrible contract,--you know. It was ... We got a raise, but, God, sometimes these guys ... I mean,--I can't ... I can't believe these ... these ... some of these men,--you know? One of my co-workers, Weizel,--he is such a weasel,--you know--(laughs) he says to me, "Oh yeah!

This is a great contract. I signed the contract. We got all this money. We got a raise!" Yes, but what did we give up? A raise is not everything,--you know? The new guy coming in ... He ... We get ... If ... If something happens to me on my job and I should die,--you know,--my inheritors will get three times my annual pay. That's what they get. The new guy coming in, if anything happens to him, his family gets his one year salary. That is it!

J. Um-hum.

Y. And if he wants a second year's salary to go to them, he's got to pay it. He's got to pay for it. We get ... We get sick time. We get so many points. We go on a point system. The new guy coming in, he gets,--you know,--what? Maybe ten days, not even,--you know. I don't know how many days,--sick days even yet. I ... I ... I don't remember what the comp--, but it was horrible!

J. So is this the first time that they have like a two tier agreement for making different classes ??

Y. No, 'cause I'm in tier four and there's a tier one who's ... now most of them are retired,--you know. There's hardly any tier one left. The tier two now is coming close to retirement,--not quite yet. And then, there's tier three and tier four. I'm in four,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Now, I'm not sure because we belong to, I think, the City/State,--you know,--retirement system,--you know? So I'm not sure if it's ... if it's on that level;--of the benefits on that level.

J. Um-hum.

Y. It's ... It's ... They're effected. But I do know that they're affected on the contract between us and our employer;--between our Union and our employer,--you know. That contract is horrible. And I ... When the guy told me this thing, and he told me he was going to sign for it, I told him, "You know, when you sign for that, and you sign that it's okay for the next guy not to have it, so that it would take away from them,

J. Um-hum.

Y. you signed your son's job away,--you know? And so, when your son gets old enough to get a job and there's not too many jobs out there,--because we see how the trend, politically, is going, and economically;--not that there's no money, but with the advent of all of this new technology, the world is the employ-- ... are the workers, not just you and me here in the U.S. a la NAFTA." You know what I mean? I says, "So when you give that away, you give away your son's job. You make it so that when your son comes to work, he's working on his knees,--you know,--begging to get the minimum of what he should get,--you know,--while they,--whoever it is,--they get--you know,--the big megabucks,--you know?" We're top heavy. You know what I'm saying? So I ... they ... they signed it. They signed the contract,--you know? There ... There was enough ... A lot of guys were saying, "No, no, no, no, no," but it passed.

J. Um-hum. But did you see any opposition, people trying to organize to get support against it, or ... or they didn't do that?

Y. N. No. I saw peo-- ... People just were saying they were going to say no.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And then,--you know,--a few of us signed no. But enough people signed yes, and that was ... you got ... the contract went into into effect. And that's what we have now,--you know?

J. And is the Union participating in anything to fight privatization or subcontracting? Or you don't see anything?

Y. No. I don't see ... I don't see the Union ... I recently got a letter from my Union asking me for money because they wanted to--I ... I forget who it was that wanted to ... I think it was some indus-- ?? my mind. Some company was saying that they didn't need watch engineers with licenses because of the kind of equipment that they have, or that we have now in the new technology. And so they could have twenty machines and have two guys in a main area, taking care of all of these machines, and they don't have to have a watch engineer at each site,--you know. And so we fought it legally, and we won that,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And they recently as-- ... were asking the membership for money to help replace that money, 'cause it cost ... It was a really protracted and costly legal battle to get that. So that I did send,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I saw ... I see that. But in my opinion and in the opinion ... and it's also part of what my experience was as a shop steward, there were many times when I asked the Union, "Come on down. Please talk to the members," and ... and the ... the Union representative, his position was, "Well, they don't come to meetings. Why should I come to them,"--you know.

J. Um-hum. Yeah. Really building the Union. (laughs)

Y. And,--you know,--I was furious about that. It was ... It made me livid to hear him say that. Because the fact is, is that "We pay your salary. And that nice little car and that nice little house that you live in comes because we pay the Union dues,"--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. "And so, to some degree, you have a responsibility to come down here." Now, it is true that, as Union members, we should come to the ... to the meeting,--you know. That is also true. And the ... the Union is out in Queens,--is out in Queens. And we have membership all over the place.

Side Two

Y. ... meetings I have been to where ... At one ... There was one Union meeting that I went to, right after I finished my apprenticeship,--you know,--and I was there with a friend,--a fellow Union member,--who ... he and I had gone through school together and we were ... we had become friends,--and they were expelling someone from the Union. And,--you know--it sounded like a--what do you call those places where they do the ... I forget what ... what what it's called right now, where ... where they talk really fast and they're selling stuff,--you know.

