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**Transcript of interview with Bill Friedheim and Jim Perlstein**

**Interviewers: Andrea Ades Vásquez and Ellen Schrecker**

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VÁSQUEZ: This is Andrea Vásquez, on June 1, 2015. We're at the CUNY Graduate Center, and Ellen Schrecker and I will be interviewing Jim Perlstein and Bill Friedheim about their work and lives at BMCC, and their activism there, and their academic life. So, we'll start by asking you each to say a little bit about how you found yourselves at BMCC. What—give us a little background about yourself before you landed at CUNY.

PERLSTEIN: Well, I—

VÁSQUEZ: And, you should probably identify yourselves in the beginning, just to make it [indistinguishable].

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, this is Jim, this is Jim Perlstein, um, I had fantasies about becoming a psychoanalyst and then I got a C- in organic chemistry, in college, and I had the revelation that maybe I should major in history. And, one thing led to another, and I ended up at Columbia Graduate School, and a friend of mine named Bob Dallek hooked me up as a teaching assistant at City College in, I guess it was 1959. And, one thing led to another, um, I got a one-semester job as a substitute lecturer, another job as an adjunct at, what was then, Hunter College in the Bronx. And, then I hooked up as a substitute lecturer at Brooklyn College for, I don't know, it was 1961 to 1968, I guess. And, since I did not complete my Ph.D., I had to leave Brooklyn and BMCC had just gotten started a year or so before, and I got—I was appointed as assistant professor at Brooklyn, at BMCC, and that's where I stayed until I retired in February, 2002.

VÁSQUEZ: And, what was that appointment year?

PERLSTEIN: I was appointed as an Assistant Professor.

VÁSQUEZ: Year?

PERLSTEIN: Oh, '68.

VÁSQUEZ: Okay.

FRIEDHEIM: I grew up on Long Island, my family's politics were liberal. Jim didn't mention it, but he's a red diaper baby, I was not a red diaper baby. Although I was influenced as a youth by the rabbi in my Reform congregation who, every Friday night, gave a sermon attacking Joe McCarthy, and in the early '60s, joined with Martin Luther King, and several other clergy to oppose the war in Vietnam, um ...

VÁSQUEZ: What was his name?

FRIEDHEIM: Roland Gittelsohn

VÁSQUEZ: Oh, okay.

FRIEDHEIM: I went to a rather, conser—a then conservative university, um, Princeton, which had pretty much an all-white student body, and there was one black student in my freshman class, he dropped out as a result of a nervous breakdown after two or three months. The faculty wasn't so conservative, so there were people there like H. H. Wilson, whom I took courses with, and in 1959, Fidel Castro actually came to a seminar that I was in, together with the press corps, 400 people—it wasn't so intimate. So, there were certain influences there, but my politics really changed when I went to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin. And, part of my decision to go there and study history was, certainly to avoid the draft. Even in 1960. And then I met a number of graduate students out there who were around this magazine that was—a journal that was started by Jimmy Weinstein called *Studies on the Left*, and they just argued circles around my liberal politics, and kind of converted me to a much more left politics, although, I don't know how left at that point. But, I also kind of rebelled against, um, the whole notion of the academy and of getting a Ph.D. In 1964, '65, I went up to Wausau, Wisconsin, to teach at a two-year extension of the university. And Wausau, Wisconsin is a pretty desolate, boring place. So, in '65, I decided to come back to New York, got an interview for a job at BMCC, didn't expect to stay very long. I retired from BMCC 41 years later, in 2006, but... And, I grew attached to BMCC and obviously stayed there for the duration.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, I neglected to say anything about my political background. As Bill said, I was a red diaper baby, um, I grew up in a community in Sunnyside, Queens, where—from my early experience, I imagined everybody was a communist and was Jewish.

[laughing]

PERLSTEIN: Learned differently, somewhat, somewhat later when we moved to Yonkers when I was in junior high and high school. In college, I—

SCHRECKER: Where'd you go to college?

PERLSTEIN: I was at Harvard, uh, as an undergraduate, and feeling, politically very isolated and alone, but then, somewhere midway through freshman year, I met some other red diaper babies from Brooklyn and the Bronx, and um, we very quickly joined what was then, The most radical organization on campus, which was called the Harvard Society for Minority Rights, which was, really, a chapter of the NAACP. And, at that time—this is the '50s, '53-'57, um, most of the activity of the NAACP was focused on purging the organization of communists and, you know, left-leaning people. So, um, we were this small coterie, I don't know what we accomplished in the years we were active. We brought Pete Seeger to campus. We helped break, uh, the blacklist on him, and that was about the most significant achievement we had. And then, you know, I—I perhaps share this contradiction with a lot of the people I grew up with. We were very left, we always, we remain very left, but we also had very middle-class aspirations. So, it was with a great sigh of relief that Khrushchev delivered his 20th Party Congress speech and I felt I was off the hook. I was about to be recruited into the Labor Youth League, and was very nervous about that, and felt, well, now I had an excuse. And, so, for the next decade or so, you know, graduate school, and early teaching career, um, my politics were ideologically, intellectually very left, but I was sort of on the sidelines. I was not active in the civil rights movement, except to, you know, nod and approve, and talk—and brag to people about all the activists I *knew*, you know. Bob Moses had been a roommate—he was in his first year of graduate school when I was a senior. And you know, there were other people like that. But, my own personal political activity really got going again at BMCC.

VÁSQUEZ: Okay. So, tell us about your first impressions when you, where were you—where'd you land at BMCC? Department, building...

FRIEDHEIM: Why don't I start—

VÁSQUEZ: Yes, you're first.

FRIEDHEIM: since I came to BMCC a couple of years before Jim did, which was the Fall of 1965. And, the college had only opened a year before, and it was essentially seen as a feeder college for Baruch. And, it was assumed that most students would major in Business Administration. There was a dress code. Men had to wear ties and jackets; women were not allowed to wear skirts.

PERLSTEIN: Slacks, [you mean]

FRIEDHEIM: Slacks—um slacks, excuse me. They had to wear skirts. I'm glad you corrected me.

VÁSQUEZ: This was just the faculty, not the students?

PERLSTEIN: No, this is—

FRIEDHEIM: Students.

VÁSQUEZ: Students as well?

FRIEDHEIM: This is students.

SCHRECKER: Wow, '65?

FRIEDHEIM: And, in '65, BMCC was white, working-class, probably majority-minority at that point, although, you know, that changed dramatically in—over the next five or six years, particularly with open admissions after 19—

VÁSQUEZ: Okay, but don't go there, yet. Tell us more of your—

FRIEDHEIM: 1969, um... Students voted with their feet. They left the business administration program, and most students majored in the liberal arts—

SCHRECKER: Really?

FRIEDHEIM: In 1965, 1966, the dress code quickly went away because students wouldn't adhere to it, and students organized. And in '65, '66, maybe it was '66, it was actually an SDS chapter on the campus, which was started by a woman named Terry Davis, who was married to a Vietnam veteran, and one of founders of the VVAW, Dave Cline, who later became, the head of Veterans for Peace, and died about two years ago. And, Terry and Dave—Dave was not a student at BMCC, but, I mean, they were both, you know, white, working-class kids, and it was really Terry who kind of brought, you know, brought me in as an advisor to this Students for a Democratic Society. There was also a black nationalist student group called the Golden Drums, and they worked some—

SCHRECKER: The what?

FRIEDHEIM: The Golden Drums. The Society of the Golden Drums.

VÁSQUEZ: Wow. And this is an uptown building?

FRIEDHEIM: Yes, right, I should—yeah, this is important. BMCC did not have a permanent campus until about twenty years later. And, it was in office buildings, initially on West 51st Street, between 6th and 7th Avenue, then they got classroom space in some other buildings near there, then finally, they got classroom space on Amsterdam Avenue in the '70s, and then, in a building that, uh, became—

PERLSTEIN: Knights of Pythias Temple—

FRIEDHEIM: Right.

PERLSTEIN: —on 70th Street

FRIEDHEIM: 70th, which had six feet thick walls, a building, um—

PERLSTEIN: No windows.

FRIEDHEIM: —no windows, in great disrepair, it was just really a horrendous place. In '67, the SDS chapter organized about 30 or 40 students and faculty to march in the famous antiwar demonstration, you know, that started at the Sheep Meadow in Central Park and marched to the UN. In fact, we were last, and we never left the Sheep Meadow, because by the time we were about to leave the demons—the speeches were already over at the UN. I think there were some 300,000 people there. And, in one sense, I think this is important because a former colleague of mine at BMCC—not from back then, but from the '90's and early 2000s, Penny Lewis—recently wrote a book arguing—and I think, absolutely correctly so—that the antiwar movement was just as much working-class, maybe more importantly working-class than middle class, and kind of, situated at elite academic institutions. It was, in part. And, certainly, you know, BMCC is a case in point, so, I mean, even by '66, '67, students were beginning to organize, and as I said, there was an active SDS chapter there.

VÁSQUEZ: But, just a little more about what you first found when you got there. You described the students a little bit. Do you want to say a little bit about your colleagues, or the administration in those early years, right after the school was founded?

PERLSTEIN: Well, again, I would defer to Bill on the administration in the first couple of years.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, the first president was a man named Martin Dworkis, who basically got the presidency as a payoff for running against John Lindsay in the silk stocking congressional district. He was put up as a sacrificial lamb, knowing that he was going to lose to Lindsay, but he was promised by the Democratic powers-that-be, in the city.

SCHRECKER: Spell the name again.

FRIEDHEIM: D-W-O-R-K-I-S.

PERLSTEIN: Martin was his first name.

