Houston Asian American Archive Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: SEHBA SARWAR
Interviewers: SHIREEN USMAN (Junior); CONNIE WANG (Junior)
Date/ Time of Interview: May 30, 2013, at 11:45AM
Transcribed by: CONNIE WANG; SHIREEN USMAN
Audio Track Time: 1:07:07
Edited by: Anna Ta (May 25, 2017)

Background:

Sehba Sarwar was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1964. She came to the U.S. to pursue her undergraduate degree in English at Mount Holyoke College in 1983 and later pursued a graduate degree from The University of Texas at Austin in Public Affairs, finishing in 1992. Ms. Sarwar is an accomplished writer, activist, and artist. She has been the founder and artistic director for Voices Breaking Boundaries (VBB) for 13 years, which is an organization that explores issues in education, race, women's rights, and demographic changes in Houston and other parts of the world. She has also worked in the Houston School District as a Journalism and Creative Writing teacher for five years as well as for the Houston Community College. She has published many essays, short stories, and poems in the U.S. and in Pakistan, including the novel, *Black Wings*. She has served on numerous boards, including the board for Planned Parenthood and KPFT radio. Ms. Sarwar naturalized to the United States in 2001, but frequently travels back to Pakistan for work and to spend time with her family. She is currently married and has an eight-year-old daughter with whom she lives in the Houston area. She speaks English, Urdu, and a little Spanish.

Setting:

The interview centers on the topics of labor and capital to develop a working history around the context of childhood experiences, family life, and daily activities. Much attention is given to Ms. Sarwar's various work experiences in Pakistan and the U.S., especially after arriving in Houston. The interview was conducted in a conference room in Ms. Sarwar's office, which is located ten minutes away from Rice University. The duration of the interview spanned a little over an hour with only one brief interruption of a cellphone. Interviewers: At the time of this interview, Connie Wang is a rising Junior at Rice University, and is majoring in English and Art History and minoring in Business. She is originally from Lake Forest, California, and, raised by Taiwanese immigrants, has a personal interest in studying the issues of Asian American identity. Shireen Usman is also a rising Junior at Rice University, and is majoring in Biological Sciences and minoring in Anthropology. She was born in Lahore, Pakistan, but grew up in the Kansas City area and lived there for most of her life. As an immigrant herself, she has an interest in learning more about Asian American History and contributing to the HAAA project.

Interview Transcript:
Key:
SS Sehba Sarwar
SU Shireen Usman
CW Connie Wang
– Speech cuts off; abrupt stop

(?) Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.) and noises

SU: This is Shireen Usman.

CW: And this is Connie Wang.

SU: We are here today on May 30th, 2013 in the office of Sehba Sarwar to interview Sehba Sarwar for the Houston Asian American Archive oral history project. Can you begin by telling us a little bit about who you are?

SS: Um, so my name is Sehba Sarwar... I am… a writer, artist, um, mother, many things. Kind of hard to say exactly what I am. And, I am born and raised in Pakistan, and I… move back and forth in between the two spaces, Houston and Karachi. So, um, what else, I mean I can go on and on. [Laughs.]

SU: Um, so… you were born where in Pakistan?

SS: Karachi.

SU: Okay, and so what was that like, living there and…? Like how long did you live there?

SS: I stayed there until my A-levels, which is the Cambridge exams, which is the college equiv—one, it's one year, so I got one year of AP in college, actually, for that, so I was nineteen when I landed in Massachusetts to go to college and then I went back home after finishing and I didn't have any desire or intention of returning, and I just… worked for a year as–at a newspaper, and then just, whatever, something happened, and I decided let's go to graduate school and I showed up in UT Austin and there I met my husband, and… here I am. [Laughs.]

SU: So the first time you left Pakistan was when you were nine—

SS: I wouldn't call it leaving. I was a student, so, I was going back and forth.

SU: Okay. And which year was that?

SS: That was 1983 when I went to college.

SU: And that was at UT for graduate.

SS: I went to Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts—

SU: Oh, okay.

SS: —for three years. I mean I finished in three years because I got one year AP.

SU: Oh, okay. And so, um, which schools did you go to in Pakistan?

SS: In Karachi, I went to one school only, which was a school called Karachi Grammar School.

SU: Okay. And so, what do you remember about your childhood and the—

SS: Well. [Laughs.] I mean I'm a writer, so I use those memories. I have so many memories. It's kind of hard to say, what do I remember, because I remember a lot, and I write a lot, so… don't quite know how to… address that question except to say that, you know, w–our family's from India, but when they moved after the '47 partition, the whole family moved, so we have, we had a lot of families. My mother's side had family, my father's side had family. Um, and so we just—I remem–I just—my experiences at school were very different from my experiences at home, but we had a lot of family. Cousins, our age, and… it's very different from how it is now, an adult is always supervising, and play dates are organized. There, we were just thrown together, and did whatever we wanted, you know. By, to play hide and seek, or create new plays, or theatre, or went swimming, or, you know, whatever, and then we did the same thing with our friends.

SU: And so did you live just with your parents, or, grandparents?

SS: My grandparents lived upstairs but when I was thirteen, age of, we moved into our own place and my grandparents got an apartment close by.

SU: And so what were your parents' professions?

SS: My father's a medical doc—was a medical doctor, he passed away a few years ago. And my mother was an educator.

SU: Okay, and so, did their professions influence you at all?

SS: Um, well, no, because I never wanted to be a doctor. They wanted me to be a doctor, but I was never interested. So, th-they understood that very fast. Uh we had a very strong arts leaning in our family, so, um, and then I fell into teaching and I discovered that I was actually good in—good at it, when I was in Houston, when I first came here and I worked with writers in the schools, and I taught at HCC, and I have taught at, in print. And I have just taught all over. And I discovered that I was a—and HISD actually, also—and that was just accidental and I never intended to keep doing it, and I'm not, but it's something that I do every now and then because I–I love working with, um, students of all ages.

SU: And so your siblings, did they come to the U.S. too? Or—

SS: Well, same way, just not intentionally. Nobody planned it, and so now my sister just recently moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, she was in Pakistan the whole time and actually she went to London for graduate school, you know, and so we've just been—that's our history of movement. So she's now in Cambridge. Remarried to a Pakistani banker.

SU: Wow. Um, I saw on your website that you grew up in a home of activists, educators,

SS: Mm-hmm.

