

## Transcript – Rita Duarte Marinho, class of 1979

Narrator: Rita Marinho

Interviewer: Mary Murphy and Amanda Knox

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Mary Murphy: Okay, so Good afternoon. My name is Mary Murphy and I am the Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist, and I'm here today to record another oral history interview with a graduate alumna of Brown University. We're going to go around and introduce ourselves now, along with a second interviewer. Okay, could you please?

Rita Marinho: Good to see you, Mary.

MM: And you.

RM: Thank you for inviting me to do this. My name is Rita Duarte Marinho, known as Rita Moniz when I earned my PhD in 1979 in Political Science from Brown University, a proud graduate of Brown.

MM: Thank you.

Amanda Knox: And I'm Amanda Knox. I'm the Assistant Archivist of the Pembroke Center.

MM: Okay, and I will ask as we talk, especially Amanda, you and I on the sides that we try to raise our voices as best we can as we talk. Okay, so Rita, I like to run these things a little bit chronologically, if that's okay with you?

RM: Yes.

MM: So as our listeners are coming in from all over the country and the world, I want you to help us set the scene and take us through your story as if we were coming in cold. Right? So as we –

RM: I'll happily do that. And I was one of those women who during the 1970s was already married, I had attended undergraduate for one year and went back to finish my undergraduate education in Massachusetts when my youngest son went to nursery school.

MM: Can I stop you there and ask first, where were you born and raised?

RM: I was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, The Whaling City.

MM: Okay.

RM: And we wintered in a New Bedford and we summered on the Vineyard, which was a really nice thing except for having [2:00] to have two of everything. And so I finished my undergraduate. I did my last three years in two years and –

MM: Where was that?

RM: I graduated from what is now University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, which was almost in my backyard. So it's easy to get to. In 1974, *summa cum laude*. And I decided at that point, sometime during my junior/senior year that I wanted to continue. And I was an undergraduate even when I started in political science, but I was more bent on international relations. So I decided to apply for doctoral programs because I decided that I wanted to teach at the college level.

MM: Can I ask before we move forward? I always like to ask the question about your parents if you're willing to share and if you are – [3:00] were you the first person in your family to earn, to enter college and earn a college degree, yes or no? Just give us a little bit of context.

RM: Yes, I must say that I am of Portuguese-American descent. My father was born on the Continent, in the northern part of Portugal. He was a registered pharmacist. My mother's oldest sister graduated from Bridgewater, which was a normal school in 1918. She was one of the first women of Portuguese-American heritage in New Bedford to get a college education. [3:35]

MM: Whoa.

RM: And that came about because my grandfather was an extraordinarily good mason, and worked for a lot of the whaling families and so very soon he became assimilated to the notion that education in the United States was an important pathway, an opportunity for success, and she became a first grade teacher [4:00] And she taught first grade for almost 50 years in the public school system prior to her retirement.

MM: Wow. Wow.

RM: So she was an important role model to me because I was raised by a bevy of women during the Second World War because my father left. As matter of fact, tomorrow will be the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. He was in the First Division in the landing on Normandy.

MM: Wow.

RM: And he was wounded almost right away, I suppose I should say thankfully because they were able to get him off the beach and back to England. But he left when I was six weeks old –

MM: Oh my god.

RM: And didn't come back until my third birthday. So , all my uncles were also gone. So I had my grandfather, who was the role model in my life, and the man in my life, my father's father. And so I was not the first to earn a college degree, but I during my career [5:00] as an academic, I was very dedicated toward helping, to help lift up students who were particularly of Portuguese-American extraction, that was my bias, but certainly first-generation graduates. And I

had many opportunities to make choices in my academic career. And I always chose to stay in public systems. And that was one of the main reasons why I did so. And I think that it was it was an excellent choice to me.

And I think, you know, when you're a professor at a university, particularly in public systems, you touch thousands of people. You get some feedback. You don't know how much you get, but I know that there were very few Portuguese-American professors at UMass, though there were quite a few from Brown. And when I had students come to me crying, particularly women who would say, you know, my grandmother lives on the third floor and I have to go and take care of her at night and it's cutting into my study time, I had no compunction about calling, calling the home and talking to the father and giving all my titles( Senhora, Doutora, Professora – Portuguese) and saying to him, you know, “your daughter's not going to be successful and you're paying this money and she's working a part- time job and what is your son doing during this time?” So as a feminist and being able to speak the language came in handy very much.

So to get back to my chronology of education, after you have the context of my life, um, I applied to several places and was accepted at [7:00] Brown. And when I got the envelope, it was particularly thick. And I thought, well, that's always a good sign. And much to my amazement, the department had put me in for a University Fellowship. I had applied for financial aid, but I didn't know University Fellowships from a peanut butter jar. So I didn't realize how prestigious that was that I had received one. And so for all intents and purposes, I had a free ride at Brown.

