


Fall 2009

Interview with Lisa Ann Brock

Amanda Anderson
Columbia College - Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cadc_caam_oralhistories

 Part of the [Political Theory Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#), and the [Work, Economy and Organizations Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Anderson, Amanda. "Interview with Lisa Ann Brock" (Fall 2009). Oral Histories, Chicago Anti-Apartheid Collection, College Archives & Special Collections, Columbia College Chicago. http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cadc_caam_oralhistories/21

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chicago Anti-Apartheid Movement by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago.

1. Amanda Anderson: Today's date is December 8, 2009 and I [Amanda Anderson] am interviewing
2. Dr. Lisa Brock. Can you please say your name and spell it please?
- 3.
4. Lisa Brock: Uh, my name is Lisa Ann Brock, L -I -S- A- A -N -N -B -R -O -C -K
- 5.
6. AA: Ok and um, we are, the place of the interview is in Dr. Brock's office, which is in the Social Science, um
- 7.
8. LB: The Humanities History and Social Sciences Department
- 9.
10. AA: What she said, there we go, ok. So—I'm just going to sit this down. Ok so, Dr. Brock, first I just want to say thank you very much for giving me the interview
- 11.
12. LB: You're welcome
- 13.
14. AA: And uh, we're going to start back, back, back with your grandfather, your grandparents
- 15.
16. LB: Ok
- 17.
18. AA: So um, what, what, growing up, what were the fondest memories of your grandparents?
- 19.
20. LB: Well I was fortunate because I actually, my parents, uh, were childhood sweethearts, which means both sets of grandparents were on the same street, literally, ha, and then my parents moved down the street. So, I'm from a small town so I had all the access to all four of my grandparents throughout my young life all the way until I was an adult. So that was, you know very precious. Uh, and I guess the fondest memories are my mother's, uh, father and mother. When I was young, I ended up staying with them, uh, quite a lot. My mother was sick. Um, after I was born. She suffered from major post-pardon depression. And so I ended up as a baby staying with her mother and her stepfather for about the first year of my life, which of course, bonded them to me and me to them. And, so I was very, very close to them, spent a lot of time in their house. Um, and my, as I grew up, my grandfather took me fishing, um, taught me how to play Chinese checkers and checkers and he was a Minister, so I went to church with him on Sundays. Um, I think I mentioned to a colleague of mine the other day that I was spoiled rotten by those two. So even though I moved back to my parent's house, I often would spend weekends with them and hang out with them just me, even though I had siblings (laughs)
- 21.
22. AA: Oh wow
- 23.
24. LB: It was all about me! Anyway
- 25.
26. AA: Ok, um, well, ok
- 27.
28. LB: (laughs)
- 29.
30. AA: As a little girl, what was your favorite toy or, or book?
- 31.
32. LB: Humph, as a little girl. Well my mother had a set, we had a set of those um, what was it called? Child craft, it was a book series.
- 33.
34. AA: Um Humh

35. LB: Um like a little encyclopedia of children's stories and projects. Um, and I remember my mother reading from that, um you know, for, as a kid, as a girl. Before I would go to sleep she would read those stories to me, um and I still remember one. There was one about a man who dropped his glasses in some ink or dye and he couldn't realize why, he didn't realize why he couldn't see the world
- 36.
37. AA: (laughs)
- 38.
39. LB: Cuz he'd put his glasses on, um, but I remember, I think it was called Child Craft and it was a book series, um, and my mother use to read to us from that, so that's what I remember the most as a little girl, I think
- 40.
41. AA: Ok, um, so growing up who did you live with? I know that you moved around a lot, or you said
- 42.
43. LB: Well, everyone's in the same town, but I lived with my parents. My mother and father
- 44.
45. AA: Ok, any siblings?
- 46.
47. LB: I have uh, an older sister, an older brother, and a younger brother. Yeah, so we all lived together in the same house with the mother and father, um, even though, as I said, what's interesting is because we had grandparents nearby there was a big sense of an extended family, so sometimes after school, I'd go down, I'd go to one grandmother's house or the other grandmother's house, or an aunts house, um, you know so there was that kind of sensibility in the family.
- 48.
49. AA: Ok, um, so where was your first school located? Do you remember?
- 50.
51. LB: Yeah, in Glendale, in the town. It was called Glendale Elementary school.
- 52.
53. AA: Ok and can you describe your experience attending one of the first integrated kindergarten classes in 1961?
- 54.
55. LB: Yeah, I remember that because there was some white kids who came from families who didn't want us there, um and so they would sometimes call you a nigger or something and we would chase em down, hit em the head (laughs). Uh, it was 1961, things were changing. But the, but the interesting thing about that is that, that tended to be rare over time. Those kids were one or two that you remember and know. The vast majority, you know kids are kids, they were, they were fine. In fact one young, one young man, he, white guy, he and I were both in that kindergarten class together. His name was David Schardlow and when we were seniors, I was Homecoming Queen and he was Homecoming King at the high school, so you know
- 56.
57. AA: Wow that was interesting! Ok, um well what was one, what was the name of one of your best or good childhood friends?
- 58.
59. LB: Um, you mean young childhood?
- 60.
61. AA: Yeah
- 62.
63. LB: Or like when I was a girl?
- 64.

65. AA: Yeah
- 66.
67. LB: Elementary, Karyn Bracey
- 68.
69. AA: Karyn Bracey, what do you remember about her?
- 70.
71. LB: She lived right across the street, and uh, she had a much more formal household than we did, so I always found that interesting. They had more kids, they had like nine kids, we had four, so when you'd eat dinner over there everything was very structured and organized, whereas at my house it was a lil' more chaotic (laughs)
- 72.
73. AA: Ok, well can describe your cultural celebrations or holidays with you and your family, how did you guys celebrate?
- 74.
75. LB: Christmas. Christmas was big fun as a kid. Um, you know we had the traditional Christmas tree and, and all of that. It was always fun because my grandparents would come over that morning of Christmas, uh and sit around and watch us play with our toys. So I remember almost every Christmas, the grandparents would come over to our house and um, and hang out with us.
- 76.
77. AA: Wow ok, what kind of music did you guys listen to growing up, you and your siblings?
- 78.
79. LB: Well because we were spread out, um my older sister is about seven years older than me. So I don't have a lot of memories of us listening to music together. Um, I do remember one of the things we all did together was watch those slides every weekend, my parents brought back from Africa, um, from Morocco. We would watch those slides together, but when I was growing up and I was like twelve, thirteen, you know we're talking about 1967, 68, you know, I started listening to of course, Stevie Wonder and James Brown, um, and um I remember a song, Don't Mess With Bill by the 5th Dimension and I remember writing down all the words so that I can sing it
- 80.
81. AA: (laughs)
- 82.
83. LB: You know, you studying the lyrics so that I can sing it. Um, but I definitely remember James Brown's Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud. I remember that song
- 84.
85. AA: Ok, what was your very first experience with racism?
- 86.
87. LB: Um, well you know it's hard because sometimes things happen and you don't know what it is until later when you reflect back
- 88.
89. AA: Um hum
- 90.
91. LB: Um, but I remember having a, - there were incidents probably. I remember having a friend named Ann Cook. It's funny how you remember these names, and she was white, at this school, and Ann and I decided that we were going to have a Batman Club. (laughing) Batman was on TV, Batman and Robbin! We decided we were gonna have a Batman Club, just the two of us so we decided we had to have meetings if we were going to have a club. And I remember Ann came to my house to play after school so we could have a Batman Club meeting. We must have been in second or third grade, I don't remember, and I remember when I was suppose to go to Ann's house, Ann told me that she really didn't understand why, but her father said I couldn't come there because I was a nigger. And, you know Ann, you know, she just told me cuz she didn't