FRIEDHEIM: Martin Dworkis, you know, who, I think, had a Ph.D. in Public Administration from NYU. And, he had, I exaggerate slightly, you know, a kind of white man's burden view of the role of BMCC, it was really to civilize—you know, that's why the dress code—civilize these students, prepare them to succeed in mainstream society. And, within a year or two, he dropped dead of a heart attack, in fact in this student handbook that we'll talk about later, there's a very impolitic, uh, cartoon in very bad taste—impeccable bad taste—of Dworkis collapsing over a—

supposedly he was eating Chinese food over a Chinese menu, but, uh... Under him was a man named Eric James who was an African American former ambassador to Liberia. The administration was maybe half African American, half White, I don't think any Latino administrators. Students, um, were, I think generally, you know, maybe—I don't know if Jim would agree—at least back—certainly back then and later, too, I mean, some of the school's students were very poorly schooled in basic skills. But, a lot of the students, even back then, were older, had had some experience in the world, became quick learners, um, and I think the quality of most students was pretty good. Some of them, pretty bad, but a number of students, you know, quite good. And, back then, the student—the college had, maybe initially a couple of thousand students, by 1970, 7,000 students, today it has about 25,000 students.

[00:15:43]

VÁSQUEZ: By '70, there was seven thousand, you said?

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, I think seven thousand.

PERLSTEIN: And the—I think something more should be said about the physical setup, because it had political and social implications.

FRIEDHEIM: Right, absolutely.

PERLSTEIN: As Bill pointed out, there were a number of rented buildings—space, rented space in buildings around midtown, going all the way from around 48th Street, all the way up to 70-something Street. And, I taught history classes in the Tango Palace, which had a big neon sign over it that said, *50 Beautiful Girls*, fifty. It had, you know, it had long since ceased to be a dance hall, but the sign had not been taken down. And then, there was this Knights of Pythias building up on 70th Street, which, as Bill said, had these thick walls, no windows. My partner Lolly, who taught English as a Second Language at BMCC was one day there with the elevator inspector, and they went up to the top floor, and when they got to the top floor, he said, 'We're walking down. This is not safe.' The Dean of Administration, to save money, shut off the heat during intersession, and all the pipes froze in the building and burst. You know, so it was, it was a set of bizarre and disrespectful physical circumstances that, I think, students reacted to. I mean, they were treated on all sorts of levels with, you know, patronization and, almost contempt. And, whatever else entered into their radicalism—this was part of it, you know? You know? If your attitude towards me is 'Fuck you,' then fuck *you*, you know? It was that kind of thing.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, I mean, absolutely. The physical conditions of BMCC spoke volumes about the contempt for students.

VÁSQUEZ: Right. That's a great scene you've set, sort of, in context, you've set for everything that follows. In terms of the faculty, was there a union?

PERLSTEIN: There was.

VÁSQUEZ: What was presence—the union presence? And, just maybe say something about the other faculty a little bit?

FRIEDHEIM: Sure, yeah, the... This was before the PSC was established, which was, a combination of two unions, the United Federation of College Teachers and the Legislative Conference. At BMCC, there was a United Federation of College Teachers Chapter. The UFCT behaved—the Legislative Conference had been organized, maybe twenty, twenty five years earlier. A key woman in it was Belle Zeller, and it was not really a union, it was essentially a lobbying outfit. And, somewhat effective in lobbying up in Albany, you know, particularly in Albany. Less so at City Hall. The UFCT was part of the AFT. It was headed by a man named Israel Kugler, and in 1966, there was a chapter at BMCC which was headed by very proper, older faculty member, very sweet guy named Roger Dooley, who taught in the English department. And, he didn't want to continue doing it, and even though it was my second year there, I said, "Alright, I'll run for chapter president," which I did and from '66 to '72, served as chapter chair of the United Federation of College Teachers chapter there, and then in '72, when the UFCT and the Legislative Conference merged, for a year or two, I was co-chair together with this fellow called—named—called?—named Joe Winters, who was, at the time, Chair of the Legislative—

SCHRECKER: This was until '72, when it merged?

FRIEDHEIM: This was in '72, when there was a merger. And, then I have a little more history with the UFCT. In 19—let's see, I wrote it down here. In 1968 and 1969, I edited the citywide newspaper of the UFCT, which was called *Action*. And, actually Is Kugler, who was president of the UFCT, gave me a pretty free hand. So, in one issue, you know, we did a big front-page story, we got a cartoon from David Levine, who, you know, did the *New York Review of Books* cartoons about repression at the Queensborough Community College campus, where a young President, only 29 years old, his name was Kurt Schmeller, uh, fired three faculty members. His main target was Don Silberman, who was in the Progressive Labor Party at the time, and then two other faculty, one of whom, Ron Radosh, you know, moved very far to the right, but was on the left, uh, at that time. And so, Kugler allowed me to do a front-page story on that. And, the UFCT was also active, and made somewhat of a name for itself in New York City coming to the defense of 31 or 32 faculty who were fired at St. John's University, and fought for them—unsuccessfully, but it did wage a pretty fierce, um, fight. And then, Jim and I were involved in the UFCT when there were bargaining elections under the Taylor Law. The Taylor Law, I think, was passed in '67 and it allowed public employees to organize that, and so, there was, um, some dispute over what form an election would take at the City University and finally it was decided, um, much to the protest of the UFCT that there would be two bargaining units: one for untenured faculty, and one for tenured faculty.

PERLSTEIN: Or tenure track.

FRIEDHEIM: Tenure track faculty. And, the Legislative Conference won that, I think 54% to 46%, well, for non-tenure track, you know, the UFCT won 70 or 80%, you know, to 20% or 30%. So, had there been one bargaining unit, the UFCT would have won it all. And then—stop me if I'm going too long on that, um, the Legislative Conference affiliated with the NEA, the UFCT was with the AFT, both of them were on the verge of bankruptcy, fighting one another, and I think that's what mainly prompted the decision to merge in 1972.

PERLSTEIN: But you know—just as a, sort of, political observation, it's always struck me—even after the merger and the membership in AFT, it always struck me as meaningful that the name of this union is the Professional Staff Congress. Not the CUNY College Teachers Union or something that would clearly identify with working people, the labor movement, and so on. I don't think it's accidental at all.

FRIEDHEIM: It's not accidental. And that was pushed by, you know, the leadership of the Legislative Conference. Kugler, I know, wanted a different name.

SCHRECKER: And this, this was a, um, compromise that they had to have a name that didn't include any of the other words that had been in the titles of the other unions.

PERLSTEIN: I defer to you on that. I don't know that I ever unders—I never knew why that particular title was chosen.

SCHRECKER: It was in a Kugler war.

PERLSTEIN: Uh huh.

VÁSQUEZ: So, when did things start, um—what kind of early—what were the early struggles or issues that you engaged in, and did you immediately, sort of, team up and work together on any issues? Or, were you, kind of, doing separate things in those early years?

PERLSTEIN: No, I think it was a small enough institution, um, so that people found each other. You know, it was similar to the experience I had as an undergraduate, where I craved somebody I could talk to who would be a sympathetic ear, and I think something similar happened at BMCC. At least, that was my experience.

VÁSQUEZ: And so, what were the—you found a group of people, and what were they mostly concerned about?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, people did gravitate to the UFCT to a certain extent, and we put out a newsletter called *The Gadfly*, which was not simply a union newsletter. It was kind of a general journal for BMCC faculty, and it had, not only articles about the union, um, but it had humor in it, it had literature, it had satire, it had movie reviews, um, a little over-ambitious. And then, as Jim said, because the institution was still relatively small at the time, um, left-leaning faculty kind of found one another. So, there were a number of people in the English department whom we

joined forces with: Ruth Misheloff, Kathy Chamberlain, Naomi Woronov. In 1969, students—at that point, the student population was becoming much more African American and Hispanic—students founded an organization called the Third World Coalition. We started a chapter of the New University Conference, and I don't remember very many details about that, maybe Jim does. Um, and...

SCHRECKER: Oh, I am very interested in the New University Conference.

FRIEDHEIM: ... and, students and faculty organized a women's liberation group. That was '69 when it began to percolate.

PERLSTEIN: And I think, I think, um, whatever the local situation that is on the campus at BMCC or, um, you know, that this was a time of general ferment, and there was so much going on, you know, not just the antiwar movement, the Panthers, the Young Lords, El Comité. Just surrounded by activity, and—you couldn't not be aware of it and be influenced by it. And, uh, well, I don't—

VÁSQUEZ: You mentioned the antiwar, the demonstration that you all mobilized so many people to go to, starting in Central Park. How did something like that happen, and were there other...?

PERLSTEIN: That was before I got there.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, that was before Jim got there.

VÁSQUEZ: So, were the earliest, um, sort of, act—mobilizing things that you guys did, were they mostly around the war at the beginning?

FRIEDHEIM: No, I don't think they were mostly about the war. I mean, certainly that's what SDS focused on. The more nationalist, black nationalist groups on campus focused on issues like Black and Puerto Rican studies, um, focused more on issues about, you know, conditions, you know, on the campus. And, I think what Jim said is really important.

VÁSQUEZ: This was before open admissions?

FRIEDHEIM: This was before open admissions, but you know, these were really, kind of hothouse years, '67, '68 in particular, as we all know. And so, you know, BMCC is part of that context. And also, one of the things that was happening, just beginning to happen in '68 and '69, is, um, an influx of Vietnam veterans to the college. I mean, that changed the college, I think, much more in the '70s than in the late '60s, but already by the late '60s, there were some Vietnam veterans, and then these copies of *Tiger Paper* that I have here, we have interviews with a number of Vietnam, um, veterans.

SCHRECKER: What about the draft? Was that an issue in, at BMCC, while you were there?

VÁSQUEZ: Resisting the draft?

SCHRECKER: Yeah, draft resistance...

FRIEDHEIM: I don't remember it being an issue, do you, Jim?

PERLSTEIN: No, no, I don't.

SCHRECKER: And, there was no ROTC?

FRIEDHEIM: There was no ROTC.

VÁSQUEZ: So, either students were not being drafted because they were full-time students, or they were vets.

FRIEDHEIM: And then it began—

PERLSTEIN: When we talk about the interplay of all the stuff that was going on, I mean, I came to BMCC in '68, but, when I just—the year or two before I'd left Brooklyn College, I was part of the Brooklyn College free speech movement, which had been modeled on what had happened in Berkeley, and there was the, just the beginning of antiwar stuff at Brooklyn College. And so, you know, carried that over to BMCC, at least the consciousness that students were moving.

[00:30:20]

VÁSQUEZ: So, the—you're describing the struggles around black studies, or you know, who had the control over, a bigger influence on the curriculum. Right? And this is—so this is happening pretty early, before open admissions, you're describing it, where people were saying, you know, 'We want this—', what were they saying about how they want—how they envision the college, as students who were active and obviously speaking out on these [indistinguishable].