And one of the reasons that I chose the program at Brown, of course, you're making this choice from the outside and doing it on the literature. This is in 1974. There's obviously no internet research to be done. And because it was a small program, and in those days, it worked more like tutorial program. [8:00 ] And I knew Elmer Cornwell was here. And I knew that he was interested in ethnic politics. And I was interested in ethnic politics and political behavior. And I arrived and much to my dismay, I found out that the political science program had somehow become grounded in the 1930s or the 1940s. Or pick a decade. And I went to Whitney Perkins, who was the graduate advisor, and I said, “I'm really unhappy with this program.” And while I was accepted in places in Boston, I realized that commuting from New Bedford to Providence with three little boys was just about all I could do. Although I had a very helpful husband, and one of my mother's older sisters had retired about the same time I came to Brown so she was there for me at home, which was helpful.

MM: [9:00] Can I stop you there and ask a question?

RM: Yes.

MM: So you're introducing to our listeners the fact that you completed your undergrad. And then in between college and graduate school, I'm assuming you get married and you have –

RB: That was before. I completed high school, one year of college, marriage, three boys. So....

MM: Wow

RM: Coming back and I'm 27 or so when I went back to earn my undergraduate degree.

MM: Okay, so then you, you finish your undergrad after you've had your kids?

RM: Yes. Yes.

MM: Wow. Okay, so then, what ages are your children as you're thinking of taking on a graduate education?

RM: Let me let me do some math. Let's see. earned my BA in '74, my youngest son – 10, 8, 6.

MM: Oh my goodness. Okay.

RM: But you know, I'm just the kind of person again, I go back to the Second World War experience. When I was brought up [10:00], you just keep putting one foot in front of the other. And everybody's in this together, and we're just going to get this thing done. So.

MM: What, if you can recall because I think this is very important for professional women, what was your thinking on the childcare element?

RM: Well, as I say, I was very, very fortunate in that my mother could help out when she wasn't on the Vineyard. And my aunt Peggy to whom I dedicated my dissertation, retired, just about the same time that I decided to come to graduate school. And so I would pick her up in the morning she would spend all day at the house, because my husband was a hospital pharmacist and he had the, you know, 11 to 7, 3 to 11 schedules. And it would be everywhere and I never knew. And of course, these were the days where we had the big computer center over on, I forget, I think it was on [11:00] George Street. And this was the days of SPSS, which probably a lot of people listening to this will know about: the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. And you did it all on a mainframe with those big green and white sheets that you see in movies. And you needed to learn Fortran for the control fields, and it was all punch cards.

MM; Yup.

RM: And I would leave here with my assignment for the next day and there would be a two-and-a-half-hour turnaround time and then I's come back, drive back at seven o'clock at night and again, it hadn't run because I forgot a semicolon.

MM, AK: No!

RM: So this would happen occasionally. I mean, I tried to be good, a good student, but nonetheless, so it was an arduous undertaking, but I don't know—once I was in the shoot, I was determined I was going to get this done. And so I went to Whitney Perkins, as I was telling you, because [12:00] I felt that the program was not what I wanted. They had, you had to do in those days, two major sections and a minor section. And one of the major sections was always public law. And that was because of Ed Bieser and his operation. And I didn't want to take that much public law. And I said to Mr. Perkins, you know, "if I wanted this much law, I would have gone to law school."

MM: To law school.

RM: “I think if I’ve gotten into Brown, I think I could have gotten into a law school. And I really want a very different kind of program that’s based in political behavior,” and so on. And this was just a few years now after the open curriculum.

MM: Yes! So it’s very interesting. You’re talking about rigidity in the curriculum.

RM: Right. So at least in their graduate program. So he said, “Well, what would you like to do?” And [13:00] I said, “Well, you know, I understand that the sociology department has a very strong demography component and I want to do really, for all intents and purposes, what will be an interdisciplinary program, but you are going to have to sponsor it in political science.” And he said, “Why don’t you write it up and submit it and see what happens?” And it was approved.

MM: Okay.

RM: And so I ended up by doing as many credits in Sociology, as I did in Political Science. It was called American politics, I think the major, and the other one was Quantitative Methodology. And then Lyman Kirkpatrick, who had been one of the transitional people from the OSS to the CIA was here as a professor so I decided that maybe a little national security for my minor would be interesting to –

MM: Yes!

RM: Work with somebody [14:00] like that. So that’s what I ended up by doing. And I wrote my dissertation. And Elmer was my dissertation advisor. And there were two young guys who didn’t stay here very long – Arnold Howitt and Mike Brintnall, who, then Arn went to Harvard and then Mike Brintnall ended up by becoming the Executive Director of the American Political Science Association – Were my committee and that was good and they were all good to me, but I must tell you that I was the only woman in my cohort. There were twelve other men and me. There was one African-American fellow, Wiley Wilson, and he and I, we palled around together so I guess whenever we walked in, we were a double threat. [laughter]

But the department was extremely – there were no women faculty, there was a woman named Susan [15:00] Marsh whose husband was teaching in another department and I think they gave her probably an appointment as an adjunct, a courtesy appointment.