SU: Uh, can you explain what, what type of like activism—

SS: Well, my mother was an educator working in the government system, so she, uh, got very involved in the—um, she–she got involved in hunger strikes for teachers, for teachers' rights, and for the teacher union. Because obviously, just like here, like just like everywhere in the world, other than the Nordic countries, Sweden and Norway where they pay teachers what they pay lawyers here, um they were not paying well and they were not giving th–thee, you know, benefits or anything, so in the seventies she did, she went on hunger strikes with her, uh you know, with a whole group of teachers. So she wasn't alone, but she was doing it. So that was her history. And my father began the National Student, um, Federation in Karachi which became—it–it was, it was Democratic Student—Democratic Student Federation? And, it–movement? I don't, federalist, somewhere. Um DSL, I think? And it began in Karachi under his leadership and then… it became national, and then he was imprisoned for a year because again, the students had just–the university had just—he was in medical school, but the university had just started; there was nothing for students, no textbooks, no support, no labs, nothing, so, um, it was a demand and a call for action. So. And then of course, all our friends, you know, a—and the thing, the question that I get asked a lot is: why is my art so political? And I don't often—my only response to that is that when you engage with society, when you engage with the world, everything is political because then you have something to say. You know? And that's how, that's how my, sort of, lens has been framed because we've had... you know, boys in our home who've been imprisoned, we've had philosopher's who've been imprisoned, we've had, um, visual artists, dancers who weren't permitted to dance, I mean there's always something to protest, so, you know, and now that I'm based here, there's still, there's no shortage of stuff to protest—to–to speak out about. So. That's what frames my art and the work I do.

SU: And so what did you think of like your father's involvement and these things when you were younger?

SS: I think when you grow up and it's your reality so it's just what it is, and you just go like, okay. I mean he was imprisoned before we were born, so it was—and he became a lot less active, personally, after our birth—after the three of us. We were pretty close in ages, it's like four year gap. It's my sister, myself, and my brother. Um, but… so he wasn't… he was, he was involved to the extent that people would always call on him, and get his advice, and there was always students coming, there was always something happening, but he wasn't necessarily marching. My mother was still more active in that way, because then she got involved in the Women's Action Forum during the Zia years when General Zia, supported by Ronald Reagan, began the covert war in Afghanistan and that was when I was very young, right before I went to college. And so my sister and I got involved and we were marching on the streets with my mother, so you know? That's just been how—and our father suppor–supported us, but he was not on the streets with us.

SU: …um, and so when did you move to Houston?

SS: Um, I call myself more based here, even though maybe it's a lie to myself? Um, in 1992 I was, I finished, sort of finished the graduate program I was in, but I didn't really finish—I set out to finish my thesis, so I moved my—my boyfriend, he was then my boyfriend, moved to Houston to teach, and I just kind of followed him. And we lived together while I finished my thesis and then I went through that whole turmoil of: Do I stay? Do I leave? And then we got married? So, you know.

SU: And so what was your first impression of Houston?

SS: Oh… it was awful. [Laughs.] Um, well also because he was teaching at a really low-income school in east Houston so and–he wanted to really know his students so he rented an apartment in–way east, in like the industrial hellhole of Houston, so, um, i–it was quite scary. And this was pre-Internet, pre-all that stuff where you can Yelp things and find out all the cool places to go, so you know, you have to slowly uncover it yourself, so. I… I did not like Houston, but I think that's [water glass pings] what everybody would say.

SU: And so what was the neighborhood like where you lived at first?

SS: Oh, it was just a three-month thing. I mean it was just the first impression you get, it was just a small apartment in east Houston, it was horrible. You know. So the impression was that this is—and we came from Austin, which is, green, and hilly and you know, whatever. Not that I like Austin necessarily that much either. I found it very segregated and I found it, um, yeah, I just found it a very segregated city. And so, Houston felt that way too, it felt like 610 divided the haves and the have-nots and I've written about that so… and we then got a townhome in southwest Houston, like close to West U, so, and we were there for a while.

SU: So, then, what exactly do you mean by segregated? (00:09:51)

SS: Segregated by race. Because, um, and Houston, and—you can, now that I know the city really well with the work that I do, I really do work on that, um… there are pockets, there are lines, there are neighborhoods which you can identify by race. You know? And in Austin, Austin claims to be very open and, you know, but that line, that I-35 line that divides the east and the, east and west Houston [here she means to say 'Austin'] is very strong. So on the one side it's the university and the ci–state capitol, and on the other side is the low-income area where the majority of the residents are Latino and black, so, you know. And I felt very visible because I was on the west side and I just… felt, and nobody could really relate to a Pakistani they all thought I was Mexican and it was just… Yeah.

SU: Was there ever an instance where someone, like a specific thing that you remember?

SS: A racial incident?

SU: Mmhmm.

SS: No, I just felt, you know I'm from a big city. Karachi is twenty million people, it's becoming one of the fastest growing cities in the world. So, to be in a town, I mean, being in Mount

Holyoke was different because it was just… education. I wasn't really living, I wasn't—private and public school are very different, and I didn't really know those differences, it was just all an adventure. So, um, it was just strange to be in a place and all of a sudden be tagged in a certain way that—although I had been tagged obviously in Massachusetts too and I used to play games, like, 'oh yeah my parents live on camels, and they—I just send a letter,' and they, you know, you [Laughs.] I would just play games because people have these stereotypes, these notions, and oh you know, you must know now how it is. 'Oh you're going back, oh you must avoid the bombs and the drones, and—' [Water glass pings.]. You know. So, did that answer the question?

SU: And so, ah well, how would you compare Mount Holyoke and UT?

SS: Well there's a world of difference. One is a big public university which is co-ed, the other's a small women's college of less than t–two thousand women, so um, classes are small from the beginning, and you know, just, the–the awareness of the world is also much more. You know, p–people in Texas are very much about 'this is Texas and this is—you know—the world,' whereas on the northeast of this country, you, ah, you at least understand state borders if not national, and, um, international borders. I don't, I think there's less consciousness of that because this is such a big state.

SU: Hmm. So did you feel like you liked one more than the other, or?

SS: I didn't, I don't like the cold weather is my problem. [Laughs.] So… I don't think I could handle eight feet of snow again. By the end of my college years—and I was an undergrad—I–I couldn't even leave my dorm room, by my last year, because I–it—and we were very spoiled. We had cafeterias downstairs, and you could just roll down in your shorts and just eat and roll back up and skip all your classes until the snow melted. So. You know. You didn't have that option at UT. [Laughs.] And nor was it ever that cold that you necessarily wanted to, you know.