FRIEDHEIM: Well, they wanted a curriculum that wasn't business-centered. They certainly wanted—they wanted a Department of Black and Puerto Rican Studies. That was, I think, later widened to Black and Latino studies. They wanted—a number of students, you know, were older and had kids and they—they wanted childcare, and actually won that. And in '68 or '69, this group called the Third World Coalition actually organized to run the student government elections and won.

PERLSTEIN: And, then they asked me to be faculty advisor.

VÁSQUEZ: And, what did they want? What were they specifically after?

PERLSTEIN: Well it was, you know Black and Puerto Rican studies, and—

VÁSQUEZ: And, what did they get? Did they break into that?

PERLSTEIN: That was—Yes. That was a struggle that they finally won with support from some black nationalist Faculty in addition to those of us that consider ourselves left. There's something else I want to introduce here. City University was as classist as any place else, despite its origins, and all the romance about the '30s and working class school and so on. And so, you had, at least in people's consciousness, the sense that there were Tier 1 institutions. In those days, it was City College and Queens College. And then, you know, other senior colleges, and then, decidedly second-class citizens with the community colleges. And faculty at the community colleges were very conscious of being looked down upon. And so, the faculty at BMCC, I think, was very much insistent on the importance of a liberal arts curriculum. For, not just, out of some sort of educational philosophy, but out of a sense of protecting their own position and so on, and that fed into, you know, this sort of thing.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, there's—I don't know if I dare—this student handbook that was put together by the Third World Coalition, um, and various faculty, two of whom are in this room, has kind of a history.

VÁSQUEZ: *People's Handbook*, it was called?

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, it was called *You Have the Power*, or *You Have the Power, the Power is With the People: People's Handbook, Manhattan Community College, 1970-'71*, and unfortunately, I don't have a copy of the BMCC official student handbook, which this was, in part, satirized, but I think even in '70 and '71, there were still talking about the dress code, although nobody adhered to it anymore. You know, so it says, "In the Spring of 1969, Black, Latin and Asian students joined forces to form the Third World Coalition for the purpose of dealing with a whole range of issues. But, most urgently, the problem of racism at the college. The B Building was seized in order to press demands for more third-world staff and for third-world—a separate third-world department. Many white students and some faculty realizing that racism was neither right nor in their own interests supported the struggle. The demands were agreed to by the school administration, but most are still waiting to be implemented." This is written in '70, '71. And then, there were sporadic takeovers of buildings and of classrooms, and then in March of 1970, they organized a three-day conference, and basically took over—

VÁSQUEZ: What sparked the takeovers? Sporadic... something must have... Were there individual things that happened, or?

PERLSTEIN: I think the main impetus was the issue of race.

VÁSQUEZ: So, it wasn't something that was done that they were responding to immediately?

FRIEDHEIM: No, it wasn't, and then, more and more as the Third World Coalition took over the student government, you know, the rhetoric changed, you know, so it became explicitly anti-imperialist rhetoric. You know, and that's certainly clear in this handbook...

PERLSTEIN: And one of the things—

FRIEDHEIM: And in their paper called *Prometheus*.

PERLSTEIN: —one of the things that I think was important is that, as a working-class school, as a school that was increasingly Black and Latino, outside political groups saw BMCC as a recruiting ground, as a, um, a center of activity, so the Young Lords sent people into BMCC, Carlos Aponte...

FRIEDHEIM: Absolutely.

PERLSTEIN: ...was really important. C.P. sent in people, Richard Hoyen would be the person there.

FRIEDHEIM: Socialist Workers Party sent in people.

PERLSTEIN: Socialist Workers Party sent in people. El Comité from the Upper West Side had a whole bunch of people there, including the secretary of, well, ultimately she was the secretary of Black and Latino Studies.

VÁSQUEZ: They became students though?

PERLSTEIN: No, no, no, she was an employee.

VÁSQUEZ: Staff. But, when you say they all sent in people, they were—came in as staff or were students?

FRIEDHEIM: No, as students.

VÁSQUEZ: As students, okay.

PERLSTEIN: And, they had a tremendous influence. They had a tremendous influence on the students, they had a tremendous influence on us.

VÁSQUEZ: They had a tremendous influence across the city.

PERLSTEIN: And, I think that, you know, I don't know how to weigh it, but I don't think I'm romanticizing the situation back then to say that in a very, very meaningful way, people like Bill and me, and Naomi and Kathy, and Ruth were politicized by the students.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, I agree with that.

PERLSTEIN: That, whatever our backgrounds, whatever our reading, that there was some aspect of our own political development that was a function of their activity, their way of organizing, and so on. You know, for several years there, I was the fa—as I said, I was the faculty advisor to Third World Coalition and student government. I didn't play any leadership role, at all.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, I'm not so sure about that.

PERLSTEIN: I was, you know—

VÁSQUEZ: Did you feel like that was a bad thing, at the time? Or, how did you feel about your—the position that you did hold for...?

PERLSTEIN: Um (pause). I don't know what, I don't know how to answer. I felt like I wasn't contributing much. I felt like... the only thing I contributed was, when they were proposing some *outlandish* shit, I would—I had at least the sense to say, 'Hey, wait a minute.'

SCHRECKER: Okay, so give us an example [laughter]. What do we need to know?

VÁSQUEZ: Not building takeovers, because they took over buildings.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, they were quite adept at taking over buildings.

VÁSQUEZ: That wasn't outrageous.

PERLSTEIN: I mean, one thing I remember was that they were furnishing their apartments with the furniture from the college, I mean, you know, they were liberating furniture, stuff like that. And, I, you know, I said, "I don't think this is really smart," you know.

FRIEDHEIM: And, they were a mix of Marxists, black nationalists, Puerto Rican nationalists—I think, I agree with Jim, we took our cues from them more than they took their cues from us. You know, I wouldn't necessarily call Jim's role with student government a leadership role, but I think Jim understates the role that he played, they had tremend—

VÁSQUEZ: Presumably you were a little—at least a little older than most of the students?

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, no, not a whole lot older.

FRIEDHEIM: Not a whole lot older.

VÁSQUEZ: Not a whole lot older, no?

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, I was in my, I guess I was in my early thirties, and, you know, I mean a lot of these students were in their late twenties.

FRIEDHEIM: Right, right. And then—

VÁSQUEZ: So, well I'm curious about what went on in the classroom with such a, you know, interesting mix of students, and also sort of, how they work together organizationally. When you worked with them or learned from them, as you point out on certain issues, you know, they came from some pretty serious political differences, right? All probably on the left, but, I'm just curious about that.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, one of the things that I always found kind of exciting, um, other faculty didn't find it particularly exciting, is that students challenged me in class. And, it's interesting, the number of faculty at BMCC later went on to more elite, four-year colleges, always talked about how they missed the BMCC classroom. So, initially when students called for at least one African American history class to be taught, I ended up teaching it, rather reluctantly, because, you know, I didn't think this white guy should be teaching this African American history course. I mean, Joanne Chesimard, Assata Shakur was in my class—

[laughter]

FRIEDHEIM: —and constantly, constantly—well, she was an important part of the Third World Coalition—and constantly challenged me. And, most of the time in very good ways. And, her husband, Lou Chesimard, was Lou a—he was a Vietnam veteran, wasn't he?

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah. And, at least, I thought he was quite charismatic. Well, he wasn't, I think, ever president of, you know, the student government.

PERLSTEIN: No.

FRIEDHEIM: I think it was really Lou who had, you know, a leading, if not *the* leading role, you know, and a really terrific speaker.

VÁSQUEZ: Tell us, tell me about how you ran the class. What did you end up doing with that class?

FRIEDHEIM: What did I end up doing? You know, I used primary sources and tried to introduce the voices of African Americans as much as I could in the class. And, ended up doing less lecturing because it's, students didn't have much tolerance for, you know, like, this white guy—I shouldn't say, “this white guy,” you know, this faculty member lecturing them about African American history. So, you know, in that sense, certainly made changes in my, the way I deported my classes.

PERLSTEIN: I mean, I used Howard Zinn, I used Mike Tanzer's *Sick Society*...

VÁSQUEZ: What were you teaching?

PERLSTEIN: I was teaching American History since the Civil War. I used—what's the name of that—the U.E. published it for years, the history of the labor movement, um

SCHRECKER: I know what you mean.

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, you mean, oh I know what you mean. We all—both used the same books, but you know, *Labor's Untold Story*?

JP :Yeah, Morais, and Boyer, Boyer and Morais. Yeah, I used stuff like that, you know, one of the nice things, at least in those days about BMCC, is that you pick your own textbooks.

FRIEDHEIM: Right. And we both taught against, you know, against the traditional narrative, and traditional texts. We were using stuff—

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, yeah.

VÁSQUEZ: Did you have the same experience that Bill describes of students, sort of, eagerly talking and...?

PERLSTEIN: I don't remember, I, no.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, this was particularly in this one class—

PERLSTEIN: I don't remember being challenged, I mean, because—

FRIEDHEIM: —the African American history. But, I was challenged in other classes too, but not as much.

PERLSTEIN: But you were, you know, you were... Somehow, any sort of anti-authoritarian—not authoritarian, anti-authority stance was something that the students found sympathetic. But, an interesting experience that was part of this for me was, there was this guy Ralph Hudgins, who was part of Third World Coalition, and he said to me in a Third World Coalition meeting at one point—and I can't—I'm paraphrasing, I don't have the right—he says, he said to me, “You're not black.” And, you know, “You're a good guy and it's nice to have you around, but why aren't you out organizing white working-class students?” And, I found, and I think this was true for some others, that it was very comfortable being a middle-class white academic in this circle of very radical black and Latino students. It was a very safe place to be, you know? You were their friend, everybody else was their enemy, you know? But, I got called on it. And, I recognized that I really didn't have any sort of understanding of the white working-class kids who were at BMCC,

and any capacities—any capacity to communicate with them as easily as I could with the black and Latino students, you know?

[00:45:37]

SCHRECKER: Did you try, or...?