MM: Right. So you're here this, I'm just thinking in my mind, you're here as the Lamphere case is exploding.

RM: I am here in the middle of the Lamphere case, and that affected my experience also.

MM: So let me stop and say to our listeners, Louise Lamphere brought a class action, prepared a class action lawsuit with other women faculty on campus. They felt that they were being discriminated against and purposely not being promoted because they were women, or given tenure and it became a landmark case that changed hiring for women in higher education across the country.

RM: Correct.

MM: Okay.

RM: So –

MM: Tell us about that. Do you have memories of that broiling?

RM: Right. Well, I remember it going on and I guess my most valuable contribution to our conversation would be how [16:00] it affected the Political Science department because it was sexist and full of misogynists with few exceptions. And I will give you some direct examples of that.

Roger Cobb, to my dismay, given the status of Emeritus, had an extremely sexist poster over the fireplace –

MM: No!

RM: In his office.

MM: What did it say?

RM: It showed two men standing at a urinal and it showed a woman you could tell her red skirt was going by the door and one of the men is saying to the other, “Well, they won’t be happy until dot, dot , dot, dot, dot.” And that was there through 1979.

MM: Jesus.

RM: And, um, I was elected by the graduate students to be their representative to the faculty meetings. Apparently this has been a long standing practice; however, [17:00] apparently, um, this was a position in which the individual was supposed to enter and never open, well, it was always a his mouth before. And I thought I was there to participate and represent the graduate students. So when issues would come up, I would raise my hand. So I think I went to two meetings and then they asked me not to attend anymore. Okay? So, um, I didn’t, and, um, but the Lamphere, the talk in the department about the Lamphere suit was for the most part, off the mark. And there was a lot of discussion about the fact that she and other women involved probably would not have filed a suit had it not been the fact that some husbands were attorneys. [18:01] So it had nothing to do with the substance of the fact that she had been hired, which came out and was shown at a much lower pay rate than colleagues who had the same academic credentials, etc. And I forget who left the Political Science department, who resigned. I don’t know if it was when Hargraves went to Vanderbilt or whatever, but they were looking for a replacement. And guess who the graduate students nominated for the student to be on the search committee?

MM: Oh.

RM: It was I. And again –

MM: This is so interesting.

RM: I'm going to face the same problem. The woman who won't keep her mouth closed. And –

MM: This is so interesting.

RM: They would have these discussions, now they would bring in women, but the scuttlebutt and the informal discussions [19:00] – and perhaps I'm prejudiced – was they had no intentions of hiring a woman.

MM: Yeah.

RM: And they didn't. But they would make remarks like, "Do you think she's strong enough to fend off hard, difficult questions by undergraduates?" So I would raise my hand and I would say things like, "Do you, would you ask that question if she had a beard?"

MM: Yeah.

RM: And of course, I was a feminist from the Second World War. And although I didn't know the term when I was three years old –

MM: Yeah.

RM: So obviously, I was a great threat to these men. So anyway –

MM: Can I clarify, just for history sake?

RM: Sure, absolutely.

MM: This was the hiring committee with, for, for the –

RM: The search committee within the department.

MM: For the Political Science department?

RM: For the Political Science department. Yeah, yeah.

MM: Okay.

RM: Yes. When I when I say, “the department,” I mean the Political Science [20:00] Department because I wasn’t involved in the other even though I was in the Sociology Department half the time. So, um, anyway –

MM: By the time you were on that search committee, were you using the term feminist to describe yourself?

RM: No, no, no. Not because I was afraid to but I really was interested in the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender. But there was not too many places you could go at Brown at that time for a course. As a matter of fact, I’m very proud to say that I taught the first course in women in politics.

MM: I love that. I love hearing that.

RM: At Brown.

MM: That is a very important piece of history.

RM: Right. And this was also an interesting example of the attitude of the department. I read our graduate catalogue [21:00] – I happened to be, I guess I was going to register and I was looking at stuff in the catalogue, whatever. And I’m in my second year and I became a teaching assistant which was fine because I didn’t want to get out of here without having any teaching experience. You know, I was running discussion groups for PolSci 1, and Roger Cobb was the professor. I just went the first time, the first time in the first semester, because I obviously knew all this stuff.

And I had learned it, I should say. And I read in the catalogue or somewhere, that there was something called a Teaching Associate, which would allow you as a graduate student to teach on your own a course. And I thought, well, I'm going to put together a course on women in politics. The literature at that time – and again, Lamphere –

MM: Yes.