SU: So did you notice any, have you noticed any change bet–in Houston, as, since you've moved here? Like maybe with the segregation you were talking about..?

SS: Well I don't think Houston is segregated with sharp lines in the same way, I mean, it is and it's not. I think the low-income areas remain low-income, I don't think the–that has changed, in fact it probably has gotten worse. And also the numbers have changed, so probably when we first landed here… the majority population was white, and now the majority is Latino, so that has happened over twenty years, you know, and it's going to just only increase, so. And whether that affects the way I experience Houston? Not sure. I don't—my experience has always been mixed, and I don't think the lines between neighborhoods has changed, you know. The economic lines, and the race lines, I don't think that has changed.

CW: Can you explain a little to us—a little about what you mean by mixed? Uh in your experience of Houston? (00:14:09)

SS: Well, you can have a neighborhood like… you can have the Third Ward, which is a black neighborhood right next to university which is University of Houston next to Texas Southern University which is almost a barricaded space for blacks but then a lot of international students

go there, so, it's, the lines are more blurry, you know, you don't know where the line between black, white, brown, um, Asian, w–where—you know. Where that line ends. In Austin it's a little bit clearer, because that freeway is the—is the line, you know. Although it's changing because of economic—they're trying to rebuild that sec—east Houston, and they're trying t… so there has been, there have been attempts. So, I don't live there, so we go there, on and off, so I–I can't really speak with great knowledge about how much that—but I have friends, who, you know. Th–there's a difference. There is a difference, so, and in Houston you can, because there's no zoning, you can go from River Oaks to suddenly be in a pocket in Montrose where you can have big apartments next to [claps] suddenly all these new urban developments, and you know, and then you—we, we just finished a project, just, ten, you know, eight blocks from here, in Freedman's Town, which is like in the heart of Houston five blocks away from downtown where there's police and there's drugs and there's weapons and then you've got the new, um urban you know, urban lofts and the new buildings right–right there, you know, so everything is kind of squeezing up against the other. That's in the inner city. I don't kn—from what I know about the hist—older history of Houston is that the, um, Chinese community, which, and the Vietnamese communities, which were much more along, um, 59, and what is now become the warehouse district, and what is now being called in a cool way, 'Edo East of Downtown,' you know, those communities have moved like, way southwest. You know. So Houston's Chinatown, which used to be very close to center has moved. And in my time–in my time in the city, I've seen midtown Houston, what is now Midtown, which was once Fourth Ward, which was once Freedman's Town, there was a point where there was a strong lobby so all the street names in, you know, around Main Street, and Milam, and that whole area, the Vietnamese, and somewhere along the way the Vietnamese names got wiped out, and now it's only got the regular English names. So, it's interesting. Again, I think I just moved away from your question about mixing, but I think there's—the lines are always changing, it seems. You know, like in that whole Gulfton area, it's you know African refugees, and South Asians, and, um, Latinos, and everybody. You know, you can drive up Hillcroft and you can go get your waxing done and then go pick up a taco, and then you know. Whatever, a samosa, and then you can just, you know. It–it's very mixed, that particular section.

SU: Um, can you give kind of a chronology of after you came for school, where you lived?

SS: Um, I don't think my own place of residence have ever—has ever been rel—has ever been important, you know? Because I work all around the city. So I don't know if that's important—why is that—?

SU: Um, we wanted to get a sense of like the different neighborhoods that—

SS: Yeah, but I don't engage with the neigh—I mean probably the place where we are now has probably been the most important choice—we bought a house. We didn't buy a house before, we rented so we moved around wherever it was convenient. Um, we bought a house on the east side and that was a very deliberate choice because my husband is Latino and, um, our daughter is *mestiza* and I don't really necessarily want—a–a majority of the Pakistani community is out in Sugar Land. I have no interest in that community. Um, a–and so, it–I'm not interested—I mean the other neigh—the only two neighborhoods where we could really fit is Montrose or the east side and the prices were too high in Montrose. So we chose the east side, which we love.

SU: Okay. And so you are friends with your neighbors where you live now?

SS: Hmm again some but not all. No, I–I think it's more about how—it was more about a choice for our daughter as opposed to us because we are all—I don't think neighborhood has ever mattered to me. It didn't matter to me where I grew up in Karachi, it didn't matter to me where I live here, it has no relation to the work I do… Except, I—we've done a production in my, in our house in Kar—in Houston, which has mattered. You know? But in general I don't think about neighborhood as my identity. It's–it's not. You know? And I think most people… maybe most, I don't—most people I know are the same, other than all the friends we have in Montrose, because that's an artistic community, and this is where we hang out, so. Our friends here would definitely say, 'Oh we are in Montrose.' But I find that very close-minded too. You know? You know what I'm saying? I don't know, I guess it's just my resistance to just not—it's not about the neighborhood.

SU: Hmm. Um, what were you talking about with the production? That you threw in your house?

SS: So in 2009 my father passed away in Karachi. I was here and so I just obviously got on a plane and went back as fast as I could but when I came back to Houston six weeks later, I couldn't—I couldn't even leave our house because, you know, he was so well known in Pakistan and over here, to be here, and nobody knew him. Not many people know his work. So we did a production and these living room art productions that we do in people's homes so what— what I'm always interested in is the relationship between spaces so we did a production in our home in east Houston which was where I did an installation of my father's life, my sister made a documentary of the artists from Pakistan contributed but then at the same time, because we are in east Houston, we had, um, Latino activists. We juxtaposed Latino activist, Daniel Bustamante, and his daughter did an installation at the house. We called these the Living Room Art Productions and we showcased the Latino movement, the independent, um, you know, the—ah what, what those two movements have done and meant in the histories, and it s—belonged in our house. That particular show felt really right in our house. And it was open to the public, and it was a one night thing, so people came, and there were performances, there were readings, there were screenings, there were installations, you know? So. It's—I mean there are documentaries about all of this on the VBB website. And at the end of the night when I sat down, I was like 'wow I just did what my parents used to do.' Because we used to have gatherings in our home. They weren't artistic events funded by, you know, whatever whatever. It was just, you know, push all the sofas out, lay down the carpet, and people sit down and watch the dancer or the poet or whatever and then have food and you know? Community. So I realized that I had done the same thing, you know, without even knowing I was doing it.

SU: Um, and so you said that you're not really very involved in the Pakistani community in Sugar Land. Um, is there like, do you just, because of your job, or…?