know to hide anything and so I told my mother (horn honking outside of window) what Ann had said and my mother said well that club got to, got to end. I like Ann, but if you can't go to her house then she can't come here. Um, so that's one incident, and then I remember another one. There was a restaurant nearby, it was really like a little uh Tasty Freeze, or Dairy Queen kind of place. It was called Muggin Muffin and it was run by these two white, a man and a wife, and as a kid we use to cross this field to go to Muggin Muffin. And you know it would be like four or five neighborhood kids, we'd cross the field cuz this, when I was growing up the lil' town was kind of rural. We'd cross this field and it was kind of up on a major road, and we'd go up there, and every time we'd go, our parents would give us like a dollar and the hamburgers were like ten cents or twenty cents. I mean we're talking like 1960, 61. They were like lil' ol White Castle kind of hamburgers and we'd spend forty cents and come back and have no change. And so (laughing) I remember my mother and Mrs. Mary who was Reuben's mother next door, realized we were being cheated and uh, so they put us all in the car and we drove up to the Muggin Muffin and talked, they wanted to talk to the owner. The woman came out and they said these are our kids and we send them up here with a dollar, they come back with no change. And this woman basically said, you know we don't want niggers up here anyways so if you send your nigger kids up here, you get what you deserve. So my mother basically said um, they'll never be up here again and we, and we left. Um so those are probably two, cuz we were kids looking up to our, Mrs. Mary and um my mother, um, who was engaging this woman and um you know as kids we still snuck up there, cuz it was the only place around, but I remember that incident and them calling my mother names and the woman kind of put her hands on my mother too in which I did not like, like pushing us out.

92.

93. AA: Wow, yeah I was going to ask, how did that make you feel because sometimes as a kid, you can't really decipher what's going on but you still get those emotions so I'm sure they, did they flare up for you?

94.

95. LB: Well you know it's wrong, you don't quite know where it's all coming from or why it exists, but you know it's wrong, you feel it's wrong, so yeah

96.

97. AA: Who was the first teacher that left a lasting impression on you?

98.

99. LB: Mrs. Wareman, it was a second grade teacher

100.

101. AA: Wow, second grade, that's interesting

102.

103. LB: Yeah, you said the first (laughing)

104.

105. AA: Yeah, what kind of things did Mrs. Wareman do?

106.

107. LB: You know it's interesting, I thought I, it's stuck in my mind, cuz she, and she was a white woman, but she thought I was smart. And um, I think that's when you have someone who kind of invest time and energy in you. I remember I wrote a poem. We were writing poems and I wrote a limerick. I think it's a limerick right where it has that beat, and she thought it was the greatest thing. It went something like I love my brother, sister, (tapping on the desk) father, but most of all I love my mother. She buys me hats and baseball bats, My mother is better than any other. And my father put rat at the end of it. Every time I would say the poem he would say my mother is better than any other rat and they'd all laugh. I'll say why'd you'd say that. (laughing) but I remember Mrs. Wareman, that yellow paper, all those big lines, you could barely write, you know that training paper

108.

109. AA: Yeah ok

110.

111. LB: Yeah, you that big kind either white or yellow paper, but it has the three lines for you to construct your letters, so you can get the caps and the small, and I remember writing that poem on one of those big pieces of paper and Mrs. Wareman put it up on the bulletin board, she thought it was good.

112.

113. AA: Oh Mrs. Wareman Yea

114.

115. LB: (laughing)

116.

117. AA: What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in, in your youth and early childhood?

118.

119. LB: Glendale was a town, probably of about 2,000 people. It's outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, it's an old railroad town founded by the Proctors of Proctor and Gamble and other railroad money, so there was a big train, It wasn't big, but I think it was one the few train depots sort of in the surrounding areas, so it was kind of known for that sort of town square and this depot. But it was a town that was very segregated so it was a lot of big mansions of very, very wealthy people in the center of town and then on, around them tended to be a few white working class families, and then on the very edge of town were blacks and so I grew up, there were two sides of the edges, on either edges of the town were blacks, small black communities. When I say small, we're talking about three or four streets on either side, where blacks lived. My grandmother's were domestics in these mansions the men in the town, like my one grandfather, worked for Sterns and Foster's mattress factory so there were some, outside of the town all these factories. So the men tended to, if they were lucky, tended to work in the factories and the women generally did domestic work. So the town was very segregated, physically segregated. There was no physical integration, but I went to the elementary school in the center of town, all the kids from the town came there, those that didn't go to private school, cuz I realized that there were a whole lot of folk in those mansions that didn't even send their kids to public schools. They sent them away to boarding school. So I knew how the other side lived quite early. Sometimes I would go with when I home sick, my mother would always work, so sometimes I would go with my grandmother to work because they were watching me. If it was a day out of school, they'd be watching me and they could take me to their work because they worked in people's homes and so I could see these, where they worked

120.

121. AA: You were exposed, that is amazing. So how were you reprimanded in your youth?

122.

123. LB: I guess I had a couple of spankings, they weren't big on, none of them were, they always talked like they were, but I guess I got a couple. My mother had a very interesting method of discipline which is really stuck with me and I think I even used it with my son, and in some ways it's become how I use it even with adults. I expect great things from people. My mother set up this scenario where she expected me to do right, to do well, to do the right thing, to not lie to her and so she set up this sort of high bar of expectation for me and I worked really hard to achieve it. So that was, disappointing my mother was something I didn't want to do because it seem as if she had such great faith in me. To me that was a way she disciplined me. When I would become a teenager, she would say, what times the party and I'll tell her, where you going, I'll tell her, when is it over which to me meant we had an agreement. If the party is over at eleven, I'll expect you home soon after that. So it was that kind of thing

124.

125. AA: How were you rewarded in your youth?

126.

127. LB: For doing well?

128.

129. AA: Um hum

130.