PERLSTEIN: I tried in a peculiar way. I hooked up with a group in the Bronx called White Lightning, and that's a whole other story that's, you know, separate from the academic stuff. But, they were doing community organizing in the Northwest Bronx. They had grown out of the Lincoln Hospital takeover. And, they had been told the same thing, they'd been part of the—with the Lords and the Panthers, the takeover of the hospital, and they went, "Hey, we don't need you in the South Bronx, go up to the Northwest Bronx." And so, through somebody I knew, who was connected to them, I start—I, so that's the way I began to, sort of, try to deal with this issue. But, that was, that was the strongest challenge I ever got, rather than specific challenge in the classroom to a particular position I took, or, you know.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, I and several of the other faculty, you know, eventually joined the Revolutionary Union. That was kind of our response to that. But, um...

VÁSQUEZ: And, when you say—was that an outside-of-the-campus—you didn't do that on campus?

FRIEDHEIM: Both.

VÁSQUEZ: Both. So, it was open on campus, and faculty and students—

FRIEDHEIM: It wasn't always open.

VÁSQUEZ: Oh.

PERLSTEIN: No.

FRIEDHEIM: At one point, it did become open.

SCHRECKER: What about the rest of the faculty? I mean, you guys obviously were among the most radical, but what was the majority of the faculty like?

FRIEDHEIM: Well actually, can we maybe, because I think more events after 1970, particularly as we dealt with a really incompetent, corrupt administration, and as we put out this paper called *Tiger Paper*, I think a lot of faculty respected us. I think a lot of faculty thought we were crazy, um, I think it was really kind of a mix. But, we were the ones who organized and stood up to the administration, and I think we gained a certain respect from that—you know, from, you know, my union work in the '60s, I was the Co-chair in '72 when we had the merger, and maybe we

can talk about it a little later, dealing with the administration of Edgar Draper—Edgar Draper became President when, in late April and early May of 1970, I think it was 56 students and two faculty—the two faculty are right here in this room—were arrested.

SCHRECKER: How many students?

FRIEDHEIM: I think it was 56. That's kind of what rings...

PERLSTEIN: Sounds right.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah. Including some of the people, obviously, you know, Ralph Hudgins and Lou Chesimard and Joanne Chesimard, all these people then in—

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, there's um, there's a photograph here of us all being arrested, well of the students, they have this—

VÁSQUEZ: And that's—what's that book? Identify that.

FRIEDHEIM: This is the yearbook, 1970-71 BMCC yearbook. So, it was around the time—not around the time, you know, it was the time of Kent State and Jackson State, it was, you know, things were happening, not only all around the city, but all around the country. You know, there was already turmoil at the college over who was going to control Black and Puerto Rican Studies, over the child care center, over a whole bunch of other demands that students had. And, it was kind of interesting, because back then, police headquarters was down on Centre Street, so what happened is, students and some faculty, you know, would take over the building, the police would send a School bus up from Centre Street and then up 6th Avenue.

VÁSQUEZ: A special school bus, you were the special kids.

FRIEDHEIM: Right, but I can't tell you how many times that school bus came up. And, you know, it was kind of great comedy because we would always have somebody on the corner of 6th Avenue and 51st Street, you know, on lookout, and when they saw the school buses coming up 6th Avenue, they would run in and we'd evacuate the building. You know, and then the school buses would turn around and go back down to Centre Street. You know, and then an hour later, they would—I don't know if it was an hour later or two hours later—they would come up again and, you know, this went on, I think, for a day or two, until finally, the police understood that maybe they had to take a different route to get up to BMCC, and they arrested, you know, the 56 students and the two faculty, and they took us to the Manhattan North Precinct.

VÁSQUEZ: What was the date of that?

FRIEDHEIM: The takeover was April 30th, but I think it was probably May 1st or May 2nd or something like that by the time we were arrested. It was—

VÁSQUEZ: May Day.

PERLSTEIN: Classes had—regular classes had been suspended, though, Well, before that, before the arrests.

FRIEDHEIM: Before that?

SCHRECKER: '70.

FRIEDHEIM: 1970.

SCHRECKER: This is Cambodia?

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, Cambodia, Kent State.

SCHRECKER: Kent State was May 4, so this was before Kent State.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, the arrests, I think, were actually—

PERLSTEIN: When was Jackson State?

SCHRECKER: That's later.

FRIEDHEIM: The arrests might have been after May 4. I don't know, does the *Yearbook* indicate it?

PERLSTEIN: It may, I haven't, you know, looked that carefully.

VÁSQUEZ: So, what happened when you all got arrested?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, they put all the women in one cell and all the men in another cell. And, then I told you this story about wiseass cop comes up and he says, "Is there a William Friedheim here?" And then, you know, I forget who the student was; he was a plumber, African American, 6'5", 6'6", and he said, "Who are you calling William Friedheim?" He said, 'You know who that is? That's *Mad Dog* Friedheim."

SCHRECKER: [laughter].

FRIEDHEIM: And, students just broke out laughing, because nobody could confuse me with a mad dog.

VÁSQUEZ: And, why was he looking for you? Why were you...?

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, just that—because he knew there were two faculty there, and he wanted to hassle, if not both of us, at least one of us. I don't know why he chose me. And then, you know, the charges were trespassing in our own building, you know, of course they were thrown out. Elliot Wilk, you know, later became a judge, from the National Lawyers Guild, was our lawyer, he said, “Yeah, don't worry about this.”

PERLSTEIN: And, his son is now a faculty member at Fashion Institute of Technology, and is along with me, a delegate to the Central Labor Council, it's a funny, funny coincidence. And, what I discovered—I was up for tenure. In those days, tenure came after three years. I was up for tenure, and I understand that there was a special discussion at the Board of Trustees and it just so happened that a friend of my then-wife's family was on a—was a board member. And, that saved my ass.

FRIEDHEIM: Who was this, who was the board member?

PERLSTEIN: Mineola Ingersoll, her name was. So, I found out later, because Mineola—Mineola spoke to my then-mother-in-law and said, you know, “Tell him to be a little more careful.”

[laughter]

FRIEDHEIM: It was kind of amaz—I had tenure at that point, but a number of us in our group did not have tenure, although eventually, in 1975, at the time of the fiscal crisis, when there were guidelines set up, um, for laying faculty off, the administration manipulated—they was supposed to be in order of hiring, you know, so, the most recent hired were let go first. And, one woman, Ruth Misheloff was put on a place in that pecking order where she should not have been, so that she would be fired. She eventually got her job back. And, within a week—you know, I've got the article here, so maybe that will give you a sense of the date—“College Head Quits After Strike”—and this is dated May 19th in the *New York Times*, so it was probably, I would guess after May—you say Kent State was May 4th?

SCHRECKER: Yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: So, it was probably after that. Because, this was about a week—yeah, it says, “Dr. Murray H. Block resigned Sunday as the president of the Borough of Manhattan Community College, following disorders last week.” So, this is dated May 19th.

VÁSQUEZ: So, sometime in the teens, probably.

FRIEDHEIM: And then, this man, African American, Edgar Draper was appointed acting president, and then was later appointed president. And, he almost ran the college into the ground.

VÁSQUEZ: So, that's right around the implementation of open admissions? How did that play out?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, open admissions was implemented in '69, right?

SCHRECKER: Yes.

FRIEDHEIM: Well—

SCHRECKER: What do you mean, by practically running the college into the ground?

FRIEDHEIM: Ruining the college.

PERLSTEIN: Ruining.

FRIEDHEIM: He did run the college.

VÁSQUEZ: Immediately ruining, or eventually ruining?

PERLSTEIN: No, he was—he had a Ph.D. in political science from NYU—

FRIEDHEIM: And, also in public administration, all these people, I think had been Dworkis's students at NYU. Dworkis taught at NYU in the School of Public Administration.

PERLSTEIN: I mean, he was, he was a real Neanderthal, and, but well-connected, politically. And just a total incompetent. Just a total incompetent.

FRIEDHEIM: He was instructed by the board to set up remedial programs at BMCC for open admissions students, which he did not do. Then, finally, in 1974, then Chancellor Kibbee tried to get rid of him, and Kibbee had a 123-page report—the only reason I know this is because I went back into the *Times*, you know, found some articles. Kibbee had a 123-page report written up detailing all the sins of the Draper administration. This is two years after our union, then the PSC, in 1972, drew up a bill of particulars against Draper, which the Board did not pay any attention to. And then, when Draper was to be inaugurated as President in 1972, three days after Attica, he invited Nelson Rockefeller to be his keynote speaker. Rockefeller evidently accepted, then a week later, you know—

VÁSQUEZ: Thought better of it?

FRIEDHEIM: —thought better of it, and decided, you know, particularly at this college with, primarily, third-world students.

VÁSQUEZ: So, how—so, with open admissions, did the student body immediately, um, multiply numbers? How did you see changes coming out?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, part of that was constricted by space, because we were in these rented—

VÁSQUEZ: You had several buildings. Scattered...

FRIEDHEIM: —we were in these rented buildings. So, I don't—right, Jim? I don't think the college got considerably bigger in the '70s—

PERLSTEIN: No, I don't, I don't—

FRIEDHEIM: —and then in, in '75, it was cut back some after the fiscal crisis.

VÁSQUEZ: So were you trying to do—I mean, did you feel that you needed to change the classes, or change what you did because of the influx of students—because of the different students being able to attend college after open admissions? Did you notice a change in the student body at all?

PERLSTEIN: I can't say that, my—I don't recall.

FRIEDHEIM: I think there was somewhat of a change, but not great. As I started to say before, the thing that had the most influence on me, was—by the mid '70s—was the influx of Vietnam veterans.

VÁSQUEZ: Because you were already serving working-class kids.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, but it's also an indication of an older student body. You know, I don't know what the average—it would be interesting to find out what the average age was in 1965, and what the average age was ten years later. You know, certainly now, the average age of students at City University's community colleges is probably 24 or 25. It might have been close to that in the mid-'70s, but it was certainly an older student body than when I started in '65, and more experienced. And, I found—I don't know what your experience was, Jim—but, that I drew more and more on their experiences, particularly the Vietnam vets, who had been through hell, and teaching an American history course.