J. Oh yeah.

Y. (mumbles quickly)with a neat picture, (mumbles again) Yes, here. One ... And people raise their hands and they're making bids on the .

J. Yeah. Auction.

Y. Auction, right,--an auction. That's exactly what it sounded like,--you know?

J. Uh-huh.

Y. (mumbles again) Yeah and nay. And people are yeah, and they had no idea what they were yeahing,--you know.

J. What they were talking about. Um-hum. ??

Y. And until it was over, we ...

J. Um-hum.

Y. I didn't know that they had just booted this guy out of the Union. Why? Why did they ... What did he do? I don't know. I don't have a clue,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I watch these guys all raise their hands, say yeah, and I didn't say yeah 'cause I didn't understand what the hell he was talking about,--you know?

J. Um.

Y. All the ?? raised their hands and say yeah and boot this guy out, and they didn't know who the hell this ... They don't even know this person,--you know?

J. Yeah.

Y. And I've seen them do it at the Union hall, and it's a good old boy system,--you know and I don't know ... I ... There are some Unions that are really pretty good,--you know,--in terms of ... in terms of the women's involvement, like the Carpenters Union, I believe,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and to some degree, the electric ... electricians,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. I think Local 3.

J. Um-hum. Well, what's between ... new women coming in,--women are still coming in,--but what's the retention? Do you have any idea, in terms of ...

Y. I have no idea what the retention ... But I can tell you that when I tried to fight for ... when I tried

to ... to say ... to bring up the issue of child care

J. Um-hum.

Y. for the women in the Union, years back, at the women's meeting, there have been many, many ... there were many, many women,--like something like, I think, twenty women, in the apprenticeship. Now, that's a lot, because when I was an apprentice, there were like maybe four of us. And of the four, on ... only two of us stayed till the end,--you know?

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

Y. Maybe ... Maybe there were five, and two of us stayed till the end. So twenty women, that's a lot of women,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. But I continually hearing women saying, "I can't stay. My kids"--you know,--"my husband, bla bla bla. It was something with the family that was going on.

J. Um. Um-hum.

Y. And that's what prompted me to say,

J. Um-hum.

Y. we need to do something about that. But I was totally shocked and surprised to find opposition to that from the women,--from the women! Opposition to taking a stand on that.

J. On what grounds?

Y. Because,--I remember the argument was,--"This is not just a women's issue. Men are going to be involved in this. And I want only to take stands on women's issues. And if it has something to do with men, I don't want to do it. I don't want to be involved in it." And I said ... And my position was, "So what?"--you know? "This is an issue that will touch men's lives, but it's primarily a women's issue.

J. Um-hum.

Y. "And if we could get the men to fight with us on this, then we may be able to really win this! Because now, it's not just twenty women.

J. Right.

Y. It's twenty women, and the other ten thousand members of Local 30,--you know what I mean?--that are all men,--you know,--maybe half of them that need child care too,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. Why not? "No, because it's not just a women's issue. And men ..." And nobody said anything. It was me and this other women who had really,--you know,--self appointed herself as--you know--the leader of the group. And none of the other women took a stand. None of them backed me up. And at the very next

meeting that we had,--and I went to all of them. I worked down at 42nd Street, and I didn't have a car at that time. I made it my business to take that train and get out of work

J. Um-hum.

Y. right away, and get on that train, and get out there,--you know? And at the very next meeting, this women came in and threw something across the table at me,--you know,--and said, "Here! For you! For that child care thing,"--you know. It was a bunch of papers on--you know--about child care. And ... And I looked at her and I said, "I don't need this because I don't need child care,"--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. "I ... I don't want this for myself. I want this for all the women that need it in the Union hall. For all of us, not just for me. This is not for me. I don't need child care any more,"--you know. And I was furious. I was furious about that,--you know? There was one more meeting after that I came to, and most...--you know,--we started having ... women just didn't come. And it just dissolved. It just ...

J. Yeah.

Y. And I've ... We have ... This is like, maybe, five years ago,--you know?--

J. Um-hum.

Y. shortly ... maybe, shortly after our last interview,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. our interview the last time?--and there are no more meetings at Local 30 that I'm know of.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I've never been called for one. I've never--you know ... It just died out,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And there was one women,--the woman that was an apprentice while I ... when ... when I was an apprentice and worked at the same place,--she left the Port Authority, went to work for another company, and she had ... she had ... They had given her so much grief,--so much grief,--that I believe she left the trades now, 'cause she's no longer with the trades.