131. LB: It's interesting, I don't even remember having a system of punishments and rewards. I did definitely feel like I was loved and it's interesting as you get older and meet people who have had really difficult childhoods, or parents who were mean or no parents. I remember when I was a freshman in college, my roommate said she didn't like her mother and I was just like what... being from a small town where everyone knew everybody, um, every family, I'm not saying every family was ideally because there were problem families, but I didn't feel that in my family. I don't really have a sense of punishment. I remember being grounded or some of those kinds of things. I remember feeling loved and respected. I tried to do right and if it was wrong they told it was wrong so that's kind of the way I was raised.

132.

133. AA: What extracurricular activities were you involved in during high school?

134.

135. LB: Everything

136.

137. AA: Were you, can you name three things?

138.

139. LB: I played varsity basketball, class president of the sophomore year, in the African American history club, I was an activist because we got the first Black History course to be taught. Black History was not taught when I was coming up. We fought for that. We had sit-ins and got that. It was an integrated high schools and we got them to mount some Black plays like James Baldwin's plays, so I was pretty active in a lot of different things in school. My father use to always say and it's probably still true today, teachers, cuz he was a teacher, he wasn't a teacher when I was there, but he knew a lot of them, he would say people either really liked me (laughing) or didn't like me at all because I was pretty outgoing.

140.

141. AA: What kind of grades did you earn?

142.

143. LB: I was a good student, A, B student

144.

145. AA: What were your parents most proud of you about in high school?

146.

147. LB: That I was, I think that I was a fighter, a fighter for things that were right

148.

149. AA: What high school did you attend?

150.

151. LB: Princeton high school, right outside of Cincinnati. It's a big, a big suburban high school

152.

153. AA: What was the race ratio at your high school, you said it was integrated?

154.

155. LB: It was probably like seventy percent white and thirty percent black

156.

157. AA: Who first introduced you to African History, African American History, like the importance of it?

158.

159. LB: Well I always knew it was important. Well actually I had a high school teacher. I can't remember her name who worked with us to get this first African American kind of studies class we had, but it was at Howard University that I think I got, I realized that I really wanted to be a historian or interested in history to commit long term and time to it, I had an African professor.

160.

161. AA: What kind of conversations with family were you having as high school graduation got closer?

162.

163. LB: I was ready to graduate. I realized that I had enough credits ahead of time, so I barely went to school. I think I only took one class. (laugh)

164.

165. AA: What?

166.

167. LB: Yeah, it was kind of crazy. Somehow I had figured out that I had only needed like two classes to graduate my senior year, or the last two quarters of my senior year, so I didn't even take a full roster of courses. I would just go in the morning (laugh)

168.

169. AA: I would have never have guessed that

170.

171. LB: And I just, you know I think for me and my parents, I was really ready to leave a small town and go to college and it's so funny because I wasn't sad to leave, I was ready to go

172.

173. AA: So if you only went to school in the morning what were you doing the rest of the day?

174.

175. LB: Playing basketball, I had all the, we had parties, played hooky

176.

177. AA: Copy that

178.

179. LB: Copy that, we had a lot of, I had a lot of fun, but I still was technically a student so all those different activities, like I said, I was Homecoming Queen my senior year and I played on the basketball team and we were, we were busy

180.

181. AA: How did you pick your prom date?

182.

183. LB: I had a boyfriend, he went to Ohio State at the time

184.

185. AA: How did you make the decision to attend Oberlin College?

186.

187. LB: People told me it was a good school and I guess cuz it was in Ohio and a little better money for my parents. It's funny, I have not a whole lot of memory of how I picked Oberlin. It's not like I was super conscious of all the options. I was a good student. I had all those activities and I think Oberlin was interested in that kind of student and I just ended up there.

188.

189. AA: What types of extracurricular activities were you involved in there?

190.

191. LB: Not as many because it was sort of a small school and small town and I developed really good friends. I remember I had friends that became life-long friends there. I had a professor, Calvin Hernton, written some classic books on African American literature and we would hang out at Calvin's house, he was little nutty. He would pontificate about this and that (laugh), but to me the biggest thing about Oberlin that was such a great experience was that I met so many different kinds of people. Being from a small town in Southern Ohio, I hadn't met many Latinos, Asians. It was basically kind of black, white for the most part then, of course now it's changed. I had a Puerto Rican friend, an Asian friend a Chinese friend so I think that was my biggest sense I got out of Oberlin, meeting people from all over the country that were different and I liked that

192.

193. AA: So why did you leave?

194.

195. LB: I left Oberlin cuz, I was a small time girl that was sick of being in a small town, cuz Oberlin was another small town. And I was tired of being in a minority. I wanted to go to a place where there were more people of color, and more black people and I wanted a city.

196.

197. AA: How did attending Howard meet or surpass your expectations?

198.

199. LB: in fact I picked Howard because it was in the Blackest city (laughing) it was a Black college. I had grown up my whole life, a minority and I just felt like I needed a Black concentration experience. It could be just the opposite for a Chicago kid, from the south side of Chicago, who might want the opposite, so I felt like I really needed that. I also felt that at Oberlin there was a lot of liberal racism that got on my nerves. I from a small town like I said, we had white kids and if they didn't like you, they called you a nigger and you knew where you stood. At Oberlin, I felt sometimes like culturally and racially I was being undermined, but it was with a smile and so it was a different kind of racism that I had never quite experienced before and it was very difficult to fight because if someone doesn't claim it, then it's hard for you claim it, and they deny it and you end up in this weird circle

200.

201. AA: Was there ever any particular incident that you could like remember at Oberlin that just hit home, that experience was true to life for you?

202.

203. LB: Well it was general feeling, but I remember a class. This is funny, because it was a class I had on slavery, so here we have a class on slavery and it's about thirty kids in the classroom, only two of us are African American and the professor's white. We're talking about slavery and the age old question whether or not slavery came before racism or the African slave trade came before racism or racism came before the African slave trade. This is a classic kind of discussion and debate and sort of the historiography or the history of the history of the slave trade. This is a question that historians have grappled with a lot. So you end up with some historians saying well, there did exist a certain level of racism in the ancient world therefore racism existed before the African slave trade, then you have others who say that isn't so and the quote various Greek Scholars, Roman scholars and Egyptian Scholars and Egyptian slavery was clearly multiracial. In the Middle Ages, various forms of servitude were multiracial so others would say the notion that only Black people for four hundred years were gonna be enslaved in the West clearly impacted the formation of racism, then some say racism led to the slave trade. I'm rambling a little bit, but I say that this debate has gone on and on. So he was raising this debate in class and so we're debating amongst ourselves and one student said where there must have been racism before slavery because there was a lot of white indentured servants and why weren't they enslaved like Africans. So that was an interesting point and I now have an answer for that. It was a little complicated, we were only freshman and that was years ago. Then this other white male student says why would you enslave whites when you have blacks? So the more conscious white students sort of gasp huh, and everyone that knew that this was problem, well at least most people knew that this was a highly problematic statement and the racism was embedded, deeply embedded in this statement and so I said um, but, the interesting thing, he says this, and then all of the white kids who were upset by this turned to us to respond and I refused to respond, I started laughing, see what you gonna do, what are you going to do? I just start laughing like a crazy person and they got mad at me for laughing and not taking, not dealing with it. So here you got somebody with racism so embedded because he's like what, what, what. He didn't even know and then you got liberal white kids who were saying this stuff is racist, deal with it. You deal with it. Why do I have to deal it? Here it is, I come from an oppressed group and then I got to be the only to fight it

as well, I'm fighting it every day. Those kind of little things got on my nerves so Howard was great.