VÁSQUEZ: Tell us about that. Tell us more what that was like when—were those...?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, like Jim, you know, my text of choice, I guess, back then was, you know, Howard Zinn.

SCHRECKER: Was that published that early? *People's History*?

FRIEDHEIM: I think it was—

PERLSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: —or at least, yeah, I think it was. You know what, maybe it wasn't.

[01:00:02]

SCHRECKER: I'm not so sure.

FRIEDHEIM: Not so sure... But, Zinn, Zinn had a couple of chapters on the Vietnam War that was in a smaller book.

SCHRECKER: Yeah, he'd written books about Vietnam.

FRIEDHEIM: So, it might have been... But, I know that in my approach to the war in Vietnam, you know, I tried to encourage students to speak about it. And, I said, if they're uncomfortable speaking about it, tell me, and you know, you don't have to. And, so interesting that a lot of veterans in my class—and it was mainly the '70s, and back then there was a much more generous G.I. Bill than there is now. So, I mean, people were really encouraged, you know, after getting out of the service.

VÁSQUEZ: And, they did speak about their experiences?

FRIEDHEIM: They did certainly speak about their experiences.

VÁSQUEZ: What kind of things did they share with—in class?

FRIEDHEIM: One of the things they certainly shared, at least, you know, the black students—and the majority of them were black—was just, you know, the racism of the whole experience. And, in a couple of copies of the *Tiger Paper* that this faculty group put out, you know, we started that in—I think I wrote it down—I think '71, we published it through '74. And in a couple of issues, we did interviews with Vietnam vets, and that would, kind of, give you a sense, of, you know, the experiences that they talked about. But, you know, it's basically what we know about the history of the war, and what life was like for black and Latino grunts in the Army and Marines and Navy—well, mainly the Army.

VÁSQUEZ: It's interesting that they were speaking in class, speaking out, or maybe offering...

FRIEDHEIM: I don't know if that was more me—

VÁSQUEZ: ...students who were not speaking, right, vets who were not talking about it.

FRIEDHEIM: I was also working on a project, then, you know, um, with this guy—I forget his name—this guy from the University of Pittsburgh, you know, trying to develop a curriculum on the Vietnam War. But, and it was also interesting, you know, I mean, I would show videos in class, maybe it came out a little later, it was—Ellen, maybe you'd know the date of *Hearts and Minds*, you know, which won an Academy Award for Best Documentary, but I think that was mid-'70s.

SCHRECKER: Could have been. I don't know.

FRIEDHEIM: You know, and I know that that film just really resonated in class. That was, what, Peter Davis?

SCHRECKER: Yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: But, meanwhile, just back to the administration, you know, and this is what I think won us some allies among faculty, at least respect, while others, kind of, you know, kept us at a distance is, Draper had the gall to organize a testimonial dinner and pressured faculty to buy \$20, which would be like, \$100 dollars today, for like, a ticket.

SCHRECKER: For himself?

FRIEDHEIM: A testimonial dinner for himself. He had his deans organize it for him. And, this was in the, you know, 123-page report that Kibbee wrote—Kibbee actually—the report actually cited a paragraph or two from the PSC publication on campus, you know, attacking this. We, as an ad hoc committee of the union, organized a picket line in front of, now I guess it's the Sheraton Hotel, it was called the Americana back then, on 53rd and 7th Avenue. And, this was when Kibbee, for all the wrong reasons, I think, was trying to get rid of Draper, mainly, you know, he was concerned—Kibbee was concerned—there was an article in the *Times* called, "Wide Deficiencies Seen at Manhattan Community"—there were a couple of articles that made the front page of the *Times*. This was 19—May of 1974. It made the students really look kind of stupid. And it was really, kind of—it was an attack on Draper, but it was also an attack on the college, and clearly, this stuff had been leaked by the Kibbee administration—Kibbee was chancellor then—to the *New York Times*. And, I'm just surmising, but you know, maybe, I assume she's not still alive, but the board member back then.

PERLSTEIN: Oh, Mineola Ingersoll, no she's not alive. Long dead.

FRIEDHEIM: That, one of the things that Kibbee was concerned about at BMCC was this Third World Coalition. I don't think he was that concerned about faculty, you know, who worked with him. You know, that was considered a big threat, and the Draper administration wasn't successful at, um, dealing with the Third World Coalition. They tried in rather heavy-handed ways.

PERLSTEIN: You know, I'll come back to the question, , that you raised about, what was the attitude of the other faculty? And, I'm reminded of this, um, bit from, in Mel Brooks's *2,000 Year Old Man*, when Carl Reiner asks him, um, "Did you know Joan of Arc?" and he says, "Yeah, I used to go out with her," and then, Reiner said, "What did you think about her visions?" and Mel Brooks says, "I told her, you go see friends, I'm going to wash up." And, that was basically the attitude of most of the faculty, you know, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, right. Draper's an asshole, the Vietnam War is wrong, um, open admissions is a good thing. Now, fine." You know.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, I think the Mel Brooks metaphor sounds about right. Kind of nicely... Now, one other thing that I should mention is, the Draper administration, um, siphoned off—back then, there was no tuition, but there was a \$60 a year, I think—eventually—by '75 there was a \$60 a year student fee.

VÁSQUEZ: Wow, that's a lot for back then.

FRIEDHEIM: At all the CUNY colleges, and that money was supposed to be controlled by student government. And, the Draper administration siphoned off that money for testimonial dinner, for all sorts of things. And, when that was discovered—I forget the figure—but I think it was several hundred thousand dollars was then owed to student government. And, student government in 1972 organized trips. One trip, I think 60 or 70 students to Latin America, and another trip to Africa, and the trip to Latin America—you know they wanted some faculty chaperones, and I barely spoke a word of Spanish, and they said, “Would you be one of the chaperones?” and I said, “I don’t speak any Spanish,” and they said, “Don’t worry about it, you’ll have 70 translators with you.” And, it was a very political trip, largely organized by a member—guy—

VÁSQUEZ: So, you were one faculty?

FRIEDHEIM: No, no, no. There were five or six, and the others were Hispanic.

VÁSQUEZ: What was that like?

FRIEDHEIM: And, it was a fascinating trip, mainly organized through the political contacts of this faculty member José Antonio Irizarry, who was eventually fired by the Draper administration, who the students, you know, brought in to teach Puerto Rican studies, and he was—

PERLSTEIN: And, he was connected—I believe he was connected to El Comité

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask you, you know, I knew there was an important political connection there. So, I mean, first, we flew down to Bogotá in Colombia, and he had connections with political—

VÁSQUEZ: And, what year was that?

FRIEDHEIM: 1972, the summer of '72. All sorts of connections with, you know, things were really happening at, you know, the main university in Bogotá, but also in the *barrios*, he had connections with all sorts of left political groups. Same thing in Peru. We went to Lima next.

VÁSQUEZ: How long was the trip?

FRIEDHEIM: The trip was, maybe, two and a half, three weeks. And then, the most exciting part—this is '72, the year before the Allende government was overthrown—was in Santiago, where we had interviews with every group, you know, on the left, you know, from the Communist Party, which was more to the right, in that group, to the mayor, you know, who kind of anticipated the problems that were going to happen, you know, like, you know when we asked the people in the C.P., you know, “Aren't you concerned about the military?” “Oh, no, no, no. Chile has a democratic tradition, nothing will happen.” Um, the mayor had a more realistic view of what was going to happen. And, I believe the mayor kind of stood off to the left of Allende. And then, from there, we flew to Puerto Rico where, of course, José Antonio Irizarry had even more connections. So, this very political trip, organized by the student government, which was controlled by Third World Coalition with money that kind of fell into their lap, because the Draper administration had illegally siphoned off funds.

VÁSQUEZ: I was going to say, I bet they had a really good party.

FRIEDHEIM: You know, and I'm sure that must have infuriated people, then 80th Street, you know, when the board was—

VÁSQUEZ: Wow, that's amazing, that sounds like an amazing trip.

FRIEDHEIM: —was located.

VÁSQUEZ: So, you mentioned earlier budget cuts that came in with the fiscal crisis, or cuts to the school. So, how did all of that start? And what was the response?

FRIEDHEIM: Jim? You want to—I mean, my memory is more hazy on that.

PERLSTEIN: Well, this is going to be a gap you're going to have to fill somewhere else, because—it's sort of complicated, but in this crisis period, I was virtually absent from, from the fight. I was involved up in the Bronx with this organization, White Lightning, I was doing community organizing, and I just, you know, I was on the sidelines.

FRIEDHEIM: I was more involved through the Revolutionary Union—the RU—and certainly worked with other faculty around the city. I don't know if Jerry was involved in that? I mean, certainly, Bart Meyers and whole bunch of people at Brooklyn College were.

VÁSQUEZ: Right, on all different campuses, yes.

FRIEDHEIM: You know, Steve Lieberstein at CCNY, and we put tremendous pressure on the union to do organizing around this, um, and actually—

VÁSQUEZ: Well, what was the threat? What did you see as the imminent threat?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, we knew what the threat was.

VÁSQUEZ: What were they—what were they saying about the school?

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, that they were going to close us for several weeks.

VÁSQUEZ: Close it complete—close it, hmm...

FRIEDHEIM: Which they did. The university was closed for two or three weeks. And, we weren't going to be paid, and then eventually, there was, you know, I think it was part of the '76, you know, PSC contract negotiations where they—

PERLSTEIN: You really have to talk to Gerry Meyer, and talk about the situation at Hostos.

FRIEDHEIM: Right. They were going to close Hostos—they were going to close John Jay, which, you know, certainly...

VÁSQUEZ: Right. I was just wondering what BMCC, what, you know.

FRIEDHEIM: No, BMCC wasn't in danger of being closed. You know.

PERLSTEIN: it was the only comm—

VÁSQUEZ: Were the programs being cut back? The specific, any of these programs that the students were caring about?

FRIEDHEIM: No, it wasn't—they weren't doing it that—my recollection is that they weren't doing it that way. It was like, wholesale closures of institutions was the priority, it wasn't like—if we save a few dollars here, a few dollars there. And, BMCC was safe because it was the only community college in Manhattan, and politically, you just couldn't, you couldn't...

VÁSQUEZ: Right.