J. Um.

Y. And I've not seen another stationary engineer ... Well, one woman that I've worked with, who also went through my ... our apprenticeship,--the same ... the Union and what have you,--she moved on and she became a supervisor. So she's no longer

J. Um-hum.

Y. in the trades now,--you know. She's a supervisor now, and she does absolutely nothing to do with

our trade. Her job is ... doesn't have anything to do with it,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. So,--I mean,--getting back to this thing with my job now, here I am in this place where I am not really--you know ... Whatever information I ... they get, I get--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. But I work the midnight shift because I had a huge rift with my boss, at that time,--a huge rift! I had to bring the Union down to fight with him on ... You know,--he tried to make a case against me, and I won,--and won the case. They ... They'd write something,--you know--that wasn't so favorable about me, but it wasn't as big a deal as it had started out to be.

J. Yeah.

Y. And essentially, I won, because he ... in order for him to fight me on this, he had to totally expose himself. So he lost,--you know. And so I ... I took on the midnight shift. And taking on the midnight shift means that whatever little bit of being around the equipment that I had, I no longer have,--you know. And it was a compromise that I did for my own mental and emotional well-being,--you know?--

J. Um-hum.

Y. because I had been through all these years of all of this crap and I just said, I'm not doing this any more. I was really, at one point, thinking of leaving the trades,--;you know. And finally,--actually, very recently it was that I finally,--you know--started taking these different classes, doing these different things with herbs and--

J. Um-hum.

Y. you know,--and massage,--and I had ... I had mentioned before,--and ... and ... and I realized, Well, this is really ... This is what I want to do. I really enjoy doing this. And I can keep this job,--you know. This is ... I can work here. That boss left. And actually, I really liked the guy,--you know. I liked the guy that was my boss,--you know? I mean,--the guy came in to take his place. I may not be able to keep him in there 'cause things change,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. People ... things and lives change. And I don't know, I might have to go back on days. I ... I still feel ... I still feel somewhat resentful and maybe-you know ... I mean,--I'm not filled with this kind of remorse,--you know,--

J. Yeah.

Y. that's tearing me apart. But I guess I'm sad, more than resentful, would be the word, that I have a trade and I don't feel like it really belongs to me,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I feel like it's a shame. That shouldn't happen to anybody,--you know. When you work at something, you really should be able to know what you're doing and feel comfortable with it;--that you could take it wherever you go and know what you're doing, and not ever doubt yourself about it,--you know? So that's .. that's one thing. But,--you know,--so here I am in this position, and I've made this decision, and so now I'm working here and getting a paycheck. That's basically what it is. It's not as stressful as any other place that I've been in. I've given up the opportunity to really know my trade or ... because I'm ... I've just decided I don't want to spend ... I'm forty-five years old,--I'll be forty-five this year,--I don't want to spend the next fifteen or twenty years fighting with these guys,

J. Um-hum.

Y. about every freaking little thing,--you know? I had an opportunity to work at the New Jersey side of the George Washington Bridge,--which would have meant I would have bring the butter home, but I ... I just--you know ... the other women,--the one that became the supervisor,--she went to work there,--you know?--and--you know--it was very stressful for her. It was very stressful for her. She and I didn't really get along, but,--you know--we ... we kind of like kept from having--you know--big things with each other,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. just so that--you know--these men wouldn't get involved in

J. Yeah. Yeah.

Y. watching two girls fight,--

J. Yeah.

Y. 'cause that's the way they see it,--you know?

J. Yeah.

Y. But ... so she wasn't really forthcoming with me with the information, but I could tell. And then, guys would come up and ?? how she was under a lot of stress at the job. And when the opportunity came for her to get into supervision, she left and went right in ... right for it,--you know? And ... And I'd known that a lot of times they had her cleaning, and I refused! What I've done where I work now is that I refuse to have pornographic material on the job. And so, they don't do it, because they did it for a while, and every time I would find it, I'd throw it away. So they would come and sit down on relief,--you know?

J. Yeah.

Y. So they'd come in the next day and they don't know who threw it out. It was gone. ... it's out,--you know. So they don't bring it. Nobody brings it to the job. And if I had to work on the New Jersey side, I'd have to ...

J. To protest. Right?

Y. And I'm not doing that. That is just two stressful for me. And I'm not going to go on and do what I've had to do for seven years,

J. Um-hum.

Y. which is "I don't want this in the Union hall," and the fighting, and the ... I just said, I've come to a point in my life where, I said, this is not for me. I'm not doing that any more. I'll fight bread and butter issues. And if they want to have the girlie pictures, they can have it, because I'm not there, and ... and I don't have to deal with that. And it's sad,--you know. In some ways, it really is a sad thing to have to make that kind of decision

J. Um-hum.

Y. about the work that you do,--you know? I think it's ...--you know ... I think it's sad that I--you know--have this job and that I have this ... this feeling about this place where I spend eight hours a day,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. sometimes, seven days in a row,--you know. 'Cause even though I work mostly the midnight, the ... the days still sift, because it's supposed to be a shift job,--you know?