204.

205. AA: What were you involved in at Howard?

206.

207. LB: When I was Howard, I really found history. I had a teacher named Betron, Aziz Betron. He was from Sudan and he taught African History. Here again you have a teacher who thinks you're smart and he invest a lot of time in me and I had a few teachers there that did that. Helped me rewrite essays for grants and different kinds of things. I was really involved in the history department, sort of academically. I hung out there, all the teachers knew me and they saw me as one of their best students. I wasn't really active on Howard's campus. I got active in the city of Washington, DC. So I became an activist in the city. I joined an organization called the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. It's funny, I think I moved to D.C in August, I went to a demonstration in which Angela Davis spoke in September and I had signed my name on a little clipboard that was going around. The Alliance called me and it was a whole group of us. That was like our first demonstration in the city and we all joined in mass, it was about fifteen or twenty of us and we became the local chapter of the organization. We worked around police violence issues, we worked around political prisoner issues. Asata Shakur, when she was still in jail, the Wilmington Ten, which is Reverend Ben Chevis, he was in jail. So the organization was responding to the, to the, cuz this is 1970's so what had happened is the FBI's Cointelpro, counter intelligence program, had targeted a lot of activists from the sixties and seventies and they were under fire. So this organization was sort of a defense organization for activist who were now being, like Angela Davis, it was her defense committee that became the National Alliance. The fact that people like Angela who stand up for prisoner's rights in California who happens to be a professor, then all of a sudden they charge her a murder that she wasn't even there for. You know, they claim she instigated it, but she wasn't physically there for it and that's how she got charged with murder in California. There were other, the Wilmington Ten were fighting desegregation of schools in Wilmington, North Carolina. They were charged with setting a fire. Ten of , eight people in a high school and two leaders in the church became the Wilmington Ten and they were all charged with an arson that someone else confessed for and they were in jail. So there all these different kind of cases where activists were under fire. The alliance was, we were like a defense, so we worked with lawyers as well as mass campaigns cuz that's what worked with Angela is that you have a good legal team, but you also let the public know what's happening so that they have public support so that when they go into the courtroom they're not isolated and alone. So I became very involved very quickly within two months of being in D.C and never looked back in terms of who became my friends, where I hung out, what we did, that was it (laugh)

208.

209. AA: Why did you decide to go to Grad School?

210.

211. LB: Well, it's interesting because I sort of make a joke about it, but it's sort of true that when I finished Howard, summer of 1979, I was working, I worked, now one the things I did do was I worked at Howard, I always had a job of some sort, small or part time job, good job, Howard, because I was good in that History department, I got two great jobs being at Howard. One was, I worked in the National Archives in the evenings and it was me and my friend Kamal. It was three of us, two guys and myself that we were kind of the stars of the history department, you know we were good students, we liked history, we were history majors. We just kind of hung out together and both of them are lawyers now. It's funny, but um anyway, Kamal and I worked at the National Archives for about a year and then one summer I worked in the National Park service (Lisa moving paper around on her desk) in Virginia at the Battle of the Manassas or the Battle of Bull Run, that I got through that History department. They found me jobs in kind of in the history

field, which was great. So that's why I always tell my son, if you're a good student, teachers are in the profession because they like to teach and if you're a good student, they like to teach you and they can help you with opportunity. So anyway, I graduated and I didn't really apply right away to grad school. I didn't quite know if I really wanted to do. I got a full time job as a secretary as a receptionist secretary in the National Association of Business Women's Club or something. This was like a National Business Women's lobby group in D.C and I'd worked there for about a year and it was kind of low pay and it didn't interest me all that much. I decided that I should go to grad school. I figured if I was going to be poor I might as well be in school. I mean if you think about it it's like I could be poor for the rest of my life or I can be poor and learning and in school, doing something that interest me. So I applied to grad school and of course I applied in History because I knew that's really wanted to do that. That was pretty clear, I knew that by time I had finished. I didn't know that when I was a freshman but by time I was a senior, I knew I liked history, so I applied to schools to go into history, African History.

212.

213. AA: Where did you go to Grad school at?

214.

215. LB: At Northwestern

216.

217. AA: How was that? What were experiences like? Where they similar to Oberlin or Howard?

218.

219. LB: Grad school is it own thing, at least my experiences it. I have met people that really enjoy it, but they're rare. Most people get through it (laughing). Northwestern was interesting. I met some, I liked my cohort of people cuz when you go to grad school, at least at Northwestern, you all came in, it was like twenty of PhD, African history students, so it was the twenty of us. So you know you do everything together and probably of that twenty there were, three, four blacks and the rest was white in African History at Northwestern, but we were all tight and that was good. We all kind of looked out for each other and that was great. I think only one didn't finish, everybody else finished, got their PhDs one way or another. So they're colleagues out, I see them at conferences um so Northwestern was good. I learned a lot. I learned a lot of skills about being a historian. There were issues, you know various kinds issues of race and racism, classicism that I had to fight, but it's funny, I was up for the fight. I often feel like at Oberlin, I didn't have the skills and tools to deal with that kind of liberal racism, because the thing about a certain kind of racism in an environment is if you're going to stay in that environment, you have to figure out how to navigate, negotiate and survive in a healthy way, you know, you can't just bail. This is the world we live in and I think at Oberlin, I didn't quite know how, I was too young, but I think Howard embolden me and gave me the confidence, so by the time I came back, Howard and my activism, by the time I came back to grad school, you know, I was better able to either, ignore, challenge, kind of know when to fight, when not to fight and all that kind of stuff when the ugly head of racism, and sexism. That's another I haven't talked about. I had an incident at Oberlin with a faculty member, I was sexually harassed, not heavily, not deep, but it was there. I dropped a class because this professor was harassing me at Oberlin

220.

221. AA: Wow, that's deep

222.

223. LB: At Northwestern I was T.A and I had a professor to, I was grading his papers and he grabbed me from behind to hug me to kind of test the waters and both of them were married.

224.

225. AA: Unbelievable

226.