RM: The literature was just [22:00] developing.

MM: Yes.

RM: At this point in time the literature was such that you could teach everything in one course. So I, not knowing the process, and not knowing anybody who I felt comfortable going to about the process. I just did this on my own. I wrote up the course. And I submitted it directly to the Dean of the College and completely bypassed the department. But I did not do this intentionally.

MM: No, I'm sure –

RM: I submitted. I thought, "Well,"

MM: That's where you submit it!

RM: So I submitted it and Dean Massey was the dean then. Dean Massey went on to be the president of Morehouse College. And I also had another buddy. Interesting, both African-American men, who was Bernard Bruce, who was the associate dean of the graduate school and any time [23:00] I had a problem I would go to one of my two rabbis I guess you could call them.

MM: Yeah.

RM: But anyway, I send this over and, and Massey, Dean Massey takes it to the Education Curriculum Committee or whatever they called them in those days, and it's approved. And everybody's in love with this course apparently.

MM: Oh my gosh.

RM: And he then calls the department and says, "I need to have an appointment. This, this young woman apparently didn't know the process, but we can overlook that. It's been approved." Well they had a fit. And I get called in by the Chair of the Department and, and he says to me, "We are not going to approve this course at the department level." And I said, "Why?" And he said, quote, "We do not teach topical courses in this department."

MM: Yeah.

RM: [24:00] Okay, this is '76 ish. So I, I didn't say anything. I left, I went to Elmer's office and I told him what had happened. He was furious. And I found out primarily through the secretary in the office who was great, another African American woman.

MM: Do you remember her name?

RM: Ruby, what was her last name? And I think she stayed here just enough to take time to take courses and then she was out of here. But she kept her ears open. And she told me afterwards that there had been a telephone call with Dean Massey made to the Chair of the Department and said, "This course is going to be taught. I'm going to find some department to affiliate this woman even if I go to the medical school, but because she's earning her PhD in political science, it seems to me to make good sense [25:00] that she would be affiliated with the –

MM: Political Science Department.

RM: Political Science Department. So I got the appointment as a Teaching Associate. These courses are supposed to be capped at 25. And it was in the John Hay building.

MM: Oh.

RM: And I'll never forget the first day I went because you know how the stairs kind of slope?

MM: Yes.

RM: And when I got there, this was a morning class, there was this line coming down the stairs, and out along on the sidewalk. And I thought, jeez, something spectacular must be going on here today. They must be giving away something free. And I went in and the line led to my classroom.

MM: Oh my goodness.

RM: And because I've always been student-oriented, even then I signed up everybody in the class.

MM: Absolutely.

RM: And it was about 67 people.

MM, AK: Oh!

MM: Yeah! I love that!

RM: And when I went back, Elmer said to me, "You've got to be crazy! Do you understand what you've done to yourself?" I said, "You know what? [26:00] I can do this, I can do this, I can do this. And if they wanted it that bad, they're going to work hard and I can do this." So I taught the course.

MM: Was it men and women who signed up?

RM: Yes, but mostly in those days women.

MM: Women.

RM: Okay. And I got great teaching evaluations. Better than some of the senior people in the department, which of course, enamored me even more to the department. But I just continued, I just kept putting one foot in front of the other, but they would do terrible things to me.

MM: Yeah, I was wondering, where, did they start trying to undermine you?

RM: There was a guy at the time, his name was William Murphy, and he was teaching a course in political behavior. And it was supposed to be held in the seminar room, but he would tell, I was the only woman, he would tell the guys in the class, "Oh, we're going to meet in the Rat, or we're going to go over to Sayles." He would change [27:00] the places and I'd get there and there would be nobody there. Ruby would say, "They're at Sayles! They're there," wherever they were. And so then I would show up. Yeah, you know, so he couldn't get me for not attending.

Um, when we first started the first semester, I was very compulsive about doing all the reading. And I would have cards in front of me with little notes so that, and somebody in the class started hiding the reserved reading in the Rock, the Rockefeller library I should refer to it as the those who don't know. By the time they were hiding them I had done it because I was always trying to stay ahead because I didn't know what was going to happen at home, right?

MM: Yeah, yeah yeah.

RM: I had to stay very organized. And so –

MM: But did you, you knew that they were doing that to –

RM: I'm sorry?

MM: You know that they were doing that to try to pull a fast one on you? [28:00]

RM: Right, right. And –

MM: These are adult people, these are adults.

RM: These are adult men. These are the students, but they they're adults. Ridiculous. Most of them dropped out. Out of that class, Dave Rochefort who probably is about, he was a little younger than I, so he's probably about to retire from Northeastern – and I were the only ones I believe, who actually earned the doctoral degree.

MM: Completed.