FRIEDHEIM: I mean, the way it manifested itself at BMCC, as I said earlier, is that they tried to manipulate the retrenchment list so that certain people who were political would be high up on the list. You know, and that was certainly Ruth Misheloff was a case in point, and another faculty member, you know, who's—we used to say back in those days, 'A good, honest force,' her name was Jane Pasnick in the English department realized her job was saved, that she should have been on the list instead of Ruth because they manipulated it. And, always, kind of, felt guilty about it. But, one of the things that we did is we forced the PSC, then on 43rd Street, to open the offices to phone banks and—even though he took credit for it, eventually, there was this huge demonstration where, down in front of the old Tweed courthouse on—which is now, what, where the Board of Education or whatever they call it, is located. You know, and I think there were several thousand people there, and there's Irwin Polishook on a flatbed truck, you

know, reluctantly addressing the crowd. And, none of that would have happened, you know, had it not been...

PERLSTEIN: And I think—I can't cite the exact moment, but I think this was the time, there was a BMCC chapter meeting of the union. And, we among others were calling for action, calling for the union to—

FRIEDHEIM: I've got a [tapping papers] document in here about that.

PERLSTEIN: —do something really militant. And, to this meeting, they sent this guy, Arnold Cantor who was the dir—executive director of the union. And, we were, you know, angry and, you know, saying, “Come on, what are you going to do?” And, he smiled and he said—and this is my, my all-time claim to fame. He smiled and he said, “Remember, you have to be—you want to avoid premature ejaculation.” And, I said, “You're worried about premature ejaculation, and you can't even get it up.”

[laughter]

FRIEDHEIM: Well, that was truly a great moment. You should be proud of that. But, we had an ad hoc strike committee that was actually a committee of the PSC chapter. And, I remember very little about it, I just found one document in my papers, you know, about it, and I, obviously, we never went on strike.

[01:15:13]

PERLSTEIN: No.

FRIEDHEIM: Maybe our hearts were in the right place, but we weren't all that competent in terms of organizing something. So, eventually in '77, the board forced the—BMCC hits the front page of the *Times* again. It was—and, what the article focused on was a doctored Middle States accreditation report, where a team had come into accredit the college. The initial report had some criticisms, relatively mild, but criticisms. The initial report was changed on a typewriter that was traced to the president's office, you know. Everything else in the report was on the same typewriter, you know, back then, obviously, you know, you didn't have word processing. And, you know, the initial report said there was low morale, faculty morale, the administration was a mess, and basically uncoordinated. The final report said just the opposite, high morale for faculty, witness the testimonial dinner for the president, you know two years earlier, and so forth and so on. And, so the *Times* was—again, I don't know if Kibbee was still chancellor. I think Kibbee was still chancellor, obviously, given both reports, the initial draft, and then the final report. And then, it turned out that the guy who was head of the Middle States accreditation team was the president of Essex Community College in Newark, and was about to be fired, and a friend of Draper. And, Draper had some high administrative position open at BMCC and was going to hire him. And, I guess this was *quid pro quo*, you know. So, after that, you know, by August that year, you know, Draper was fired by the board.

PERLSTEIN: And then, I think they gave him a professorship at Baruch?

FRIEDHEIM: Right.

PERLSTEIN: And, he ultimately faded away.

FRIEDHEIM: Anyway, that's the story through the '70s. Ends with kind of a whimper. You got questions, Ellen?

SCHRECKER: Um. Well, I don't know the history of BMCC. You know, when did it start?

FRIEDHEIM: '64.

SCHRECKER: Okay, and it starts from scratch, right?

FRIEDHEIM: Starts from scratch. As I said, you know, it was—Martin Dworkis was appointed the first president. He put together a team of people, one of whom, actually taught with us eventually in the social science department, Jesse Pavis, actually, one-time C.P. member, but not then.

PERLSTEIN: Well and, what was his name? Irv Cohen—

FRIEDHEIM: Irving Cohen, oh god.

PERLSTEIN: —was another old C.P.-er.

FRIEDHEIM: Was he? Oh, Irving Cohen. Right, Irving, I thought you were thinking of Lee Cohen, became the Dean of Students, who was just... so impressed with himself. So, and it was eventually, as I said, to be kind of a feeder for business students to Baruch College.

SCHRECKER: So, the faculty is mostly young? I mean, what—where did the faculty come from?

FRIEDHEIM: I don't know if it was mostly young. I think it was all different. It was—

PERLSTEIN: There was a tremendous range.

FRIEDHEIM: Range. But, mostly white, you know, which of course became an item of protest.

PERLSTEIN: There were a few people who had been high school teachers and...

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah. And then, there was this woman in the English department who wrote—was a playwright.

PERLSTEIN: Oh, *Up the Down Staircase*.

FRIEDHEIM: Up the Down, yeah, something Kaufman, what was her...?

PERLSTEIN: Bel.

SCHRECKER: Bel.

FRIEDHEIM: Bel Kaufman, right. Taught there for a year or two. You know who also eventually taught there? And, the administration tried to fire her a number of times, is Sonia Sanchez, in the early '70s. And, students also organized, you know, to protect her job.

VÁSQUEZ: So, were the students or you guys around, sort of, with—I mean, it wasn't saving the college, as you say, but issues that came up around the fiscal crisis. Were you, or the students, or both, engaged with other—with students on the other campuses? Or was it—

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah.

VÁSQUEZ: —everyone pretty much in—and, how did that happen? How did you... was it—maybe it was through the union, but how did—did students have citywide, were they citywide coordinated and...?

PERLSTEIN: I don't think so.

FRIEDHEIM: Not that I know of. Faculty, where—certainly New University Conference—again, I'm kind of hazy on this, but, and Ellen, you can certainly track down people who were members of the New University Conference, although unfortunately, you know, a great source would have been—

SCHRECKER: I interviewed Bart.

PERLSTEIN: You did?

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, you did interview Bart, good. Yeah, I was just going to say, you know—

SCHRECKER: He was one of the first people I ever interviewed for this project.

FRIEDHEIM: Great, oh I'm glad that you interviewed Bart.

SCHRECKER: Yeah. And I sent the transcript to his wife.

PERLSTEIN: Oh, so Alice—

FRIEDHEIM: Alice has it, okay, good.

SCHRECKER: And, I'll send it to you—it's not a transcript.

PERLSTEIN: She's a neighbor upstate, so...

FRIEDHEIM: But, could you send it to me? She's not at—even though I have a place upstate too, but I'm not a neighbor of Alice's.

SCHRECKER: Oh, you're in that community?

PERLSTEIN: With Shelly and, yeah—

FRIEDHEIM: So, and then—back then, you know I remember, you know, who was this guy from CCNY who was married to the poet? Later committed suicide?

SCHRECKER: Alf Conrad.

FRIEDHEIM: Alf Conrad.

SCHRECKER: Adrienne Rich.

FRIEDHEIM: Adrienne Rich, right. You know, this guy from—

SCHRECKER: Was Alf Conrad at NUC—in NUC?

FRIEDHEIM: I think Alf Conrad was in New University—or at least he was a fellow traveler to New University Conference. I remember meeting with him, that he was very often at meetings, at least that—maybe there was an informal faculty group first, before New University.

PERLSTEIN: And, Nanette Funk was also.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, Nanette—and then, the brother of, not Goodman, but of Schwerner, I think, was teaching at maybe the College of Staten Island, or something like that.

VÁSQUEZ: You mentioned Nanette Funk who we interviewed with Jerry Markowitz and Mike Wallace around *Crisis at CUNY*, the pamphlet, and the Newt Davidson Collective. So, did you guys know about that, and did you have anything to do with any of those folks?

PERLSTEIN: I didn't have anything to do with the—

VÁSQUEZ: Did you use that? Some people have said they used that brochure.

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, I think I used it. Yeah, I mean everybody—certainly at BMCC, faculty knew the Newt Davidson, you know, and we loved the play on David Newton, who was this pompous dean or vice chancellor or whatever.

VÁSQUEZ: So, they didn't announce who they were, they published it by first name only. Did everyone know who they were, pretty much, or you just used it because it was there, the document was there?

FRIEDHEIM: I don't know about—right, Bill Tabb was involved. I think I knew that, and...

PERLSTEIN: Was Jim McDerm—no.

FRIEDHEIM: John McDermott.

PERLSTEIN: John McDermott was he—

FRIEDHEIM: No, I don't think he was part of that.

PERLSTEIN: He was involved with New University Conference.

SCHRECKER: Yes. He was very active there, but he didn't teach in the city.

PERLSTEIN: That's right, he was at Old Westbury, yeah.

SCHRECKER: He was at Old Westbury.

FRIEDHEIM: So...

VÁSQUEZ: You were talking about citywide things, how you coordinated or didn't, or knew what the others were doing. Was there an awareness of what was going on in the other campuses to...?

FRIEDHEIM: Only through New University Conference, and then, you know, thank god you interviewed Bart. My memory of that is kind of hazy. A person who worked for BMCC who was more involved in New University Conference was Ruth Misheloff. I think she was actually—

SCHRECKER: I've interviewed her.

FRIEDHEIM: Hmm?

SCHRECKER: I've interviewed her.

FRIEDHEIM: You have, okay.

SCHRECKER: But, it's sort of like, then you learn a lot more, so you want—need to go back and ask more questions.

FRIEDHEIM: Right, yeah.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

VÁSQUEZ: You said—was she one of the people you said started a women's studies program there, earlier?

FRIEDHEIM: No.

VÁSQUEZ: No. Was it students who started that?

SCHRECKER: Who started that? How did that get started?

FRIEDHEIM: The Women's Studies program. At BMCC—

VÁSQUEZ: Was that Bill?

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, I started the Women's Studies—and Joanne Chesimard was just on my case constantly, "What are you doing teaching the women's studies course?"

[laughter]

FRIEDHEIM: No, um, could have been Nan, but I kind of doubt it.

PERLSTEIN: I don't know. I don't remember her.

FRIEDHEIM: Women's Studies...

VÁSQUEZ: Did it take off? Was it...?

FRIEDHEIM: I don't remember. I don't think Kathy had anything to do with it, did she? Kathy Chamberlain?