227. LB: Unbelievable, I didn't have any of that at Howard, that's interesting. Both of these two guys were not black. One was of color, one was white, at Howard the majority was black and I was never not once sexually harassed, that's just for the record
- 228.
229. AA: What did your job duties consist of when you were working in Gettysburg? I thought that was fascinating
- 230.
231. LB: Oh that one year in Gettysburg. It was like a fellowship. What was it called? A residency I guess. Gettysburg was a small, you Gettysburg, Gettysburg Address, that same little town, that whole town is a cemetery, because they buried people right where they fell and they fought all over the town, so like you could be walking and you trip over something and it's a grave in your front yard where you're living cuz it was a huge battle and a lot of people died in the Civil War. Gettysburg was a small college and they didn't have a lot of international studies and black studies, things like that Latin American, it just wasn't their focus, but what they did do is evidently, they got some money, I don't if it was like a Rockefeller grant, I don't remember now, but they money to bring in each year like a focus topic. So the year I was looking for a place to write my dissertation, they had a residency seminar for a person who had an expertise in Southern Africa. We're talking about in 1986 and the stuff was hot in South Africa, you know kids were in the streets, it was all on the news, so they were looking for someone to coordinate, to teach a seminar and coordinate a speaker series on Southern Africa. So I applied and I got it. So I went for that year to do that and of course while I was there, we had to build a shanty.
- 232.
233. AA: Got to do it
- 234.
235. LB: Got to do it (laughing). Once students heard the information about South Africa, they were like we got to build a shanty (laughing). I left that as my legacy and some of the higher-ups probably didn't like it, cuz the key with the shanty is you built them where it would be the most problematic, where people would see it, but that was great. The speaker series was already set up. They had the guy from the Organization of African Unity from the UN to come. They just had a lot of different key people to come in that series. That's what I did working there
- 236.
237. AA: How did you feel working there as a black woman?
- 238.
239. LB: the kids were nice, the people were nice. I think it was all good for a year. I knew it really wasn't the kind of place I wanted to stay at. I wanted a bigger community, active community, bigger community of color, but for a year, I think it was a great opportunity and the people that hired me were very pleasant.
- 240.
241. AA: I think we already covered this with Howard, but how did you become an activist?
- 242.
243. LB: You know it's funny, I saw something the other day and this may sound really crazy, but I think people are kind of born like me. My mother always swore up and down that the first I said was that's not fair and I meant it and so even, even, even as a kid, I found myself engaging, even with my mother, I mean I didn't have the words, but I didn't like it, I knew it was wrong, I wanted to do something about it and as I got older and more vocal I junior high school, we were organizing around girls weren't able to wear pants, challenging the school for racism. Now the interesting thing is I grew up in a certain time too. So I twelve in 1968 so stuff is happening all around me in the country and I heard of, but the issue is I talked to other people like my brothers and sisters, none of them are activist like me. We grew up in the same household; they're not all that interested. I think they and my parents have always have been proud of me, but it's like that's Lisa, that's just the way Lisa is, what you gonna do, that's Lisa. And so they often time say that

and as I gotten older, I've realized other people I know like my husband, people that I meet in the movement, they have the exact same experience. They didn't necessarily, their brothers and sisters aren't necessarily activists, their parents weren't necessarily activist, but for some reason, they felt compelled to fight against injustice. It's a sort of compulsion and you do not, you know as I've gotten older, I've mellowed a little bit. It's this idea that if something is wrong, you've got to do something about it. I mean if you don't do it then whose gonna do it. I've always had this and it makes me feel better and it's good for your mental health because, at least for me, that's how much of a desire to be involved in change, progressive change is. It's like how can you sleep at night if this stuff is going on and you haven't done anything. Not that you're gonna to win, so actually the act of being active in social justice helps you deal with the fact that you live in a world that is unjust and along the way you do have small victories that are great but even if you don't win the big cahuna, at least you know you contributed to some change.

244.

245. AA: I like that. I really like that

246.

247. LB: I think I've always known that inclination. I think when I went to Howard and to D.C, I think I found a place for it to grow. Like I said all I did was sign up and I was moving. It was the right opportunity, the right place, the right time and I was ready. No one had to convince me, I was ready.

248.

249. AA: How did your parents react to your involvement in the movement?

250.

251. LB: Worried (laughing) as always. They would just shake their heads. They were always worried, but again, I think they were proud too.

252.

253. AA: What did the Regan administration mean to you and apartheid?

254.

255. LB (laughing) Regan was tough! Whoo those were tough years. Well clearly Regan was a god-send to them, the apartheid government and they were good buddies and then they had Thatcher in Britain so you know, the three of them were just really feeling good about turning back. In South Africa, they were kind of on a different historical trajectory, but in Britain and the U.S, both Thatcher and Regan were basically trying to turn back more progressive forces that had been unleashed and fairly successful in their countries, here with the whole women's movement, Civil Rights movement, affirmative action here, all of those college student's involvement, anti war movement, all of those kinds of things in this country that been successful, Regan's job was to try and turn that back, and Thatcher had really had a labor government that set up national healthcare, um, um transportation services that were run by the state. I remember when I went to Britain in 1983, you could just walk in up into a clinic, into a dentist, get your teeth fixed, get seen. It was great, not anymore post Thatcher. So I'm saying it was Thatcher, Reagan and the apartheid government, they were all trying to push away from progressive things.

256.

257. AA: From one local meeting with Dennis, concerning the Springbok team, how did you feel about leaving as Group Chair of the Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour in 1981?

258.

259. LB: Nervous, (laughing). I was like what have I gotten myself into?

260.

261. AA: So after the nervousness, then what?

262.

263. LB: Oh I was ready. You know it's funny, even in Washington D.C., I emerged as a speaker and leader of some of the campaigns. People seem to trust me enough to give me that leadership role,

so I just did the best I could in any of those things and I was never shy person in that way, so once it's on, we gotta start planning and figuring out (laughing)

264.

265. AA: How did Harold Washington's death affect Chicago and the anti-apartheid movement in 1983?

266.

267. LB: Oh it wasn't 83.

268.

269. AA: I thought it was 83

270.

271. LB: It was, was, was, uh, uh, he got elected in 83, his death was 86, 85. He had just re-elected, was it 88? I'm forgetting everything. We have to look that up.

272.

273. AA: OK

274.

275. LB: Oh the death was horrible. I was teaching up in Lake Forest and I remember just crying.

276.

277. AA: How did you hear about it?

278.