RM: And when they heard what happened was towards the end of the semester, the department began to have discussions about changing the PhD program, and they decided to suspend it four years so that they could redo it. So I think I might have contributed to that. But because I was so adamant about it not meeting the expectations of what was currently going on in political science, and I mean, electoral behavior. They weren't [29:00] doing any of these things to the degree that they should have been.

MM: And by 1976, I have to say, so I think the first, one of the first women's studies courses offered at least here Brown, I think was in '71 in another department, but so that's five years in the Political Science department sitting there –

RM: Right.

MM: Not offering –

RM: Right and, and not wanting to when it's presented and approved to them. And at one point, they kept moving my office around. No big deal. But I was on the first floor and I came in one day and I looked up and the fluorescent light was hanging by a thread over my desk. And so I went in and I told Elmer and they called maintenance and maintenance said, "Somebody has

unscrewed this. This is not by accident.” So with that Elmer moved me physically into his [30:00] office. We set up a little desk in the corner. And I don’t know if you’ve ever been in his office?

MM: No.

RM: But every book he had read for the last 50 years was in piles all over the place. He knew where everything was though. So he literally had to clear off a place, but he felt that I would be safer in his office. And you know, so that’s what it came to. So.

MM: So there were, and I always say in these interviews, I do find these strains where women talk about men who were both jerks, but allies towards women’s liberation.

RM: Yes, yes.

MM: Towards their cases. I feel that.

RM: I couldn’t have asked for a better dissertation advisor than Elmer Cornwell and he understood that I also was interested in political activism and of course, he became the parliamentarian for the Rhode Island legislature [31:00] and was for eons. And with his work in Little Compton as a town moderator and all that. So he understood how you could do these things, that it was no less academic to be out there in the real world, doing things as an activist and trying to make change as well as doing your research and so on. And of course, in those days there was in the social sciences, there was no such thing as applied research the way there is now, because the different kinds of typologies had not been invented yet. And so when they – the rule of unintended consequences – when they suspended the program, after a couple of years, I was hired as an assistant professor back at UMass Dartmouth in 1978 – my third, my third year [32:00]. I had not finished my dissertation.

MM: So they suspended the program, but were allowing those who had matriculated to finish?

RM: Oh yeah. I told him, I said, I went to Dean Bruce right away and I said, “I don’t know what they’re doing, but I’m finishing because I can’t go anyplace else and I’m in the shoot, I’ve already started my dissertation research, and there’s no way.” And plus, I had a job. I was hired as an adjunct there. And so, um, no, that was in ’76 that they hired me part time and then in ’78, they hired me as an assistant professor and I received my doctoral degree in May of 1979. And during the [33:00] the course of 1978 and 1979, um, they hired me, if I would come over here on a Friday and do some discussion sessions. Because they didn’t have any graduate students because they had suspended the program. That’s what I meant by the rule, you know, the unintended consequences. And I was only too happy to do that because the pay at UMass Dartmouth wasn’t good. And that was actually, it almost doubled my salary by coming over here. And I would spend the whole day Friday here. I would do all student appointments if need be.

And interestingly enough, they accepted a woman whose name I can’t remember, but she became a state senator, I believe from Newport at some point, and she came to me one day, maybe in April of 79 and she said, “Rita I want you to know,” I should explain that physically what they made the women’s room [34:00] was under the stairs. And it was open. There was an opening to the fireplace in Roger Cobb’s office. So when you were in the women’s room, you could hear the conversations going on in Roger Cobb’s office. And, and he and Alan Zuckerman and somebody else I forget who the third party was, had decided that I was doing these discussions because I was trying to backdoor myself into a position at Brown. Now, obviously, I wasn’t interested in teaching at Brown. Not because the students weren’t good, or the money wasn’t good, but that’s not where my calling was and where my heart was.

MM: And especially in the environment you were experiencing.

RM: These should be my colleagues for the next 30 years? I don’t think so. So, um, she said they’re gunning for [35:00] you and something’s going to happen, but they think you’re trying to backdoor yourself into a position and just beware. So 10 days before Commencement, late on a Friday afternoon, and there’s nobody – this is in Pembroke House now.

MM: Okay.

RM: Where it used to be on the corner.

MM: Uh huh. Yep.

RM: And Cobb's office was right to the left, and the only people in the entire building were me in Elmer's office, which was right down on the right. And Ruby was in her office. And Roger says that he wants to speak to me. Well, I had been an assistant for him in my second year. And during the course of that year, I had a student who had what we would call a nervous breakdown. And she came to me and she said, "The psychiatrist [36:00] has decided that I should only take two courses. And I want to keep the political science course. But I need to talk to you because you're really responsible for the work." And I said to her, "I'll get you through this, if you need extra time or whatever, we'll get through this. So don't worry about that. Know that I'm going to be very supportive and so on." And I said to myself, gee, you know, I'm really working for Cobb, maybe I should let him know about this. Maybe I'm taking, giving her this kind of latitude. And this was before –

MM: Sensitivities around that.