SS: Well, I guess then my politics are more important than—I mean, I don't identify myself as—I'm Pakistani, I was born and raised in Pakistan but I'm not Pakistani or American, I'm kind of in between. Um, and the Sugar Land community is much more nationalistic and much more—

it's much more closed, and more—and it becomes about wealth and other issues of priority which are not priorities for our family. You know? So what happens then, also, when families move to Sugar Land they become Republican, and the politics are more important, you know? So there's a lot of Pakistani families that support Voices Breaking Boundaries, and my work, that are kind of inside the loop, but they're not necessarily part of our social life. Some of them are, some aren't, but, uh, social life is much more about people we connect with at different levels, not nationality.

SU: Mmm. And so do you see a difference between the Pakistani Americans and like Pakistanis when you go back and visit?

SS: There's a big difference, yes. And because I'm so connected to my home I go back and I, and I'm doing a production I'm getting ready to go, actually in five weeks um—four weeks. Things are just getting crazy because the productions are going to be so big. Um. I mean I'm, I think I'm in touch with what's happening there and I can sort of relate to it and talk about it and not be like 'oh, this is how it was,' and then try and recreate the history in Houston, because that's never going to happen. I just want to make sure my daughter knows her home and knows the language and has the experience that is there as opposed to my memory which is old and faded and not the truth. It has no connection to reality today. You know? So, I see a lot of families sort of trying to hold on. And just, 'we must do it this way,' you know? Like, and that's not appealing.

SU: Um, so what language do you speak at home?

SS: We speak mostly English.

SU: And so do you speak other languages too?

SS: I speak Urdu to my daughter so she can understand, and speak it, yeah. And then Spanish because she's studying it and my husband speaks it.

SU: And so do you speak Spanish too?

SS: My Spanish is bad. But I mean I can get by; I can fake it. [Laughs.]

SU: And so how did you meet your husband?

SS: I was in graduate school.

SU: And so was he in the same school as you?

SS: He was not. He was just hanging around trying to figure out what he wanted. He was, he wanted to get a teaching position and there was nothing in Houst—in Austin, so he moved here pretty quickly, pretty soon after I met him.

SU: And so were you always like, did you ever think that you wanted to marry a Pakistani, or do you not reca—

SS: I did, actually. There was point in my life when I first came, when I came here for graduate school I was like 'I'd better marry a S—' it wasn't a Pakistani, I would marry a South Asian I—I dated in, in Pakistani. I was like, I'll marry a South Asian so I made sure that if I have to decide that I'd go home and… I have to say those relationships [laughs] didn't succeed, and I was actually in India for a while too. I did an internship in Calcutta and I was there and I'd gone there many times as a kid, but you know, those relationships didn't work. So, what do you do?

SU: And so how did your parents view your marrying like—

SS: They were fine.

SU: Um, and so was religion ever important when you were growing up?

SS: No. Not in his family, not in ours. I think that makes a big difference in what you can do. You have tons of choices.

SU: And so has that changed over time? Or stayed the same?

SS: Stayed the same.

CW: You mentioned an internship in Calcutta? What did you do for that internship?

SS: I worked for a newspaper.

CW: Ohh.

SS: Because my first training actually—I wasn't a fiction writer first. I was actually a journalist, even before I went to college I was a journalist. I then really had this opportunity to work at a newspaper. So when I went back to Karachi after doing my undergrad, I worked at the paper again so I had that really strong training. So when I was at UT and the—at the—at the immediate school of public administration we had the option of taking in—we had to do internships where they would fund you to do international relations intern—internships. So, I know, I know. [Laughs.] It was a quite a—it was, it was—it was amazing because I had been to India as a child, but my family is from north India, not—not east? So that was really different. But um… it was awesome. In fact, I really want to find the woman who became my roommate, and I've written a story about that, and I mean, it's. And I'm—now I'm going to Bangladesh. But I really wish I could go to Calcutta. I can't get a visa now. I mean I will eventually get a visa to go to India but I'm having a lot of problems right now. So. And this is for a new project that I'm doing for VBB. I don't know if it's written up anywhere—it's on our website. It's called Borderlines, so we're exploring border issues between India and Pakistan, Bangladesh, and United States, and Mexico. So. It's a really broad project and we'll be working on it for a while. And simultaneously, I'm working on a manuscript called *What is Home?*, this whole issue of: did I even ever plan to be here? You know?

CW: Yeah you said originally you didn't plan on coming back to the United States after undergraduate. Um, why did you decide to come back?

SS: Um, I was working and I was in a, I was in a relationship that my father didn't really want, and a family friend was over, and UT called me and said—I had deferred admission to them—and they said, 'Why don't you come?' And I was like, 'Ah, what the hell.' [Laughs.] It was just completely unplanned.

CW: So having worked as a journalistic intern, did you already know that your interest was in politics and activism at the time?

SS: As an undergrad at Mount Holyoke I already knew I was—I had already studied art and I had already studied creative—creative writing. I was already writing, and, and I was al—always involved in activism, even in college, you know. We had a di—we got our college [undistinguishable word] from South, from South Africa. I mean we were marching in New York, I mean I was never not, so for me it's always been about how to mix the two while I've been here, you know. It's not about, um, and for a while it seemed like 'oh I have to choose one or the other,' but I, I think I've finally found a way to do all of it, together, and not even choose medium. I can make—I can do a spatial, I do installations, video, performance, writing, I do—I mean I, I do all of that and everything is connected to issues that really matter. So I feel good. I mean it's, it's always a challenge, it's never—I'm not saying that it's easy, but I am—I'm pleased with the path that it's taken and I wouldn't have predicted be the way it was. I was always much more just a writer, but because of the organization I've really expanded the artistic work.

SU: So your first job was the journalist, in—

SS: That's right.

SU: How did you come to that job?

SS: Well, because our family was so connect—I mean, it's connected in the activist community, and the journalism world, and I mean we just—it—we just knew the—knew people, and I, and I think my sister had done the internship before I did so when she left—she was just one year older—so when she went to college, they just asked me to step in. It made sense and I did and it was a really important newspaper, because it was one of the newspapers that was speaking out against—it was one of the few—it was a very small, it was an English newspaper, so English was my mother—I mean it's the government language, but it's not the primary language. People don't a— so if you speak English, which our family did, then you were, you could—opportunities were there to do things. And, um, it was the only paper, it was really the only paper that, uh, that was actively protesting against the government, taking risks. There were times where things, censorship was very, was very strong. So they would, you know, they—they would run by this—every issue would be run by the censor. And, uh, they would say, 'Take this out.' And so in protest, the editor would just leave blank columns. You know? To make it clear to the readership that there was something here that was taken out. Because in those days it was

film, it wasn't on computer so you wrote a big, you know, wrote a story by hand, typed it, got the typist to type it out, and then you, then they put in on film, on clear film, and then they had manually hand-cut the film, and pasted it in on, you know, boards, with ads, and the pictures, and all of that—yes! Can you imagine? [Laughs.] Yeah. So, it was, that, that was only twenty-five years ago? That's how much things have changed.