279. LB: I was teaching and somebody had said it in the hallway, it had come across the news. It affected Chicago tremendously and we've never recovered. We use to say it was the man, the move, by we I mean the progressive movement here. We use to say it was the man, the movement and the moment, or the moment, the movement, the man. Which means they all kind of, the stars were all aligned to make his election happen in a city like Chicago, but once he died one of the key pillars it's sort of unlike some other movements. In some ways it's similar to South Africa. If Mandela would not have survived or if he would have been killed right when he had got out of jail, we don't know what would have happened in South Africa. It's not to say that you don't have a strong movement, but what it does mean is that the role a very smart, charismatic person in that movement, plays a certain kind of role, that other people can't because when Harold died, they tried to come up with other people, it didn't work, also we have to keep, the movement was very fragile. We had blacks, Latinos and progressive whites, but even some of the blacks and Latinos, and even some of the whites, they had been Johnny come lately. They weren't necessarily all that progressive especially in the black community and Latino community, you had people who were kind of hustlers and opportunists who were alderman, who only reluctantly supported Harold because they had been doing pretty well personally with the previous administration with the patronage politics. So they only supported, it's because their constituents said you better support Harold. So once Harold died, what happened, what you see was the black and Latino and non progressive folk, peel off from the movement and you don't have it anymore

280.

281. AA: What was the importance of the Maputo Mozambique in 1983 to you?

282.

283. LB: I learned a whole lot very quickly about my own assumptions about (laughing) going by myself to live in a war torn African country. I was really not prepared for what I experienced, but I had to get prepared very quickly to get prepared so it was rough, it was very rough for me personally. Just because one, I was scared, I didn't have anybody there, then I end up staying with ANC people from South Africa, who have their tensions in the movement and then being from the US, the Mozambican government and the US did not have good relations and I'm a Fulbright scholar, so you have this situation where some of the Mozambican folk looking at you like is she a spy is she not a spy but then I'm living with ANC people who were doing all kind of underground stuff, but I can't say that because it's underground. So it's interesting, people would write me from home and I would write these innocuous letters like (tapping on the desk) I am

doing fine, I say monkey's on the beach, I am doing my research, but I felt like I just couldn't talk about, I mean the ANC family that I'd lived with were members of the military wing of the ANC, so there were guns in the house, there were secret meetings with Chris Haunty and Joe Slovo, I met them there, and on one hand you have the Mozambican government but then also these ANC people are doing things and the South African government is coming across the border trying to kill them, with some success. Al B Saxis, who I met there a few years later, his arm was blown off in a car, Ruth First, who I hoped to work with at the University was killed with a letter bomb. A community in Mozambique, South African whites in white face had come in into South Africa late at night, found out where ANC lived and shot up a whole neighborhood, because literally, Maputo is right on the border of South Africa, so I remember a friend whose wife had gone to Swazi land and I remember going to his house one day and he was so nervous. This was a South African man black married to this Dutch woman and food was tough to get in Mozambique too so sometimes people would go across the borders. She had driven to Swazi land which wasn't that far either, maybe like fifteen miles in one direction to go to a supermarket to get food. I remember I walking to his house that day and he had told me she had went and he couldn't sit still until she made it back if she would make it back because you got the South African government trying to kill the ANC people, the South African government is also trying, these contras are waging war against the Mozambican government because they didn't like the Mozambican government supporting the ANC, so basically they're trying to kill the ANC and also undermine the Mozambican government so they can't support them. So literally these contras are all along the roads outside the city so he's worried thinking cuz she could ambushed on the street you know the road. It was a difficult experience.

284.

285. AA: How long were you there?

286.

287. LB: Five months, I was suppose to stay a year or you know, longer than I stayed.

288.

289. AA: How did you get involved with the Chicago Sister-Community with Alex Township in 90 and 91?

290.

291. LB: Through people here. It was an organization and they, it's interesting, sometimes I say they sometimes I say we. We had a lot of organizations, but the boundaries were sort of porous, they weren't hardened fastened boundaries so someone who might work with the Labor Network would sometimes work with the Sister City project, we were a big tip community of anti-apartheid activists here. The sister community things with Alex had two main things they did. They brought people in from the townships to do internships, we would find them places to stay and the other thing is we had the Soweto Day Walk-a-thon and I don't remember, but for the first couple of years I was the major coordinator of that, the walk-a-thon to raise money for Alex.

292.

293. AA: In 1994, you were the head of the committee to send the election observers from Chicago, how did you attain that position?

294.

295. LB: (laughing) I don't know. I don't know I just

296.

297. AA: Right place right time?

298.

299. LB: I guess and it was a co thing. I co-chaired it with Harold Rogers, we co-chaired that, he's another labor activist here. Well on is I knew that I couldn't go, but I would've loved to go, but I knew I couldn't go because just two years before, I had just gone to Angola for their elections and I had a two year old son so I didn't have the money. If I hadn't gone to Angola and if I'd known all this stuff was going to happen in South Africa, I would have much rather had done that, but I

knew I couldn't go so the issue was what role could I play and so the role was to help facilitate people going from Chicago. Basil Clunie went, there were a lot of people who went. I got my alderman at the time, Jesse Evans went

300.

301. AA: Describe some of the transitions you saw in the committee?

302.

303. LB: Earlier or over the years?

304.

305. AA: Yeah, throughout the years?

306.

307. LB: I didn't see any major shifts, it was like in any movement tensions and they were more around race, who you organized, or organized with. I tended to work in integrated movements because I believe in that. I don't know how you gonna come out on the other end, by the other end I mean, lets say we would win change, if you haven't worked with people to get there, then what do you do? (laughing) if you get to change, you know what I mean?

308.

309. AA: Yeah that makes sense

310.

311. LB: Some things I think organizations, for instance if you're gonna have a Congressional Black Caucus, then you it should be black congress people. Or if you're gonna have an African American journalist association, then it should be black journalists, but I felt like with the anti-apartheid movement, our primary goal was to help and assist in South Africa and if you've got all kinds of different people willing to help do that, it didn't make much sense for me to not have them up in the mix, but once you have them in the mix, sometimes issues would come up. For instance in Chicago, when I did the SART. The Stop Apartheid Rugby Tour, there was an attempt to have an all black Stop Apartheid Rugby tour lead by Conrad World and it was interesting. I remember I was relatively new to Chicago and when I met Conrad, he looks down at me and says so you're the leader of the white group (laughing). Well, I don't know about that. Look at me do I look white, but over the years we've gotten to know each other, but they had a particular ideological bend, that is they only wanted to work with black people. So they also wanted to help the struggle in South Africa, but they wanted to do it in their own way. Sometimes we would unite and Conrad would come speak or Bob Sparks from those groups would come speak to our things, so we knew who each other was. The majority of activism in the city of Chicago did not come from that sector. It came from this bigger, broader, multi racial tent.

312.

313. AA: Describe a life- long relationship you built with someone in the movement?

314.

315. LB: Hummm, well, that's a good question. (laughing) you came up with that one on your own huh? In all honesty all of my good friends are from the movement. I don't really have any friends that aren't.

316.

317. AA: Really, that's amazing.

318.

319. LB: I married a man from the movement and so all of my best buddies are either from the Alliance or the anti-apartheid movement and for instance, those days are gone, but we built our relationships around that and I think a part of that is because again, they're people like me and so we're alike in that way.

320.