RM: Disabilities Act was legislated. And I went to him and I said, I have a student and I reiterated the story, and he looked at me across his desk and he says, "I think you're being foolish I'd let her go down the tubes." And [37:00] I said to myself at that point in time, I will never come to him with anything else. And I know that I'm a better teacher today than he will ever be as far as student support is concerned. And I didn't. And he did call us all in at the end of the semester and he said, I hope that I'm going to get a nice normal curve of grades to send to the registrar's office from the teaching. What kind of a person is this?

MM: The suggestion that you would fake –

RM: You know, somebody who showed, doesn't show up for class may get a C, but there's going to be no normal curve at a place like Brown.

MM: These are high achieving students.

RM:, This is absurd. So I didn't respond. I kept my mouth shut. I submitted the grades they earned. The grades is what they received. So I didn't have any dealings with [38:00] this man over all of these years and his suddenly calls me in 10 days before graduation.

MM: And again set the year.

RM: This was '79. This was 10 days before I received –

MM: That you were going to receive –

RM: That I received my doctoral degree. And I sat down, the poster still over the fireplace, and I looked at him and he said to me, “I received complaints from students that you're not keeping appointments with them.”

MM: That is ridiculous.

RM: The worst thing. So I, I just let him go on and I won't repeat now because for posterity, but I just, I blew my stack and I strung together every epithet that I ever had learned in my life and, and just told him where to go and how to go and I don't think [39:00] I drew a breath for five minutes. And he, he was really taken aback because I started off by saying, “What do you think you have? Some first year graduate student on the other side of this desk that doesn't have any experience in this department?” Then I went on and then I got up.

MM: Yeah.

RM: And there was a television show years ago with a woman named Loretta Young and she used to always enter the program, she wore very – this was in the 50s – she wore very flared dresses, and she would kind of turn and do this ballet pirouette before she got to the door at the end. And she was saying, good night. And I happened to have on a skirt that day, a longer skirt.

So I did my Lorraine, I mean Loretta Young exit and I went to the door and I said, "Have a nice weekend, Roger." And as I walked down the hall, this is just like a scene out of a sitcom, as I walked down [40:00] the hall the only sound to be heard in the entire building was clapping.

MM: From Ruby? Was it from Ruby?

RM: From Ruby.

MM: Oh my god, I'm loving this! I'm loving her character!

RM: Finally, finally somebody had told him off.

MM: Yeah.

RM: And of course there were no repercussions from it. I mean, I went directly to Elmer's house.

MM: Oh, yeah.

RM: Because I had to tell him what happened and he wasn't the least bit, he wasn't the least bit chagrined about what I had done. And then commencement day came and in those days, they would hood you in front of everybody. I don't know if they still do that.

MM: I'm not sure.

RM: And ironically Dean Bruce was the person who hooded me. And it was not a good Commencement Day. It was one of those days [41:00] where come hell or high water Brown's going to have the Commencement, if a hurricane storms through the campus we're still going to have the Commencement. And as I'm looking out at the audience, and he's putting the hood over me, and he was a very tall, handsome man, and he had earned a Harvard PhD so he has all of this flaming red –

MM: Regalia.

RM: Black velvet, you know, and he's putting the hood over me and he said, and he's saying to me, "Well, Rita, we really got those bastards, didn't we?"

MM: Oh, yeah.

RM: So, but after telling you the stories of the misogyny and the sexism, with the exception of Arn Howitt, Mike Brintnall, Whitney Perkins, Newell Stoltz, I have to mention him too. He was, he was not part of that. He was not in a good position in the department in that he really didn't agree with these. [42:00] And it was interesting that it was mostly the younger faculty who were the most threatened, rather than the older. One would think it would be the reverse. Um –

MM: Can I ask you a question?

RM: They were very good to me. I mean, Brown, Brown – I don't, when I think of Brown and I talk to people about Brown and they find out that I earned my doctoral degree here, bad feelings do not erupt within me.

MM: Right. Right.

RM: I feel so good about Brown and of course, my, my oldest son went here. That- that, it was just part of the time that I was here.

MM: Yeah. Exactly. We hear that often from our interviewees that say two things: they have a lot of challenges with their experiences, but feel very warmly towards –

RM: Absolutely.

MM: Towards Brown. I want to ask a question, though. I mean, which I think you're already articulating is this idea of the, of the boys club, really.

RM: Right.

MM: And that it was just kind of permeated –

RM: Right.

MM: Everything.

RM: Right.

MM: And then [43:00] they, so I mean, I – So I think I guess that's just what you're articulating here. Right?