J. Um. Um-hum.

Y. And that's ... And that's where it's at for me right now,--you know? And ... And there's not a whole lot ... I don't see a whole lot of hope for there being any real major change in this job, partly because of ... of the Union and where they ... what stands they've taken,

J. Um-hum.

Y. but also, partly because there's so much of our work is contracted out,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. that we don't do. Not ... Not only do I not do it, but no ... none of us do it. Nobody does it,--you know. We don't have to do it. Because, if there's a problem, not only do you not do it because it's contracted out, but you can't do it, because if you touch it, then they lose their warrantee,--you know. So you have to pass it on,--you know. And that's where it's at, at this point.

J. So, what about ... We didn't really finish up with the NEW story. Are you going to continue any involvement with that or ... What ... What came out of that?

Y. With NEW?

J. When you went to the meeting the other night, did you sign on for anything? Or are you ...

Y. Yeah. There's the ... What ... What they're doing is, they're going to meet again,--you know,--and then we'll see, I guess, where we're going to go from that point on. We're going to deal with that then,--you know? And I don't know. I'm not really sure,--you know. I mean,--I feel like I have a lot to give when I'm there,--you know,--with the women.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I have a lot that I can ... that I can really give: a lot of ... of stories and ... and also, even analysis about how ...

J. Yeah. Um-hum.

Y. what fits why, and how come,--you know;--those kinds of things. I feel like I have a lot of that to offer. But I also feel ... You know,--there's a... I really feel myself moving away from the trades,--you know. I feel like my job is a job where I go and I get my check,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and keep going,--you know? And my life is very full outside of the trades,--you know,--with going to school, and practicing what I go to school for,--you know. And I've been involved in a few little theater things,--you know,--having to do, not with the trades, but with women's issues,--you know ,--and political prisoners, and that kind of stuff. And so my life is really full in this other area,

J. Yeah.

Y. and I'm moving,--really moving away from the trades,--you know. So I haven't really decided,--you know,--'cause if I decide to get involved, then--you know,--it means moving back in that direction,--you know. And I'm not sure if I want to do that,--you know. I'm not sure if I want to do that, not because I don't find that exciting,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. you know. I really enjoy doing that,--

J. Yeah.

Y. but because I can't do everything.

J. It's a choice.

Y. And I've already made a decision to move in this other direction,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and to focus over here. And if ... And in order for me to do that, I really have to, then, refocus.

J. Yeah.

Y. So,--you know,--I ... I think that ... I think that I probably, at least at this point, the thing that I can give the most would be is something like ad hoc--you know;--that kind of thing. If something comes up, and something needs to ... an issue needs to be resolved or needed to be worked on, at this time, right now, I could do that. Short term projects that I could do. I can get involved with, and there's an end to it, and then I can ... and I can continue doing what I'm doing right now. That I feel like I could do,--you know. But the kind of commitment that I feel like it takes, ... I'm the kind of person that, if I commit myself to something, I go and I commit myself all the way. And I don't feel like doing something where I feel like I'm not giving what I really have,--where I feel like I'm spread out too thin,--you know. So I ... I,--you know,--it's ... it's coming ... You

know,--this is a new thing that came up. I got invited to this ... to this meeting. I went. I went, actually, because my friend Evon (Ruderman) was going to be there,--you know?

J. Was she there?

Y. She was there. Uh-huh. She was there. And it was ... And I thought also that there were going to be other tradeswomen that have been in the trades for a long time there, and really wasn't that many. And I think that I probably would like to The thing that I think I would like to do,--if I was going to do anything in the trades,--would be more working with women who have been in the trades for a long time,--you know. What are ... Where are we at?

J. Yeah.

Y. What do we want to do,--you know? Can we have any kind of effect? Is there a way for us to help new people coming in? Because I think one of the saddest things, to me, is that affirmative action is being dismantled, or dismantled, and ... and I ... there are not too many women coming into the trades now. And there was a time where you were constantly seeing a new flow of faces

J. Um-hum.

Y. of women coming in. It's not that way any more,--you know. There's a trickle here,--a little trickle there, and--you know I would ... I would, rather than spend my energy on new women coming in,--for me personally,--I would prefer working with women who have already been in the trade for an extended period of time and want to do something to effect this here,--you know,--this new situation, and to talk about, on a deeper level, what we've learned, what we're doing, and where we're going,--yo know,--even if that means that we talk about women moving on,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. leaving the trades, but talking about why,--you know?--because I don't feel that it's a bad thing,--you know? I don't think that it's a bad thing. The women that are leaving are not leaving with resentment. Are ... Most of the women that I have spoken to that are leaving, have made a decision to move on to something else,--you know;--that there's something else for them,--you know. And even some of the women within the Port Authority that I know, that are moving on, have said, "I don't want to do what most of these guys do. They go and they have this job, and they're not really working in their trade too much, and they collect their check, and they're okay and could just live this kind of sedentary job." And many of those women have explored other areas for themselves because they ... they want to live viable lives

J. Um-hum.

Y. that are exciting,--that are challenging for them in these new areas. And so, they're moving on,--you know. That's what I would ... That's what I'm more interested in doing, rather than going back to the new apprentice ...