321. AA: How long have you been married?

322.

323. LB: Twenty years

324. AA: What group or organization did he belong to?

325.

326. LB: He belonged to the Alliance here and see that was interesting. I had just moved to Chicago and I didn't know many people. So I'm going Northwestern and I had contacts because the Alliance had a chapter here. I didn't know them personally that well, but it was a channel to meet people. The movement at that time was a great like that. When I traveled to Mozambique, I stayed with ANC people, when I went to London, my friends were from South Africa and people involved in the anti-apartheid there. When I went to Portugal, I met people in the anti-apartheid movement in Portuguese. The movement became a vehicle for me to really meet like minded people around the world. In terms of your answer of life-long relationships, all my friends, relationships have been life- long because of the movement, so I don't think its one person. The biggest thing is, the movement became a bridge for me to meet people around the world that I knew I had something in common with because we were involved in similar things so it took the mystery out.

327.

328. AA: How did you and your husband meet?

329.

330. LB: (laughing) In the movement. I think we met, he has a different story than I do, but we met at an Alliance picnic here in Chicago.

331.

332. AA: Were you guys in the same type of activism?

333.

334. LB: Well what's interesting is when I came to Chicago, in D.C. I did more domestic, anti-racism political prisoner work. But I ended up in Chicago, even though they did that kind of work here, I got more involve in the anti-apartheid movement here even though I knew about it in D.C. I was that involved, but especially here, I'm studying it and so I got more involved, but all these movements overlapped, again so the anti-apartheid movement overlapped, the Alliance had a kind of connected organization called the National Anti-Imperialist Solidarity with southern Africa and Otis, my husband was involved in International Solidarity with South Africa. At the time him and Harold Rogers, Prexy Nesbitt, they had a um, newsletter that they put out called the African Agenda, they sent out all over the world. Go figure it was done right here on Hyde Park. So we had overlapping, he was a part of the Alliance, he did more African Solidarity before I did.

335.

336. AA: What was one was one conversation about the movement you can remember having with him that you both had strong feelings about?

337.

338. LB: That's another good question. (God that wind out there) I don't remember any. I learned a lot from him, still do, he's very smart.

339.

340. AA: Once you became active, what event or person was most influential to you in your activism?

341.

342. LB: Um, a woman by the name of Charlene Mitchell and Domu Smith in Washington, D.C. and

343. Otis.

344.

345. AA: How did activists celebrate or fellowship after a long day of demonstrations?

346.

347. LB: (laughing) When we were younger, we had a lot of parties, you know when the Alliance would have like a national convention, there would always be a party. People had parties, house parties yeah, in fact Otis and I had gone to a, for instance every year, this guy name Rynell Mustard on the west side had an annual women's day picnic, which was huge over the years, I

mean it went on for fifteen years. Every August, Dan Davis would come, Carol Mosely Braun, oh yeah it was a big thing.

348.

349. AA: How did you feel when Mandela came to Detroit?

350.

351. LB: I was excited. I wished he came to Chicago, but it was very exciting

352.

353. AA: What drew you to the anti-apartheid movement over other political movements going on in the US at that time?

354.

355. LB: I think part of it was that I was studying it and so I had a lot of information and it was so clear. It was such a clear struggle against injustice. You got a country, happens to in Africa, now maybe people think Africa is in Europe, but I didn't think it was. Africa is largely a country of Africans that is blacks and you got this country in Africa that's run by whites, who happen to be a minority and have denied absolutely every right to Africans that are indigenous to that country. So you got ten percent of white population, denying the vote, workers rights, just everything to a majority, so it was just so clear and then they were a fascist state, the way they were reinforcing that was so brutal.

356.

357. AA: How did you and your peers participate in divesture movements?

358.

359. LB: Well that shanty town thing was a way and what's interesting is I was gone away for two years right at the heyday when stuff was happening, like I worked on SART in 81 and then everything was going on and then Washington was 83. Then I leave in the Fall of 83 and don't come back until the Fall of 85 and by the time I come back, there is an anti-apartheid organization on the campus at Northwestern and they had begun to build all over the country. So divestment movements became a huge thing both on college campuses to get colleges to disinvest their funds from their portfolio from businesses that do business in South Africa, but also one of the biggest successes here in Illinois was that the Labor Union, they worked through unions and you know, unions are huge. You can reach thousands of people through unions. I used to go and sometimes talk to unions, cuz you know, I had information, I'm a student. I'm a graduate student so they would invite me out to talk about what's happening in South Africa and all of it was about education. The unions had progressive caucuses and for instance there's a coalition of black trade unionists that crosses unions and there's a coalition of labor union women that crosses unions, so both of those organizations were a part of the Illinois Labor Network against apartheid here in Chicago. So one of the things they did, they worked, all the women that was a part of C.L.U.E all the men and women that were a part of C.B. T.U they would work in UAW, AFSME, you know all these different companies to try and raise the issue, South Africa. So what with AFSME is the state and municipal, all the people who worked for the state of Illinois, city of Chicago, state of Massachusetts, city of Massachusetts, they all are a part of AFSME. So here in Illinois we got AFSME to force their pension funds to divest from companies who do business with South Africa. So the entire state of Illinois pension funds was divested and this was happening all over the country. It was huge. So we were successful in divesting funds in the state of Illinois.

360.

361. AA: If Mandela were here now, what would you say to him?

362.

363. LB: First I would hug him, give him a kiss on the cheek, tell him he has inspired me and many other people and then I would ask him why he didn't nationalize DeBeers. I still don't completely understand that. Even if not nationalize then make it a parastatal. Parastatal is when it's partly governmentally owned. So fifty percent governmentally owned, fifty percent privately owned, and you get fifty percent of the profit.