SU: And so were there a lot of other, like, young women working for this newspaper?

SS: It wasn't that big, no. There were, they were—mostly they were all professionals, or already hav—having completed their education, but we had had a very good education, so it wasn't that hard. It was just something to do. Most of—and in those days we took our exams, our Cambridge exams happened in December. And then college admissions took—you know, you went to college in September. So you had these nine months of doing nothing, which most of our friends did. But my parents were like 'go do something useful.' And so, it—and it was great. It was great and I've stayed in touch with all my editors from then and they participated in VBB. My editor who worked with us, my—she's one of the best editors in the world, I think she's so amazing—I think she's sending in an essay for a publication we're, that 'Voices Breaking Boundaries' is about to make on, uh, issues of women. And, uh, oh this production actually—by the—is where this picture comes from [points to a poster in her office]. And, um. Another edi—my second editor when I went back after college, um, he came to Houston to do a—give a talk on a reading, and every time I'm there, I mean if I have time I always meet up with him. So.

SU: So you were—felt more like a peer with your coworkers than like a young colleague—

SS: Right. Yes. I would say that. Definitely. And also because, yeah, yeah, definitely. Definitely. I don't know I never thought about that. But yeah. You know, I mean they just treated us with respect and we were, I mean, I say us, I mean my sister and I, she, because she was doing it first, but you know, we were writing columns, we were doing illustration, we were involved in everything and we knew what was going on, so. You know? Yeah. So it's a great first experience for a job, yeah. It makes you very picky about what you do in your future.

SU: [Laughs.] And so that job, did it help lead you to your next job?

SS: Hmm. I mean, I went back to the newspaper, so yeah, and I was editing the college newspaper, so I went back to the same place when I went home.

SU: And so were you working while you were at Mount Holyoke?

SS: I was on work-study, so I was doing stuff, but that was irrelevant.

SU: And did then, were you—did you have a job when you were in graduate school?

SS: I did have m—jobs and internships and different things, yeah. But most of them didn't matter. You know?

SU: Do you remember any of them?

SS: Um. I think I was working in the library for a while. And then I think then—and then there was a job that I took and they wanted—they thought they wanted to sponsor me and I was like 'sure, why not.' Um, it was with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. And the woman recognized that I could edit and write, so she put me in charge of the newsletter. And, uh, and she gave me a really powerful position, actually, which was to review the statistics. It was the Minority Department, it was called in that time. So I had to review all the statistics of enrollment, and then call these colleges in north Texas and tell them [laughs] tell their admissions office that 'you're—you don't have enough, um, students of color'—I don't know what the term was, and though I suppose it was 'minority'—'you don't have enough minority students.' And they would be like these fifty-year-olds, you know? [Laughs.] It's like a twenty-four-year-old, you know, twenty-two-year-old, like telling them off like, 'Change your, increase your numbers or your funding will go down!' [Laughs.] So I did that for maybe a year. And then I went to India, and worked over there.

SU: Yeah. The reason why we're asking a lot about jobs is that part of the—

SS: I noticed that on the questionnaire, yeah.

SU: Mmhmm. One of the themes of the HAAA project is labor and capital.

SS: Mmhmm.

SU: So.

SS: Yeah, I think—yeah. I don't think… I—I just am very lucky, I—I don't do what I don't want to do. You know? And I've been very lucky that I've been able to do that. So, and I think it comes from the kind of training that I have, and, a—a life of privilege, probably. And, if you have decent— if you do well in college, if you do well in school, then I think you have that—you can—you come from that mindset of 'well, I'll do what I want to do.' You know? So there was a short period where I worked when I was undocumented, when I was trying to decide whether I'm going home or not because the—and that was one period where I worked for a university professor going through his—but even then he paid me really well for that time. This was like 1992 and he paid me twelve dollars an hour. I think students are still getting paid twelve dollars and hour. You know? So. And I did not like that experience. At all. I don't like bosses. Um. I've never done well with bosses. So, you know it kind of makes sense that I'm—what I'm doing. But, you know, I—I won't be running an organization forever either. I mean, I, I—there's a lot of other things I can do, but I have learned that about myself, that I don't do well working for others.

SU: And so what was that experience, that you did?

SS: I was, uh, hired—he just hired me to be his assistant. So, whatever that was, whether it was like filing his stuff, or entering data, or whatever. You know? He was a politics professor, at the University of Houston. So it wasn't—it wasn't, um, not thinking, it was still a higher skill set. But, I—you know. I did not… I think I was very conscious—I don't think I've been ever treated

badly for being a Pakistani but I've always been conscious of race issues. I didn't like that he was a white man, I did not like having to respond to that, I did not like having, you know, my personal economy depend on that of a white man's whims, so—you know. I think I did it for a year, and he fired me actually [laughing].

CW: Is there a story behind that?

SS: I mean he just—no—I don't think I was doing a good job. I think I was getting very tired of it—so…yeah. I think I—it was just, it was not, it was not meant for me. That kind of job—clerical, probably.

SU: And, so how long have you been working in the job that you're doing now?

SS: VBB is 13 years old, as an o—official ah organization, but it began, um and while I was running, while the organization was getting—gestating and getting born I was teaching in HISD. And I did that for five years, but I did that with—knowing that I was not going to continue it. I sort of taught at a charter school, which was really fun and I still talk about it and I love that experience—having a—and now that I have a child I'm really grateful for that experience. And then I taught at a high school for three years, but I taught in the way [short pause] I wanted to. I taught part time and I taught, you know, the subjects that I wanted to teach, so you know.

SU: What subjects did you teach?

SS: I began at the high school teaching senior English and Journalism, Creative Writing. And, by my second year, I dropped—um—the senior English and began teaching every other day, every, you know they had a block schedule, so I, and I kept Creative Writing and Journalism…which I loved.