J. Um-hum.

Y. I think that there's a place for that,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. for people that want to do that,--but I ... that's not the place that I want to be at.

J. What ... Do you have ideas about, and have you had discussions with women in the trades about what's happening now: the climate, anti-affirmative action ...

Y. I've not really had ... You mean individually?

J. Um-hum.

Y. Yes. But as a group, we haven't gotten together in so long that I've not gotten a collective idea of what women are thinking about. I did speak with a woman that I spoke to, that she had an interesting kind of take than I did,--you know. I feel really sad that women are not coming in, because this is a good paying job,--you know? They pay us well on these jobs,--you know? And the benefits are much better ... not ... They're not all great, but they're oftentimes much better than many of the traditional female jobs,--you know?--

J. Um-hum.

Y. and many of the many other jobs,--you know? Many jobs are ... are part-time, and you don't even have any benefits. And, as a matter of fact, look in the Port Authority now, they're hiring temporary workers, and they're not giving them benefits,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. So I see it moving in that direction in these jobs. We're losing them,--you know? So ... So, to me, that's sad, when I look at that,--you know. And this one woman I was speaking with,--'cause there's this young sister that wants to get into a trade, and I'm really trying to help her figure out what direction she can look in to get information,--and I spoke with this woman that I know, who's been in the trades like something fifteen years, and she was saying, "Oh no! I think that it's okay that the women are not coming in now. We don't really need to go through this garbage any more. And it's okay for them not to be in Unions and it's okay for them to work in non-Union jobs, doing the trade and learning it. And,--you know,--and bla, bla, bla. She was ... She was on her own trip. I have no idea where that came from, (laughs) because I absolutely disagree with that;--absolutely,--you know,--just from the bottom of my heart disagree with that. Not that I ...

J. Well, the the problem is that you can go that route, and you can learn the trade. And, okay, you ... you work here, you work there. You're learning the trade. You don't go the traditional ... the traditional route. And then you get ...--you know ... To get the good job, you have to get the Union job, and you still have all the same shit.

Y. Right. Well, the thing is, it's not that I disagree that you ... that ... with women not going through the Union.

J. Yeah.

Y. I think that, if that's what you want to do, that's okay. But I don't think it's okay to not fight for people to get jobs,--for women to get jobs in the trades;--for women to get into the Union and get jobs in the Union.

J. Right.

Y. That is not okay.

J. Women and minorities ??

Y. That's right. Um-hum,--to get jobs, it's just not okay,--you know. It's not okay to me that they don't have minority contractors: women and people of color.

J. Um.

Y. It's not okay. To me, that's not all right,--you know. It's not okay that ... that we get ten percent of whatever's available out there, maybe,--you know--and that that ten percent they're fighting toward.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I have had many discussions with men,--you know,--with ... with ... with black men, about this new movement that's happening in this country right now, where white, working class men are angry and fighting ... and fighting us for these jobs. And my position and understanding about this is very, very different,--you know,--from ... from theirs,--from the men that I talk with. Because I believe,--and I have told them,--these men that are fighting and are angry about not ... about these things, what they are fighting for is absolutely correct. They are absolutely right. Everything that they are angry about, they are entitled and they are correct to be angry about that. It's their analysis is where they depart,--

J. That's right.

Y. you know. They're angry because they don't have jobs. They're angry because they don't have medical care. They're angry because their ... their kids can't eat; they can't dress their kids. Their ... Their ... Their marriages are falling apart. Their relationships are falling apart, because everything that was supposed to be, is not happening,--you know? Well, they're right to be angry about that. But where they're wrong is that, instead of looking at where the real problem is, they're fighting us for our measly little ten percent,--you know?

J. Like that's going to change the situation.

Y. Right. And ... And our measly ten percent means that maybe ten percent of us get to go for the ten percent of that ... of those jobs,--you know.

J. Right.

Y. That's where the problem is,--you know? That's where the issues are,--you know? And I feel that that goes across the board.

J. And they're class issues.

Y. That's right. That goes across ... That's a ... It's a class issue, and it goes across ?? and they make it ... and ... and it comes ... and it turns into a sexist and racist argument. But I believe it's because ... My feeling about racism, and sexism,--well, particularly about racism,--is that racism is really an issue of economics. That's the bottom line. If you fight the black person,--if you fight the Mexican person,--if you fight the Native American person, then you don't have to look at that this guy over here is got way more than his share!--you know. And you could fight ... And you can make the issue, this over here,--you know. You

know,--it'll be the minority contractor. You know what I mean?