364. AA: And explain what DeBeers is?
365.
366. LB: The biggest diamond cartel in the world and it's a South African based company.
367.
368. AA: How did you react to the Reconciliation and Truth Commission?
369.
370. LB: I thought it was brilliant. I thought it was a brilliant way to stave off violence in the country. I do understand that. It allowed for a venting and vetting of the crimes of apartheid and it allowed for some compensation, some reparations to go to families, but it's not a perfect model. Some people wanted those guys to go to jail, whether they fessed up or not. But I felt like given the racial history of the world, the South Africans felt like, I'm sure the Americans said don't kill our white brothers and sisters or we'll divest everything from you. I'm sure the West made them have to compromise on that question because the other thing is if they had actually killed, I don't mean killed, I mean executed, tried in a trial, for war crimes, some of the main leaders of the apartheid government and system, there would have been a lot they would have had to execute and that would've been a blood bath. The West really would have cried foul in large part because of the race of the participants, they would've cried foul. It would have Africans killing whites. You know you hate to say that, but had it been the other way around or even in the Rwanda situation or even in the World Court situations, when they bring African leaders who are black up for war crimes, the idea that they might be executed or whatever is less volatile then in this particular situation in South Africa and I also think in our socialist world without a counter poll, South Africa was probably feeling potentially isolated. So I think the TRC was brilliant and I think it did a lot, you can imagine the amount of South Africans who had there not been a Mandela, had there not been some kind of process put in place, it would've been on, it would've been on, you know what I mean. People were mad
- 371.
372. AA: Yeah I hear you
373.
374. LB: It would've been on. It could've been a blood bath that would've set South Africa up for many, many years and they didn't want that.
375.
376. AA: Looking back now, what are you most proud of?
377.
378. LB: I'm proud of being active in all these movements I think. I'm also proud because I've made friends from all over the world and um I've learned how to relate to people. I'm a real internationalist and by that I mean, I think a person in South Africa has just as much the right to be on this earth as a person in Chicago. I don't make value judgments about where people are from. It's interesting, people often think, people talked about 9/11, all people in America. I think if a baby dies in Guatemala, it's the same, so I'm just an internationalist in that was and I think that comes across when I talk to people and some of my best friends come from Africa and we get along (laugh) because I have this sensibility.
- 379.
380. AA: What are you least proud of?
381.
382. LB: Hmm, least, that I didn't stay in longer Mozambique. I could of, but I couldn't, it was to tough for me.
383.
384. AA: How do you think your life would be different if you didn't become an activist?
385.
386. LB: (laugh) Well, my best friend in high school is not an activist and she has a nice family and lives in Cincinnati, you know, we stay in touch so I have a feeling I would have probably been

married. It's funny I have a hard time separating my activism from my traveling and going to graduate school and all of that. So I guess I have this sense that if had not this whole, what I became hadn't come together the way it did, I probably would have ended up in Cincinnati where most of the people I went to high school with for the most part did not leave.

387.

388. AA: What do you think about the current situation in South Africa today?

389.

390. LB: (long sigh then laugh) I think the folks in South Africa have worked and are working really hard to build this new country. I'm really impressed by the people and the level of engagement and intelligence by many people there in terms of trying to problem solve. When we just did this trip this past summer, on one hand you can see things from afar and then you can see sort of the state level you know like the fact they elected Zuma as president and he has all this history of being accused of rape, poor politics on HIV, Aids. Yet on the other hand, you meet the heads of these wonderful museums and universities, you meet the poet laureate, artists in studios and there all brilliant, there all brilliant, so it's sort of a country come in contradiction of itself. You still got a lot of white racism, denial there. When we were on this trip, it's funny the white women students would meet white males who would come up to them and try to talk to them and they would act like they didn't know who Mandela was or they didn't know what happened and they would be like what, either you're lying or you're crazy. So they would come to me like really frustrated like why would they say this? This happened more than once and I said they don't want to talk to you about it, they don't want to talk to you about it. So you still got a long way to go. I guess my biggest sort of disappointment with South Africa, but then again, maybe they had no choice, is that they choose in some ways a more mixed economy, so that you could solve more of the economic problems more quickly. By mixed economy, I mean nationalization or socialism in something. For instance, if they made DeBeers a parastatal then fifty percent of that profit could've went to building houses, that profit could go to building schools. They had some other companies that could've done that with. I'm not saying you do that with small companies, but nationalize certain things that yield huge amounts money very quickly so that you can inject it into the economy because my concern is without that, the level of disappointment and disengagement, and what's happening is similar to our post Civil Rights dilemma here where you don't solve the economic problem certain blacks who have access to middle class education like myself have that ability to move up, but the vast majority don't have that access and therefore you end up turning in on yourself and you end up with an un sound economy, violence in the neighborhood, violence against each other because of frustration and lack of hope. My concern about South Africa is that kind of stuff is happening.

391.

392. AA: What advice can you give youth interested in becoming involved in any kind of activism?

393.

394. LB: Get involved. Its funny, I talk to the youth all the time. I have a young friend, she about thirty, Darra Cooper, and when I met her, I could tell that she was one of us. She had all this passion, she was talking and pointing you know, whereas you have some people who are followers you know, but clearly Darra's a leader because she gets upset when things are unjust. Most activist we're activist because it comes out of love, because you love people. When I was young I would cry if someone got hurt, if an animal got hurt. I still cry, I cried when this young boy got clubbed to death. I didn't just cry for him, I cried for the boys who did it too because these are our kids. What kind of life set them up to be like this, to want to kill somebody with a railroad tie in the middle of the street. So I cried for them as well and I think for young people they have to figure out what matters to them and do it either as a leader or a follower and if you are a leader be prepared to lend it to the movement and not just to companies as CEOs. The artists used be the banner makers and now they'll just do commercials so be willing to share outside of work.

395. AA: How has community involvement changed from the anti-apartheid era?

396.

397. LB: Well the movements changed. Young people now, activists I think are much deeper, broader, diverse in their sense of what activism means, much more challenging in issues if sexism, racism within movements. For instance, a lot of older people, in order to keep a group together, there might one guy that's a rogue in the group, the older folks would just say that's just the way there are, we don't want to split up the group for that. Young people are not like that, no, no, no. if there's a sexist in the room, he's got to go. He got go to rehabilitation, he gone be confronted. Same thing with race and I like that. Also environmental movements, just the other day young people were upset because Coke was at a meeting. Coke has done horrible things around the world in terms of supporting apartheid back in the day to now around the world. So if you're a progressive, it's much more personal now. If you're gonna have progressive meetings you don't want Coke there, that's seen as a problem because you're supporting a company. So back in days those kinds of things wasn't as important, but now young people now I think have better integrated various movements and struggles today, which I think is a good thing and a healthy thing and a healthy thing.

398.

399. AA: Finally, what will your legacy be?

400.

401. LB: That's another good question. I hope that my legacy would be that I made a contribution to various struggles and movements, that I've worked with young people to keep that going. As an educator I love working with young people. My son tells me I'm too old to hang with young people (laugh), but some of my best friends are young and we have parties and we share things. I think that's a big part of what I want. I want young people to take away something from me that is beneficial to them and then this archives, I think that we've set up. I did purposely because I want what we did here in Chicago to be remembered and I want grassroots movements to be remembered because if we don't do things like this, it could be forgotten. It's funny as a historian, I remember a woman that worked down at the Art Institute, she would always say to me, you know Lisa, you make history sound so interesting. She said she could never figure out why historians existed, almost like everything we know today is what happened. It's in the past so what more could we know. It's interesting because like being an archaeologist. We only know bits of things that happened because things get forgotten and what historians do is trace back pockets that no one knew about or they look at certain parts of history in a new way so that they speak in a different way to today's audience. For instance it might a letter somewhere in which it becomes the point in which someone constructs a whole other way at looking at history, but if that letter doesn't exist then it's impossible to do that. So I'm proud of this archive and I wish I could give it some money so I can leave my name on it