SU: Um, so did you notice a difference between teaching high school students and then the, you taught college level—

SS: After—I was—yeah, but I was teaching low um performing English students at HCC and the high school students I was teaching were very high performing. So, it was a different class of students. I mean—but they were—but the—but the journalism class that I taught was pretty amazing because there were students from—it was—this was a school um that has now gone through all there cathartic changes, but this was in South Houston in a neighborhood called South Park, which is a black neighborhood, black military neighborhood, and um they had a history of drugs and arrests and violence and all of that so the students—the white—the students who came to the Vanguard program in which I taught was bused in or were driven in—bused in—drove in from all over the city, whereas the students who attended the regular school were neighborhood kids and they were once only black and slowly the population was changing so it had become more Latino, but they were the silent majority because the administration was black. So, it was a—it was a very interesting learning experience about race, class, um and then the parents began getting really involved and the school splintered and then became a different school and now it's ironically, it's around the corner from here, it's called Carnegie High School, and the Jones High School is like, poor thing abandoned, and those kids are just abandoned, but

my journalism—in my journalism class I taught kids from both sides. You know, there were literally two hallways, so there was a hallway on this side which was for the Vanguard kids and there was a hallway on this side which was for the neighborhood kids, so for my journalism class they crossed over, so ah…yeah. It was a great class… yeah.

SU: And, so how was your relationship with your coworkers when you were teaching?

SS: It was good. I—it depends on which side of the building you are talking about actually. On my side of the building it was very good. On the other side of the building, unfortunately, it wasn't.

SU: What do you mean by that?

CW: Yeah, what factors do you think influenced that?

SS: Um, I think it has to do with resentment. I think it has to do with class. I think it has to do with privilege. I think it has to do with the fact that my classes were—my creative writing classes, I sometimes had only 13 students and I had a room full of computers. Whereas, th—the teachers were dealing with just trying to keep their students in school, not get pregnant, not drop out, and they had classes packed with forty kids. You know? And, I didn't create that environment, that's where I was hired. I chose it though, and I think that—but then there was that whole hierarchy of—and I had issues with again the bosses [exasperated laugh] because one of the young woman, women, I had in my senior English—after which I said I would not teach senior English—she um, she plagiarized her entire paper, you know. And so then the black administration—she was, her mother came from a black—c—you know. well known—she was a, she was a figure in that, in that community and so the principal and the vice prin—principal they all stood by her and they tried— you know it was just a very, very race, class driven community. It was—it's a story for Houston to learn from, you know. A—and it's been really, it's interesting to be part of that history.

SU: And, so after that happened did you continue teaching there?

SS: No, I left and I began VBB. We-we had already begun and I just took a risk and said I am not teaching and so, my husband supported me for a few years before the organization drew income, but when I quit I had no job… And, yeah and in that case I did quit because I just got tired of the conflict, I just got tired of um…I just got—yeah I just got tired of the conflict. Plus I knew that I couldn't continue. I was on an emergency plan to be certified, and I knew I wasn't going to get certified.

CW: But you seem to enjoy your freedom to move around—

SS: Mmhmm

CW: —between jobs. Are there any issues though that will always be close to your heart you know as somebody who is involved with politics and activism?

SS: Women's issues and displacement, identity.

CW: Have you personally faced any of those issues yourself, like are there any instances you can think—

SS: Ah, of course!

CW: —of or, you know, just describe…

SS: This is the new manuscript I am working on, so—all of—that's why all of these are so fresh right now that's why, because I am writing about all of this stuff, right. Um, have I faced issues of women's issues? Always, always—I mean it doesn't change where I am, whether I am in Karachi or the U.S., it's you know, it's—there's always disparity between genders. And um it's just something that… you know. Yes, I'm lucky to be able to do what I want but I've had to work pretty hard to do it, um and that is connected to class, but the—in general, it's a—it's a huge issue and my daughter will make observations like…we—you know she's eight years old and sh—and—and a mother's influence goes to her children so it really shows me in some way I am doing it every day. She'll make comments like 'why have there never been male—wom—female presidents in this country?' You know, and she'll comment on the heads—the presidents—the busts that are on I-45 and she's like 'we have that in Pakistan, why's that never happened here?' and the other day she—just recently—just like two weeks ago she said 'how come all of these cities are named after men?' and then she added 'white men' [laughs]. So obviously, I'm like living it [while laughing].

SU: And so, what exactly are you interested in about displacement or can you explain what you mean by that?

SS: Well I think that I don't, I was probably born—I—I was born displaced. Our family history and issue, uh home is in India, Northern India, but the years have slipped away and we couldn't ever really go back and live there. We still have family there. We visited. When I am in India I don't really feel like a stranger, but I don't really—I know that I am. You know? And, in Karachi, I mean b—it's just because of the way we were raised and the community we were raised—it was an English speaking com—community of privilege. Um… we were outsiders, but even in our school our family was outsiders, because most our schoolmates—nobody was involved in—in uh—in issues the way my family was. So no matter w—where—but you know maybe that's typical. Everybody feels like an outsider and everybody is always trying to say where do I belong, but it's definitely an issue that's very prevalent for me and all of the world right.

SU: So do you see that as like a bad issue or something that can maybe be—

SS: Ah I don't know if it's bad or good, I just think it—it is how it is. And I don't—you know some people get a sense of belonging by going to a religious institution or whatever—we've never— our family doesn't do that on either side, my husband's side or my side. And, none of my siblings have married into r—family members that have that either, so it's obviously—it's a very clear choice that we make um… and we wouldn't want it to be different, right? Um and we

are not seeking sort of—some sort of institution with which we can sort of place our—I—I think there is a beauty to being able to self-identify and self-create and self—and that gives you that freedom to move but then you do have that sense of ah 'who am I, where am I, what am I doing, why am doing?'—you know? I—I feel—I feel mostly lucky, I don't see it as a bad thing. It's definitely a lot of material to work on, artistically [laughing].

SU: Um, so what does your husband do?

SS: He is an educator and he works for HISD. He um—actually, he is in the same field, exactly as my mother, which is really interesting because he does English as a second language and she does English as a second language in Pakistan. She trains teachers, and he trains teachers here, so they—they always have stories to share and work to compare, you know?

SU: And so does he travel to Pakistan?

SS: He used to a lot more, but now that I am going to—going for work specifically… no. I'd rather my—and for my daughter it's better for her just to hang out and learn and to take classes and—and I—we used to go—we used to go and travel all over the North and travel everywhere in Pakistan and it's just become—e—even though he looks Pathan and he can, you know he can pass for Pakistani, but um… he—there's not that much for him to do because I'm not engaging in that kind of travel, that kind of tourist travel that we did before, which we've done a lot of and it's been amazing. But, I'm really now going so much for work and then—and then I just want to be with family, so it's—it's not fun for him.