J. Um-hum.

Y. To me, that's the way I see it,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Do you see ... I know you said that you hardly come across any young women who are new to the trades. But did you have any sense of the women as being different, the other night at NEW,--the young women?

Y. (laughs) You know,--the only thing that I thought that was different for them was that--from ... from ourselves,--was that it was ... it's harder ... It's harder for them. And it's harder for them because they're taking jobs away,--you know,--cause there's not a lot of jobs. One woman there was saying,--you know,--"I lost my job recently." She was an apprentice,--you know? That was unheard of. Apprentices always had jobs,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. because they ... it was cheaper to hire them than to hire the mechanics,--you know. Apprentices don't have jobs,--you know?

J. Um.

Y. And she's a boiler apprentice, so she has less jobs,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And so, in that way, that's what I felt was different. I felt that. But ... And in other ways, it was the same story,--you know.

J. Um. It seems, too, that your generation had kind of a ... You had on your side, that you had more of a political analysis;--more of a ... and you were part of a movement. There was ... It was a different time.

Y. Right.

J. There was ...--you know,--and it gave support to the whole idea of what you were trying to do,--you know?

Y. Right.

Y. Each in your individual struggle. But together, there was a feeling ... of solidarity more.

Y. Right. I'll agree. I agree. Even ... even though,--you know,--the ... we fought with each other, and we disagreed with each other about how to do whatever it is that we were doing,

J. Um-hum.

Y. but, for the most part, there was a ... a threat of solidarity that followed it's way through. And that's why New York Tradeswomen and United Tradeswomen were able to come into existence,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And what I really liked about United Tradeswomen and New York Tradeswomen was that it was a tradeswomen organization started, run, worked with the tradeswomen,--you know,--which is un-- ... different from NEW.

J. Um-hum.

Y. NEW is an advocacy,--you know,--situation, where these women come to them to do these new things,--you know? And ...

J. I think that's one reason why UT had so much vitality. It was an incredible ...--you know,--just so much imagination and wonderful spirit that ...

Y. Right.

Right. Um-hum. And all the women that were in United Tradeswomen,--and even, to some degree, in New York Tradeswomen,--all of the women were ... had been in the trades more or less the same amount of time.

J. Um-hum.

Y. There were a few women who had been in there a little longer. But more or less, people had the same amount of time, were in the apprenticeship or ending their appren ... just ended their apprenticeship, or were in the process of ending their apprenticeship. So most of the women that were in it, were in that ??

J. Yeah,--community of interests.

Y. Right.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Right.

And so, all of these women now have been in the trades for,--you know,--?? eight years and over,--you know,--now,--you know. I think that,--like I said before,--if I were going to work with ... with tradeswomen, that's the group of women that I would like to work with, to figure out how to effect the larger picture.

J. Right. Because ... women have gone through so much, and so, now to just say, well, they're going to take it away. And ?? what you need to force the discussion, to force it in a way that people actually see what the real issues are,

Y. Right.

J. and not do it in an angry or a fractious way, but to do it in a way. bit tp dp ot om a rea; ama;utoca; wau. So (??)

Y. Right. Um-hum. And it ... it really takes,--you know,--it really takes a lot of--I feel, a lot of maturity and a lot of--you know,--a lot of patience. A lot of women who ... We really have to learn to figure out a way to work with each other so that we can do something that is bigger than our individual selves and our individual personalities. Now, I talk about this, and I have really moved in this other direction overnight,--you

know? So,--you know,--I talk about this with you, but I have no idea how to get something like this off of the ground;--how to get started.

J. Um-hum. Right.

Well, the thing is that it just seems that we women shouldn't let it go without really putting up some kind of struggle,

Y. Right.

J. and just say, well, that's the way the climate is and we just have to ...

Y. But I think that most women don't want to just let it ?? away.

J. Right.

Y. But it's just that we don't,--you know,--??

Y. Most of the women that I ... And this was one woman. That was her opinion,--you know. But most of the women that I would talk with

J. Um-hum.

Y. are,--you know--talking about what's going on and what's happening. But what we haven't figured out is, well, what do we want to do,

J. ??

Y. and how are we going to do this,--you know. And how ... Because I think that,--I can say this honestly about myself,--it's very scary,--you know. I'm going to be working with ... I mean,--we've known each other for a long time. I'm going to be working with her? Oh God! Can I handle it?--you know. Can I be around her more than two hours and not go stark raving mad.