RM: Right. I mean, obviously, and I don't know what and the culture of that department had started whenever the Political Science department split off from the history department, I don't remember the year. And the culture of, you know, it's like Madeline French, *The Women's Room*. The novel I mean, those, those experiences manifested themselves all over and that's why her novel became a best seller and was used in women's studies –

MM: Forever.

RM: For so long, because she was not exaggerating. And, and it sounds as if I suppose for someone who really didn't understand that cultural context. When you are the first to do this, or you're outspoken are you're assertive. By today's standards, I really wasn't all that [44:00] assertive, but by those days standards I was very assertive.

MM: It was radical.

RM: Yes. And, but I enjoyed every minute I was here and I had a great dissertation committee. I remember the day I did my orals we were sitting in the seminar room and of course, the whole

idea of orals is that they keep asking you questions until you can't answer a question. And I remember Elmer asked me a question about a book. A guy named Roberts wrote this book and he said, he asked me what the main hypothesis is, or something about it. And I drew a complete blank. He could have been asking me about some quantum theory of physics. I would have – I had absolutely no recall. So I just paused and I said, “You know,” I said, “Elmer [45:00] I had my Presidential Seminar with you. Did you assign it as the reading because if you had I'm sure I'd have some recall.” I said, “I can't answer this question. I have absolutely no idea what this is about.” And there was this pregnant pause and I remember Arn Howitt from the other side of the table began to laugh. And he said, “You know, Rita, you're supposed to be on the defensive in this. We're not!”

MM: Yeah!

RM: So, you know, I have happy memories like that, too. And, and I went on to have a very successful career. I earned early tenure and promotion at UMass Dartmouth and went on in my political life to serve on the City Council in New Bedford. I was always a political activist. I was very active in the [46:00] YWCA and I became the National Board's first Portuguese -American to serve. And I rose to the rank of being the Executive Vice President which was a wonderful experience of flying all over the country to help women in distress when their day care centers were being closed in the heart of Detroit or whatever the situation was. And then I became the Associate Dean at UMass Dartmouth and then I decided well, maybe I can help more students by being an administrator. And the last year I was there they dedicated, the students dedicated the yearbook to me, which is probably the most important award or recognition I've ever received. Because to me when it comes from the students, it means everything.

MM: Absolutely.

RM: It means everything. And can then I –

MM: Can I slow you down just a little bit? [47:00]

RM: Sure.

MM: If I can just slow you down.

RM: Sure. You may.

MM: So, because I want to hear more about your activist life. At what point do you decide I need to run for City Council? And why?

RM: Well, you know that's a strange story in the sense that I follow so much the paradigm of women running for office. I woke up one morning and decided that this is something I should do, I should run for the City Council. And I did and I didn't win the first time I ran and I was sick of the corruption of the mayoral team what we used to refer to as the Irish Mafia. New Bedford was a city at that time that was 70% Portuguese and had only elected one mayor of Portuguese extraction. And my ward, Ward 5 was mostly [48:00] Portuguese people and I felt that they deserved better representation whatever that was. But I, I got myself in trouble taking on the power structure too and –

MM: Scary.

RM: So the mayor ended up by suing me to try to keep me quiet. And I won the lawsuit. I made law in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts because I would not allow the legislative bodies all over Massachusetts to be chilled by mayors who wanted to silence city councilors This had to do with perusing the community development grant money and how it was being spent. And I had the nerve to go to Washington to blow the whistle. And so but you know, that was really the launching pad because once I freed myself from that, the [49:00] local YWCA in which I had been active as an officer of for many years decided they should put me up to be on the National Board. And that allowed me to be involved in feminist politics at a much higher level than I ever expected to be. I also was very active in the Women's Caucus for Political Science. Starting in 1976, they made me the membership chair. At that point in time, they had less than 100 members. Five years later when I relinquished the post they had over 700.

MM: Cool.

RM: So I mean, I got into all kinds of different activisms. And um –

MM: What about how, if you can tell us a little bit as we run up a little bit on time, the climate in the United States, as you're doing all of this activist work, especially with the YWCA. What was that like? Or do you have any, I always say the polar, the flash moments in your memory of being [50:00] a part of the Women's Liberation Movement. If you consider yourself part of it.

RM: Right. I think the late '70s, well it started in the early '70s and of course with Gloria Steinem and *The Feminine Mystique* being published, etc, etc. And, um there was a sense of momentum and trajectory that this was just a matter of incrementalism and it was going to keep going in a fairly straight trajectory to allow us to achieve whatever was on the agenda. And I think the whole issue with the Equal Rights Amendment and the fact that it wasn't passed, and that the opposition of the conservative right led by Phyllis Schlafly was successful really [51:00] began –

MM: The unraveling.