SU: …So, was he born in the U.S.?

SS: He was born in South Texas, yeah. He's from the, from the Valley.

SU: Mhmm. Have you ever felt that there is like a cultural like underlying difference?

SS: There are differences and there are similarities, you know? I mean I think that… again, it's about the person and not the culture, you know. So because his focus has always been on issues that I can connect with, he has always been much more of a global thinker, um… and his family is that way and so it makes it…I don't know if it's as simple as—I—I think now he worries more because there is more violence definitely, so we're getting ready to go and he's expressing worry. But, um I mean in—in—I don't know—in terms of difference I mean, I don't know. I mean there's tons of differences, but I don't know if um… I wouldn't be able to—I couldn't put a Pakistani man next to him and say oh, we're more similar and we're more different, you know there's so many similarities in the way we see the world.

SU: …and what are those, some of those similar issues?

SS: I think much more of a global—neither one of us really wants to just put ourselves in one sort of bracket and say this is who we are and this is what we do, you know, it's much more of a global thinking, global connections. Um passion for travel, passion for all kinds of foods—not just Mexican not just Pakistani. Um passion for just issues of—I mean, i—it is just, it's just a

very— it's a consciousness of the world—it's—it's a lens through which you see the world—you know, and I—and I explained that lens—I mean it's just a lens, it's a very critical lens of ex—experience. It's about working in a classroom and recognizing that okay I'm walking for him—I'm walking into a black s—school, run by black administration, the students are Latino. My role is to find a way to um give equal rights to all students. So, whatever—and this has been my experience, I mean, this is the work I do through VBB, it's not about Pakistan, it's not about one region, it's about the larger picture you know. And, I—I think my work, I was thinking about that re—recently is that why do I always want to compare spaces, because I think I get very tired being told 'oh be careful, you're a woman, you won't be safe' or whatever, you know all those stories, and I feel like… those same issues exist in this country. People just chose not to see them. I'm very involved with Planned Parenthood and I'm on—I serve on their board. So, I mean, this production 'Women Under Siege' was um inspired by the metal detectors that are at Planned Parenthood so w—when you enter a building—when you enter a building for health you have—as a patient—you have to go through metal detectors, you know. And in Pakistan when you enter a Sufi shrine which is the most secular, most open form of Islam that there can be, most historic for that region, you have to go through metal detectors, so it's sort of that violence—that um…that I do know in Pakistan—I certainly have seen it in different ways over here, and I think it's important to recognize and not say oh, them and not us, you know. I mean l—last year when we did the 'Women Under Siege' production, I mean Texas was just—I—I don't knew if you guys knew, you were probably too immersed in your classes, but Rick Perry had passed this emergency law, um… You remember that? The vaginal ultrasound, the emergency vaginal ultrasound for women choosing abortion and it was just, just shocking that men could sit over there and make decisions about what women are choosing for economic reasons, personal reasons, whatever reasons. S—something so intrusive—and that a governor could force that and pass it is just, I mean one of the most shocking things and then—and then I find that people are telling me 'oh Pakistan is so—you know, run by Islam and so backward' [slight laughter]. And, like do you know where you live, do you know what your governor is doing to women? I mean he took away the emergency—he took away the women's health program from Texas—from women, from Planned Parenthood. Ten—Ninety percent of that is paid by the Federal Government. Ten percent is paid by State. It was a fed—a health program for women to get cheap healthcare, affordable healthcare. It's gone. In one year, it's just [swishing sound and claps] gone. And so all the women in Houston—in Texas without health insurance who could once turn to the women's health program, now, if they feel a clump in their breast or they have um pain, they don't have the money to go get tested. They don't have money to go get treated. They have even less money [exasperated laugh]. Where is the progress? Where is the [sighs]—it's just shocking to me that this country… I mean, leads the world in so many ways, but in health and education is so behind. Health and education, the two necessary things that humans have to have in order to move forward you know…so…

CW: So, would you say that after living in the U.S. it has, I guess, opened your eyes to a more global perspective whereas before you would have just seen Pakistan's perspective?

SS: I think before it was more South Asia. It was always South Asia—it was never just the border. It was never—Pakistan's too small and it's too long and it's too impacted by its neighbors to not feel the effect. But, definitely I didn't know that much about what was happening here, I didn't have reason to know…I mean, I was young. But, um… I think being in

Texas has opened my eyes in ways that—Massachusetts—that d—didn't really affect me in Massachusetts. There were other things happening in those days. There were protests like Take Back the Night and there were still women's rallies happening in New York at that time for women's rights. But um, I guess right now because I'm so involved with Planned Parenthood I can just—I s—I know the inside story in that level of detail.

CW: And when did you get involved with Planned Parenthood?

SS: When did I?

CW: Mmhmm

SS: You know I was already involved. because I wanted—I knew I wanted to do some sort of production on the issues around it about women's rights and in Texas, Planned Parenthood is front and center of women's rights, um because it's really the economic part of the health part of it, you know, and so I think I was already doing some research in 2008 perhaps, 2009? And then they asked me to join their board shortly afterwards… So, definitely 3-4 years.

CW: As a strong advocate of women's rights, what do you think—I mean yes, you are a woman and I'm sure you've experienced, you know, gender issues as everyone has, but was there a time where you just, it just clicked in your head that, you know, you want to become a really strong advocate for this? This specific issue?

SS: Well, I think—I mean just being in Karachi when General Zia was passing these laws, you know, where if a woman is raped h—her voice—her witnessing is equal to—she needs four witnesses to support her word against one of a man—an—that was when I was fifteen. You know, that was happening like in front of us. That—those kinds of extremist Sharia laws were being passed right in front of us, you know. So, I—I mean that young... And it made sense—

CW: So you grew up very aware of all that was happening?

SS: Yes, yes definitely, definitely. And it would—yes—but definitely growing up in those Zia years, you know anybody who's lived through something like that will—you know your radar is up. When you see something going the other way, you're like [laughs] we need to at least speak out and you feel pretty powerless because speaking out is not—speaking out has not really changed anything, you know. So we can do productions and we can raise awareness and we can write op-eds or whatever, but I don't—I don't see the change, I don't see the wave, I don't see—I don't know when that wave is going to happened here, you know? Sort of scary. And it's happening all around the country right now, you know, things that were not—that were not, that—that were areas of—that were not part of public discourse as choices—that, that was like private choices are suddenly becoming public and being forbidden public choices—forbidden private choices in the public arena. You know? So, it's serious, it's really serious and you know, I mean—and in—in some colleges this is being talked about and in some it's not, definitely in women's colleges, these are—b—but I think—imagine it's happening at Rice, you know.