J. (laughs)

Y. You know what I'm saying? But I... But my feeling is that, in order for us to do ... be effective, we have to go beyond that,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And it's okay for us to not particularly like each other, or--you know--getting along with each other on a personal level,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. you know,--but we need to be able to move beyond that,

J. Um-hum.

Y. in order to be able to do anything.

J. Come up with the privileged.

Y. To come up with something,--you know;--come up with some kind of a program where,--you know,--we make a decision of what do we want to do or how do we want to do that. And I don't ... Talking with women,--you know,--I don't see that it's going to be clearly obvious,--you know.

J. Um-hum.

Y. I'm glad that I belong to a Union,--you know? I believe in Unions. I said this before, the last time, I definitely believe in them. I know that if I wasn't in the Union, the guy next to me would be getting paid more money than I am,--and I may not have the job, at this point,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And he might be ... get benefits that I don't get. So in that way, I am absolutely glad that I am in the Union,--you know? But I am totally disillusioned with Unions, because their agenda is making sure that they have a job, not that we have our rights taken care of,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Right.

Y. Their ... Their political agenda is just like,--you know--the rest of the politicians,--you know?

J. But what about the women's movement. We ... We used to hear about the women's movement, and there still is a women's movement. And there still is ... NOW still exists. What ... What are your feelings about like,--you know--activating this ... what exists to get it to be focused on this ... this particular issue? Is that ...

Y. To get the ... And to get other ... other women, outside of the trades, to ... to ...

J. Um-hum. Yeah. The middle class women's movement, NOW and other such organizations to like ...

Y. I ... I have ... I don't have ... I don't have a clue ... I do not have a clue about how to get that larger picture going,--you know. I think ... If there's any possibility, I think the only thing that might have, right now, and I'm now ... I think that probably the best way to talk about that, and to get that even ... that idea even going, would be for more women to come together to talk about it.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And then, I think that many ideas would come from that

J. Um-hum.

Y. as to how and what we could do to effect this larger picture of the women's movement,--you know?--because there is a women's movement,--you know. That is true,--you know. But I also find that there's a lot of ... There's something that is much bigger than just the women's movement,--you know,--and more ... much bigger than just ourselves,--you know. It ... It ... It kind of covers the ... the society at large,--you know,--and that is the--what's the word I'm looking for? I want to say repression, but it's ... it's not quite that,--you know. It's this move to the right.

J. Um-hum.

Y. You know? This move to the right. It is tremendous. People are,--have been and are voting for things that is not in their best interest. People are voting and going for things that are narrow and short-sighted,--you know. If it feels good right now, and if this feels good, then I'm going to do this little short, narrow thing,--you know. And there comes a ...

J. It seems like pe-- ... people see everything going to hell, so this seems, like, to make sense, in the short term, make sense.

Y. Right. Their short-term, really narrow picture,--you know?--and that has affected the society. And it goes across the board,--across the board with ... It doesn't matter what color you are. It doesn't matter what sex you are, and it doesn't even really matter what class you're coming from.

J. Um-hum.

Y. Just across the board, people are moving in that direction. And those that are in control, are absolutely loving it,--you know,--because it keeps the ...--you know;--it keeps their pockets nice and full, and the focus off of them,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. And I think that that, to me, seems like one of the biggest obstacles that I have seen in ... in my lifetime,--in my lifetime, 'cause as crazy as the '60s were, it was crazy enough to get it all up and moving and changing,--and there were so many things going on,--you know. And it made it ... It was very scary but it was also very exciting, and many things were happening. It ... It seems to me that people are so afraid of letting go whatever little privilege they think that,--they imagine that they have, that they are willing to vote against their own interest,--you know. You know,--when you can see it, when you see what happened out there in California. What was the name of that ... that ... 487 was that,--you know,--against the ... the ... the ...

J. Well, the immigrants.

Y. The immigrant ??

J. And now they have one doing away with affirmative action
??

Y. And now that, yeah. And doing away with ... making English the only language and,--I mean,--you know. And you could see it,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. this thing with ... that ... that happened in ... in Oklahoma,--you know.

J. Yeah.

Y. All of this is part of that move in that direction,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. I think that the thing in Oklahoma really gave people a good kick in the ass,--you know. People really got scared,--you know,--about moving so far over to the right,--you know. And,--you know. So I think we really have our ... our work cut out for us, and I think that the main ... Right now, when I look at it, I think that the best way for me to effect it is to start small.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And that's why I ... I would say that,--you know,--in coming here and doing this interview, and actually talking about these things that I haven't talked about with anyone

J. Um-hum.

Y. in so long, it's given me some ideas and some incentive to maybe talk with other women that I know, that have been in the trades for a while, and see if we could get together, even if it's just to ... to talk--you know--about what's going on,

J. Um-hum.

Y. and where we're at, and what we want to do, and where we're going,--you know. I think that, to me, it's seems to me like we have to start there,--you know,--

J. Um-hum.

Y. and get the juices and the ideas flowing, so then maybe, decide, okay, well, this is what we'd like to do

J. Um-hum.

Y. We'd like to break up from here and ... and move in this direction. We want to do this particular thing over here, or that par--you know--tackle that particular issue,--you know,--because otherwise, it just is a little overwhelming. ??