PERLSTEIN: I'm drawing a complete blank on women's studies at BMCC.

FRIEDHEIM: No, there was certainly...

VÁSQUEZ: And, you said there was a movement for child care? And, this was at the school, for students? How did that happen? When, and what did they get? You said they actually...

FRIEDHEIM: Well, I think for a while they actually had a child care center. In the B building—you know the buildings were named “A building,” “B building,” “C building.”

VÁSQUEZ: So, that was a student demand, and got...?

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, that was a student demand, absolutely.

VÁSQUEZ: How did they fund that?

FRIEDHEIM: Probably through the student fees.

VÁSQUEZ: You think? Their own student fees, okay.

FRIEDHEIM: Although, that's just a guess. I don't know.

VÁSQUEZ: Any more about that period of retrenchment? Austerity's starting right after the fiscal crisis and lasting for quite a while, really, in one way or another, there were a lot of activities around CUNY, around, you know, cutbacks and the imposition of tuition.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, a lot of that stuff was in the late '80s, early '90s, you know, when Papa Cuomo was governor. You know, I remember there was a huge demonstration, you know, I think of ten or fifteen thousand people. But, my memory's a little hazy on that. You know, I got another box of—you know—

VÁSQUEZ: We're in box 1 today, okay.

FRIEDHEIM: —yeah, box 1 today. Yeah, I've got another box, you know, that maybe will trigger my memory.

SCHRECKER: What about moving to the new building? When did that happen?

PERLSTEIN: '80...8?

FRIEDHEIM: '84 I think.

PERLSTEIN: That late? '84?

SCHRECKER: Was faculty involved in any of those plans, or consulted?

FRIEDHEIM: Not really, not really.

PERLSTEIN: Not really, not really. And, I remember Draper, just, this was a whole commentary. You know the building—you're familiar with the building? Right? It's this long, low—and Draper insisted on referring to it as our campus in the sky.

FRIEDHEIM: And, he always talked, you know, he kind of used the metaphor of the Empire State Building—if you're actually—instead of it lying on its side, you stood it up, it would be as tall as the Empire State Building.

VÁSQUEZ: Funny?

FRIEDHEIM: And then, in '84, they got this cast-off, um, piece of outdoor art, statuary of Icarus. Which they put in front of the building, you know. And, of course, this is just what you want to say to aspiring students, you know, like—

SCHRECKER: Go, haha.

FRIEDHEIM: You know, don't try to fly too high, because your wings will melt. And, nobody in the administration seemed to understand.

PERLSTEIN: And, the statue itself is—it's this torso and the upper legs, so it—the legs are cut off above the knee, and the arms are cut off about here.

VÁSQUEZ: Cut off below the knee. And so...

PERLSTEIN: To say nothing of the fact that his penis is also glued to his leg. But, just the whole thing was just so sick, you know?

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, but I don't know which BMCC president at the time. When faculty, maybe not so subtly, mentioned the symbolism of Icarus, you know, whoever was president—maybe it was Josh Smith, I don't know, but you know, certainly defended having that statue there.

SCHRECKER: And, was the faculty morale very bad?

PERLSTEIN: [sigh]. Yes. You know, again, I go back to this, um, this question of community college faculty feeling like second-class citizens in the eyes of other faculty, and the eyes of the university administration, and stuff like that. So, on that level, morale was always bad. In, I would say, in the '70s, at least up until the fiscal crisis, there was sense that the administration could be fought—you could struggle against it. And, there was a certain comradeship, and a positive sense in that, you know, we're fighting for something good for ourselves and for the students, and so on. I think increasingly—at least now, just, I'm talking personally, I mean, there was a sense that there was this sharp divide between administration and faculty. Once upon a time, it was that administrators were faculty members who had left the classroom and might very well go back someday, but now they were professional administrators, some of them had never been in a classroom. And, the response increasingly was—to any initiative—was, “No, you can't, because.” And, it was telling, you know, that the current president, right away when he came in, I mean, this was way beyond the period that you're interested in, but he referred to

himself as “President and CEO.” That, you know, this, this bottom-line business model—that was incredibly demoralizing.

[01:31:01]

FRIEDHEIM: Certainly, the physical plan, you know, particularly the N building, where Lolly worked. I mean, that certainly affected faculty morale.

VÁSQUEZ: Describe it.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, we described it already, you know, that's the building where—

PERLSTEIN: Well, the Tango Palace.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, but that's not the N building. But, right, so, one set of classrooms right above the Tango Palace, you know, another set of classrooms in the N building, the Knights of Pythias—

PERLSTEIN: Temple with no windows.

FRIEDHEIM: —with no windows, and six-foot thick—

VÁSQUEZ: What had that building been? Six-foot thick walls?

PERLSTEIN: Knights of Pythias Temple. You know, like a masonic temple, or a, you know, no windows because this is a secret org—you know.

FRIEDHEIM: And, Jim described, you know, Lolly going up in the elevator with the inspector, haha, and the guy wouldn't go back down in the elevator. And, then, you know, we've got some *Tiger Papers* here, with pictures of the N building.

VÁSQUEZ: So, tell us about *Tiger Paper*.

FRIEDHEIM: *Tiger Paper* was a group of—

PERLSTEIN: It was a coinage of Ruth Misheloff's, um, and, you know, it was a play on paper tiger.

SCHRECKER: Ohhh.

PERLSTEIN: So, they called it, you know, *Tiger Paper*.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, and it was written by six or seven—occasionally, you know, maybe we put out two or three issues a year? We did from '72—

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

VÁSQUEZ: Was that the drawing by Levine?

FRIEDHEIM: No. That actually, maybe, but that's one that we stole.

VÁSQUEZ: Oh.

[laughter]

FRIEDHEIM: I don't think this was with permission. Yeah, this one, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," you know, that's Nelson Rockefeller, going to...

VÁSQUEZ: Hmm, wow.

SCHRECKER: Did you sign it? Or was this anonymous?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, what we said—we did sign it with those of us who were tenured, but we didn't—we protected the untenured. So, but everybody knew who put it out. Um, so, you know...and I—

VÁSQUEZ: And, how long did it run for?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, what do I have here—oh, '71 to...

VÁSQUEZ: '73? Are these all of the issues?

FRIEDHEIM: I think so.

VÁSQUEZ: '74.

FRIEDHEIM: '74 was probably—oops, I got a double here. What was the last—yeah, this is a different one. And, it certainly used pretty heavy anti-imperialist rhetoric. But, good parts of it, I think, were nicely written. I mean, you can be the judge of that, whether it was or not. You know, I think it was pretty literate newspaper, you know, we were attacked by—

VÁSQUEZ: That's a good sign.

SCHRECKER: How did you finance it? Or you just...

FRIEDHEIM: We asked for contributions, but it was mainly through our own pockets. But, you know, it was in the day and age, you've all been through that, you know, where you—what is it, electrotype, or whatever? You know, you lay out the—

VÁSQUEZ: Yeah, but you had to bring it somewhere to print it.

FRIEDHEIM: Right, you had to bring it somewhere to get it printed.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: And it included, as I say—

VÁSQUEZ: And, how did you distribute it?

FRIEDHEIM: We just left—

VÁSQUEZ: You just left it around...

FRIEDHEIM: —hundreds of copies all over the place. Um, you know, we had a number of interviews with students in here, including, you know Vietnam veterans. And, it was a pretty radical, and I think, nicely written rag, with maybe, if you want to excuse some of the over-the-top, you know, anti-imperialist rhetoric. And so, that was Jim, Ruth Misheloff, Kathy Chamberlain, Naomi Woronov, myself. I think that was it.

PERLSTEIN: Am I right that by the end, it had become pretty much R.U. folks were doing it?

FRIEDHEIM: No, R.U. folks eventually—what's at the bottom of that pile, put out two issues of *Faculty Action*.

PERLSTEIN: Oh, okay.

VÁSQUEZ: And, what was that like? What was—just two issues?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, there was one issue attacking the '76 union contract, I think correctly so, you know. That was the one in the wake of, you know, the fiscal crisis. Another issue was devoted to the Bakke case. You know, that had presumed to be a citywide newspaper, it really wasn't, you know. It was those of us who were in the R.U., you know, and it was basically BMCC people. Mike Zweig, who was at Stony Brook, maybe one or two other people.

VÁSQUEZ: Ok.

SCHRECKER: This is adorable.

FRIEDHEIM: And then we stole—you know, in those days, everybody stole, you know, you were expected to steal—

VÁSQUEZ: Clipped each other's art.

FRIEDHEIM: —you know cartoons, political drawings, and...

SCHRECKER: [reading] “Manhattan Community College's only underground newspaper.”

VÁSQUEZ: Did you want to discuss any of the other items that you brought in the last minutes? Or, any other thoughts about either that later period that we're talking about in the '70s, or even into the '80s? Or, do you want to save that?

FRIEDHEIM: Why don't we save that—I mean, particularly since we were both instrumental— together with lots of other people, you know—starting the New Caucus. And, that's kind of a story unto itself, I think.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: And, a very different period. And, another period, like where, you know, people felt there some possibility of organizing and changing things, and...

VÁSQUEZ: So describe—it was so exciting to hear about when students were really just, as you described in the early years—

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, let me—one other thing.

VÁSQUEZ: Yeah, go ahead.

FRIEDHEIM: What I didn't mention is Sample Pittman.

PERLSTEIN: [laughing]

FRIEDHEIM: You gotta tell the story of Sample Pittman.

SCHRECKER: What's Sample?

FRIEDHEIM: Sample Pittman was kind of a hired hand, by Draper, to be Dean of Students, and basically to police the Third World Coalition. And, he had Third World Coalition members arrested many different times.

PERLSTEIN: Well that was—we would trade arrests. I mean, we once chased him down the street at night and said, “police, police, police,” and we had him arrested. And, then he had us arrested at the same time.

FRIEDHEIM: But, Sample carried a gun. He had a license—

PERLSTEIN: He had an ankle holster.

SCHRECKER: Whoa.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, as a landlord, collecting money. He evidently was licensed to carry a gun.

PERLSTEIN: He was a slumlord, he had tenement buildings in Harlem.