SU: How do the metal detectors tie into women's rights?

SS: Well the—if you, if you imagine that you are already, you have s—serious emotional stuff going on, physical stuff going on. You have fear, worry, whatever, whether it's an infection, STD. Whatever it is—whatever, whatever! And, you walk into this building and you're going for a test, a physical test, right? And, you gotta put your purse through a metal detector before you can enter the facility. That's pretty—th—that's, that's pretty intrusive and it's—that is being done for your protection in a health facility, you know? So, I mean the first time I walked into the building I was really shocked because I am not used to that here. In Pakistan, you have to go through those detectors to go into shopping malls, into movies theaters, into outside banks. There are men standing with Kalashnikovs and guns. I mean you see—you see that, but over here, you know, court houses and airports, which has gotten worse, but it's all done for your protection, you know? And, at Planned Parenthood it's definitely done, I mean there are—there was a van that rammed into—when the clinic was downtown on Fannin Street—there was a van that—you know, you hear about suicide bombers in different parts of the world—there was a van that rammed into the front of the building, um like back in—on Fannin Street—like only in the eighties, yeah. Yeah, yeah…and I've been involved with KPFT, they've had their transmission blown out—and you know—that happens… So, it—it—it was a shock to me, and it pulled up a lot of um triggers and thoughts for me. So, that was the catalyst for the show, that was not—th—that's actually the poster for the show 'Women Under Siege,' you know…so.

SU: So, does it symbolize kind of a mixed like message that it's protection and putting women under siege?

SS: No, no, no, no…it's—it's what has to be done, unfortunately. It has to be done, but it's—my response was not about Planned Parenthood, my response was more about the world outside that this is how threatening the—this is how much threat there is outside that they have to take these steps for protection, you know, and that says something about the world outside.

SU: And so you were also involved with the radio show. What was your involvement?

SS: I've really stepped back from radio this year um, but I used to do like a weekly show before my daughter was born that focused on art issue—art issues, but I was already knew that I couldn't do it for that much longer. I needed to focus more on my own work. Um and now—every now and then I do—I do love radio, but I don't have time for it, you know.

SU: And so were—what was your involvement?

SS: I would just come up with ideas for shows and ask really, you know, good questions and, whatever, explore issues. Sometimes it was issues, sometimes it was just interviewing people that I wanted to talk to and have those b—I guess, it's always issue based, you know. But, um it's fun and I can, and I enjoy it—it's kind of like teaching for me—it's fun, I enjoy it, I learn a lot, but do I have time? Not really [laughs].

SU: And how did you decide to write your first novel?

SS: I decided that when I was in college, actually, in Massachusetts. You know, I just fell into a creative writing class. And, I had always written before, and I had always read before, but we hadn't read—in Pakistan we never read—being a colonized, ex-colonized country and taking Cambridge exams—we always read white writers. So, I didn't realize that I could be a writer—nobody told me that. Again, a very different world in which we live today. At that time there were no Pakistani writers. I mean Salman Rushdie was the first writer that I actually—Pakistani writer, who, who doesn't even call himself Pakistani actually—um, that I saw in Karachi, and I was amazed, you know. And, then in college I took some writing classes, and then I began the manuscript, and then I went home and I got really upset that I was working more in English not Urdu—that my Urdu wasn't good enough so I stopped writing like until I get fluent and you know—that wasn't [laughs]…so I went back to it and went through a depression or two and decided that that was what—that—I had to do.

SU: And, so what was your novel about?

SS: Um my novel—hang on one second [checking cell phone]. What was my novel about? My—it's—it's about similar things. Um… it's about um… issues of—i—it's about family history and stories and um and displacement, you know. The protagonist is a Pakistani woman living in Houston. It's not my story, but it is kind of, like most first novels are, you know. She has children. She is divorced, which I wasn't and didn't have. Um and she is separated from her mother, and so she slowly goes back home to um rediscover her past and her family and reconnect… Do you guys have a lot more? We should stop in about five minutes.

CW: We are very close to being done.

SU: Yes, we are almost done, um...

CW: If you got a wrap up question?

SU: Are there any major events in U.S. history that have impacted you?

SS: Any major events in U.S. history?

SU: Um like during your lifetime?

SS: Well the stuff that I was just talking about. I think that's very local based, that's very Texas based, but um… I think that, you know, people—I—I don't know—you mean personally or that have moved me?

SU: Um have moved you, but like major events. Like for example, September 11th or—

SS: I think September 11th had an effect on the organization because the organization, VBB, was less um theme-based in our shows. And our shows have become much more issue based than theme based to explore because the world around us and changed so dramatically. Um so, if that changes the construct of the organization, definitely. But—and me personally, I mean—I think that I can go back to Ronald Regan—to arrive in this country under… when Ronald Regan was

the leader is pretty scary, I think [laughs]. And, to see him upheld as a hero, to see the George Bush sculpture and the airport that has been renamed in his name is pretty scary to see the sculpture— you know sort of creating heroes out of men who have done a lot of destruction and who have had—whose, whose actions have had long term effect. Like I think Ronald Regan is probably the American president that I have—and that comes from probably a very, not probably—it—the effect is very personal because… of what Ronald Regan did in Afghanistan and Pakistan during my teen years and that continues to happen—that the effects of that are still there. You know, and that I think is—but he was doing similar things elsewhere so I'm just, I—I guess I'm just troubled by how men—how presidents are made heroes and history is rewritten. And, I think that's a—a lot of the work I do—is sort of taking back the history and reconfiguring it and sharing it out in a way that we see it—I see it, people that I work with see it.

SU: Okay, I think we can end with one final question. Um what do you consider your greatest accomplishment so far?

SS: Oh I don't know—having a child! [Laughing] Having a daughter—thrilled that she's a daughter. I'm sure I would have been happy with a son, but I'm really thrilled she's a daughter [laughing].

SU: Very good, thank you so much!

SS: You're welcome.

CW: Thank you, for giving us so much of your time.

SS: Oh, you're welcome!

[Interview Ends]

(01:07:07)