J. Um-hum.

Y. this really large picture. What do I want to do about it? I don't know.

J. Right.

Y. But I know we can't stay there.

J. This rightward drifting nation.

Y. Oh yeah.

J. Yeah.

Y. You know,--it's like a big lot in the ... in the ... in the ocean.

J. Going down. (both laugh)

Y. And the ... And the ... And the ... And the stream is flowing in that direction, and that's exactly where it's roaring. We got to go across, but it's flowing down fast. (laughs)

J. It's a lot to figure out.

Y. Yeah. Right. So, I think, step number one is,--you know,--is us getting together and ... and starting really on a on a more personal

J. Um-hum.

Y. level, and then moving from that ... that point forward.

J. Like we used to say, in the '60s, the personal is political.

Y. Yeah. Right.

J. if we can make it political.

Y. Yeah. Right. But it is. It always has been,--you know?

J. Yes, it is. Right.

Y. What you eat is political,--you know,--and how you sleep or don't sleep.

J. Or who makes the food that we eat.

Y. Right. Um-hum. Yeah. It's all ...

J. I'm a coffee and sugar ??

Y. It always ... It always is so funny to me,--you know,--it was also so funny to me when I hear people saying,--and I ... and you hear a lot of artists say this,--you know,--"Oh, I don't get involved in that political stuff. I'm not political. I don't get ..."--you know. Or I hear people saying that all the time, but a lot of artists I've heard say that, 'cause that's a real thing for them to say.

J. Um-hum.

Y. And whenever I hear them saying ... saying that, I always say what a ?? because they can't get away from it,--you know. If there's water, it's political,--you know.

J. Um-hum. Um-hum.

Y. You know. If ...

J. Art is very political, especially in California,--you know.

Y. Yeah. Is it polluted? Is it non-polluted,--you know?

J. Sure.

Y. What ... You know,--what kind of ... of pesticides are they using in that water,--you know? What ... What are the things that they're using to ... to so-called clean it,--you know? You know,--is it spring water or is it tap water. Is it full of lead and mercury, bla, bla, bla. It's all political,--you know. You can't get away from this world.

J. (laughs)

Y. We might think we can, but you ... Even the homeless are political, especially.

J. Right.

Y. (laughs)

J. So thank you.

Y. Uh-huh.

J. Any ... Any other words you want to add in the closing minute?

Y. Anything that I want to add. Well, that ... this: I would like to say that it is fabulous to me to be able to be ... to be able to see things as clearly as I feel I can see them now in my life,--at this point in my life. I would not move backwards for anything in the world. I do not want ... I do not wish to be a teenager again. I ??those years again,--you know? I would,--you know ... I am so glad that I would ... had the opportunity to ... to get into the trades and to be in the trade. I would not give that up for anything in the world. I absolutely love the men that I work with. They're a pain in the ass. They're racist. They're sexist. They're a bunch of pigs. I get pissed off at them about things, but I absolutely love them, because they've taught me everything that I know,--you know?.I ... I mean,--I've been able to really work my way through them to a point of having demystified them. I still have my father fixation,--you know. I still have, and I'm still ??,--you know--I'm not invulnerable to that,--you know. But I'm so clear about them,--so much more clear than I ever was in my life. I absolutely applaud them for ... for the lessons that they've taught me,--you know. (laughs) I wouldn't mind having a big dinner and inviting them all,--you know.

J. (laughs)

s Y. And the other thing I would like to say is that ... One was that I was really glad to be ... to have had the opportunity to be in the trades. And ... And the other is, it's a very exciting time to be alive. As ... As scary as it is,--as narrow as I see people being,--it's really interesting to me, because I feel that it's ... It's very repressive. It's a very scary time, but it's full of potential. It is absolutely full of potential in the way that the '60s were not,--in a different way.

J. Um-hum.

Y. The '60s was a whole other thing. We had to go through that. But I feel that this time right now ... it also seems like a void, but the void is full of potential. It's full of possibilities. And it's a very exciting time to be alive, if you're able to,--you know,--keep some kind of presence of mind, clarity and analysis as to what's

going on, that you don't get swept into the madness,--you know,--Then you don't have to feel so depressed about what's going on,--you know?

J. Um-hum.

Y. You don't have to feel like it takes control,--you know. That's what I want to ??

J. Well, that's inspirational and it's powerful.

Y. (both laugh)