FRIEDHEIM: In one of these *Tiger Papers*, we had an interview with him, you know, “The Wit and Wisdom of Sample Pittman.” I actually interviewed him, and it is just *startling* what he revealed to me.

VÁSQUEZ: So, what happened with him?

FRIEDHEIM: Well, one of the things is, he was—one of the things that the Draper administration did, is, you know, all the deans had to be technically, a member of a department. So, departments voted all these people down, wouldn't give them tenure, or let them be in the department, including Sample. I don't know what department—was Sample supposed to be in the social science department?

PERLSTEIN: I can't remember now.

FRIEDHEIM: But, Sample was also—people said, “No way!”

VÁSQUEZ: Thanks, but no thanks, right, right.

PERLSTEIN: But, according to the governance plans, apparently, the president could place somebody in a department, and so, you know, even if you turned him down...

VÁSQUEZ: Right. But, you said some of the administrators were not even academics at all.

FRIEDHEIM: Well, a lot of them had come out in the—

PERLSTEIN: Well, in the period we're talking about, they still, you know...

FRIEDHEIM: Well, a lot of them came out of the NYU School of Public Administration. So, they had been, um, Dworkis students, the first president, taught Public Administration at NYU. So, Eric James got his degree from NYU, Edgar Draper did, and I think a number of other people in the administration. But I think, you know, the essence of the story—you know, kind of getting back to, you know, Penny Lewis's thesis about the antiwar movement, is, you know, there is lots of stuff happening among working class students and Third World students.

VÁSQUEZ: Are you in touch with any of the students in any way? Have you heard anything?

PERLSTEIN: Yeah—this guy, Richard Hoyen, I see fairly frequently.

SCHRECKER: How do you spell it?

PERLSTEIN: H—his last name is H-O-Y-E-N. And, I think it was—I think, originally, it was Ho Yen, that he was one of these overseas Chinese, he has a Jamaican accent. He was born and grew up in Jamaica, and um, so anyway, he's still around. And he's a schoolteacher.

FRIEDHEIM: He's a school teacher and has, kind of a low-level position in the, you know, U.F.T. leadership, you know, which we egg him on about constantly—

PERLSTEIN: And then, this woman—

FRIEDHEIM: —he's not playing a terribly progressive role.

PERLSTEIN: Maria Ramos is still around.

FRIEDHEIM: Oh, then who's teaching in the Anthropology department at City College?

PERLSTEIN: Oh, well, and then yeah, um ... [snapping]

FRIEDHEIM: Oh I forget her name. Married to a guy who used to teach in our department.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, yeah, it will come to me.

FRIEDHEIM: It's a question of the age and remembering names, and, oh what is her name? Got her Ph.D. and started at BMCC. Actually, we have a number of students who ended up, you know, with Ph.D.'s.

VÁSQUEZ: Staying at CUNY.

FRIEDHEIM: ...and, she teaches in the Anthropology Department at CCNY, but... it will come to me, maybe in the middle of the night, tonight, but I'm not going to call you up when I—

SCHRECKER: Okay, thank you [laugh].

VÁSQUEZ: Any more, any closing thoughts? About this period?

FRIEDHEIM: I think it's good to close on Sample Pittman.

PERLSTEIN: Well, it's just that going back, you know, there's this question that's come up, re—the political relationship between students and faculty. And, it's my sense that we as faculty drew an awful lot of inspiration from the student organizing that was going on, and that was, you know, students, Vietnam vets, the Lords, the Panthers, El Comité. It was in no sense, or very

little sense of students mentoring and empowering, you know—faculty mentoring and empowering students.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, we definitely didn't try to—

VÁSQUEZ: It would be interesting to have an interview with some of the students that you name.

PERLSTEIN: And, my sense is that, insofar as there was real collaboration between students and faculty, the initiative for that came from the students. And, that it's never worked successfully the other way around, where faculty tried to organize students, or get them going, or whatever, you know?

FRIEDHEIM: Clearly, you know, as Jim says, we didn't drive the student movement, the student movement really impacted on us, and I think, changed us in pretty important ways.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

SCHRECKER: Well, that's... Were they—what was the relationship between, um, it's a white faculty with, you know, black and Hispanic kids, or adults as the case may be. Did other faculty members have good relations with their students, or did they resent them, or, you know, were there issues?

FRIEDHEIM: I think both. I think there were some faculty that certainly did resent the students. I don't think they were anywhere near a majority. And, then, the composition of the faculty changed pretty dramatically over 30 or 40 years. And, I think that has something to do with the ghettoization of African American faculty and professional staff at the City University. There are more of them at the community colleges—you know, the percentages are very different at the community colleges than they are at the senior colleges. And then, in terms of Hispanic faculty, you know, the City University can point to Hostos, but not too many other places, and really the only four-year college, you know, where there's a significant mass of African American faculty is Medgar Evers—four-year college in the City University.

[01:45:12]

PERLSTEIN: And, I would say that the fact that, increasingly, um, you know, student body is people of color, the faculty, less and less, but still predominantly white, and therefore—and the whites are faculty, people of color are the students. That really inhibited the capacity of faculty to really empathize with and understand who it was that they were teaching. You know, so that I think that an awful lot of faculty—and I would include myself on some levels—had more stereotypical than experiential—more of a stereotypical than an experiential sense of what their students' lives were like. You know. They—that divide between faculty and student inhibited—and the fact that then people lived, you know, you didn't live in a Black or Latino neighborhood.

At least that was true of 99% of the faculty. So, there was always this, I think, this kind of disconnect.

FRIEDHEIM: Also, an interesting dynamic between us—I'm talking about the radical faculty—and Black and Latino faculty. I mean, there were some who really wanted to protect their positions—who were, I think, quite resentful of us, thought that we were kind of a danger to them. There are others who were nationalists, who we had kind of a mixed relationship with. Some that we had pretty good relations with, but I think it was—I don't know what your sense is Jim, and I think it was a pretty mixed...

PERLSTEIN: No, I think that's absolutely—

VÁSQUEZ: Whether they had tenure or not, it was...?

PERLSTEIN: Yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah and no, and still—and I can understand it, you know? African American faculty—not all of them, but probably more so than most white faculty, tended to play it pretty safely, even when tenured, you know.

PERLSTEIN: You know, there's this toast, “Better a friend of the working-class than a member,” you know? And, that also applies to, I think, you know, “Better a friend of people of color than a member.” And that, you know, plays itself out all the way through this, I think.

SCHRECKER: Yeah, I'm having trouble making contacts with, um, black and Latino faculty members from that period.

PERLSTEIN: We've lost touch—I mean, we could help, theoretically, I mean—

FRIEDHEIM: The only one from a later part of that period, you know, because he's very much a Nationalist, and pretty much of an opportunist, too, Jim?

PERLSTEIN: Bishop?

FRIEDHEIM: Blake.

PERLSTEIN: Blake, I mean, yeah.

FRIEDHEIM: I would assume—I mean, he was older than us, José Antonio Irrizarry, I don't know if he's still alive.

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, Irrizarry, and um...

FRIEDHEIM: The guy who also taught in that department died a couple of years ago, he was on that trip in '72 with me to Chile, um, short guy, friendly. His son became a legal aid lawyer, and my son knows him, but he died a couple of years ago.

VÁSQUEZ: Do you hap—

FRIEDHEIM: Is Sonia Sanchez still alive?

PERLSTEIN: I don't—yes, I think she is.

FRIEDHEIM: I mean, we weren't that—

PERLSTEIN: Yeah, she wouldn't remember us.

FRIEDHEIM: Right, you know.

VÁSQUEZ: So, second hand, do you have a sense of what those faculty members were doing in the classrooms during these student activist, sort of times, or what their relationships, how they may have served students differently than you feel you were able to?

PERLSTEIN: I think for the most part, they—legitimately—were very self-protective. They thought that, you know, we were behaving with the, you know, the privilege of being white and being tenured, you know.

VÁSQUEZ: So, do you feel like they were just more traditional teachers imparting?

FRIEDHEIM: It's hard to say, because, you know, we're talking about 40 years ago. 20 years ago, I mean, there is—something that I was part of, there were a significant number of BMCC faculty—not a majority—who were really into progressive pedagogy. And, you know, for lack of a better term, student-centered teaching. You know, and certainly the History Project, you know, has played a role, some of those people, at least in, um, and across departments at BMCC, certainly in the '90s and the early 2000s before I retired, there were a lot of faculty, you know, who were, I think, willing to take chances in the classroom, certainly made their classes much more student-centered, um, really give voice to students and their experiences, you know, particularly given the nature of the student body, in that we have so many older students, who bring a ton of experience with them to the classroom. I don't think that was the case in the '70s and '80s very much.

PERLSTEIN: But, are you making a comment about race, or no?

FRIEDHEIM: No, I'm not making a comment about race at all, I'm just saying that, generally among faculty at BMCC—you know, I was certainly, in the '90s, and you know, ten years ago, pretty impressed with a lot of BMCC faculty in terms of what they did in the classroom.

PERLSTEIN: But, I would be prepared to make the generalization that, with a few exceptions, you know, for good reasons, Black and Latino faculty were *much* more careful in the way they dealt with the administration, in the way they dealt with curriculum, you know. And, I'm putting "careful," you know, in quotation marks.

FRIEDHEIM: And, then, the Black and Puerto Rican Studies—it wasn't really a department, it was a center, I mean, that was contested turf. The administration, maybe you remember in the early '70s, brought in their own people, um, very conservative academics, and that created more turmoil with students on campus. And, you know, and, that, as we know, is not really atypical, you know—that happened at many places around the United States when those departments became contested turf.

PERLSTEIN: Oh, boy.

FRIEDHEIM: What time is it?

PERLSTEIN: 3:50—20, almost 20 'til four.

SCHRECKER: Yeah, we've been here two hours.

FRIEDHEIM: Yeah, you don't want to hear us yak yak any more.

SCHRECKER: No we do, it's great.

VÁSQUEZ: Well, listen, thank you.

SCHRECKER: Yes, this has been wonderful.

VÁSQUEZ: This was a great, great interview.

PERLSTEIN: It's a pleasure.

VÁSQUEZ: Part two, another day, we'll continue. Thank you very much.

[end of recording]