RM: What some are going through today, because that was the first time that I can remember in my lifetime, kind of the fringe, what I would refer to as a fringe, conservatism being able to capture an agenda and bring it to its goal successfully.

But it was a great time of optimism. And, and I was very fortunate because when I went back to UMass Dartmouth, of course, the faculty there because they had produced me so to speak, very supportive of everything I wanted to do. And so when I would go to them, and I'd say, "I just got an offer, the city of Fall River wants to be reorganized, and they want me to do it and this is a really big job, but I'll manage it. My classes are first," or whatever, "But I'm only going to be on [52:00] campus probably two days a week for the foreseeable future dates that both," you know, "Fine. Go to it. This is great." And so I, I –

MM: Did you do that?

RM: And I did it. They had hired one of my colleagues and he just couldn't make it happen. And he was frustrated and he got a job, he got an offer from private industry and he came to me and he said, "I've suggested you to replace me because you're so goal-oriented, you won't stop until it's done." And I started and I was there for 13 years with Fall River.

MM: As the city manager?

RM: As a, no, I was a consultant. It was called the Fall River Regional Task Force.

MM: Okay.

RM: And it was made up of the presidents of the banks, and big insurance companies, and Funeral Directors. What made it different from the Chamber of Commerce, it was almost an alternate to the Chamber of Commerce, was that all [53:00] the unions were represented as well.

MM: Okay.

RM: So the IBEW and the textile Workers Union and the firefighters union –

MM: Yeah. Big deal.

RM: Were all sitting at the table with these folks. So when we had something to do, the unions heard it from the ground.

MM: The get-go.

RM: So there was no chance for them to think that there was some conspiracy against them because they were allies. They were part of the process. And I was successful because what I did was I rewrote every job description for every city classification. And there was a fellow there who was a Director of Personnel who just retired from being a New York City police officer and

he worked in personnel in New York. And so he, he understood the strategy was really very helpful. Then after I finished that they decided that they wanted to build a new middle school, and it was going to have to require a bond referendum [54:00] so they wanted me to run the campaign. They kept finding things for me to do. And these things was so interesting. And it was really in my backyard, and there's a lot of Portuguese people in Fall River, too. And so I really, I couldn't say no. And, and actually, they paid me well. It paid for the tuition for my sons to go to Brown, Boston University, and Brandeis.

MM: Wow.

RM: I can't –

MM: That's no joke.

RM: I can't complain. I mean they did get a little help from all of the institutions, but for the most part, that's what that money went to. And it also helped me in my retirement because I was very faithful about paying my Social Security tax on my consulting money, and Massachusetts is one of the states where you don't pay Social Security tax as a public employee. So after I was able to piece everything together and the different states [55:00] I went to – I went to South Carolina, which was a very interesting experience to be a dean. Then I was in Pennsylvania and I ended up at Towson in Maryland.

MM: Oh. Where were you in South Carolina?

RM: Upstate.

MM: Okay.

RM: It would be akin to Dartmouth. It was not the flagship.

MM: Okay. Okay.

RM: And then I went to Millersville in Pennsylvania.

MM: Okay.

RM: In Amish country. I kept getting into these conservative places. It was really kind of interesting.

MM: And at this point your kids were older as you were moving around these places right?

RM: Right, Right. And then at Towson that was my last stop And then I had, I had decided that, interestingly enough for my oral history, I was never hired by a male. I was always hired by a female provost. Isn't that interesting?

MM: Every time?

RM: Every time. Every time.

MM: How many female Provosts [56:00] were floating around?

RM: I know, but the, this was – I find that interesting.

MM: Yeah.

RM: If I had enough time to do a study now because I have so many projects. I'm still working on some books and things. And I have a granddaughter who got her PhD at 23. It was as if somebody was chasing her with I don't know what, um, but she and I, she did – she actually worked for the New Bedford, the Southeast YWCA for a while, and she wrote her dissertation on the YWCA. And so she and I together are writing a book, because at the end of my career, I wanted to spend it in the classroom because that was my first love. And it just so happened that Towson had a Gender Studies department that was not only strong, but it had a Master's [57:00]

degree, one of the best Master's degrees in the country, and a lot of international students. So when I stepped up from the deanship to the faculty again, I became the Director of the Graduate Program.

MM: Oh.

RM: And I taught the intro course, because I couldn't for years as a dean keep telling senior professors, I don't care what you're teaching, but once a year you should teach the intro course –

MM: The basics.

RM: Because that's how you know how these students are changing, particularly with the millennial. You know, it was always important –

MM: Just intro, intro to Political Science or intro to Gender Studies?

RM: No, I may, I used to tell everybody, whatever –

MM: Oh, whatever field.

RM: Physics. Whatever field was reporting to me, they should teach their intro course –

MM: The basics.

RM: In that particular discipline. So I taught the intro course and then graduate [58:00] courses. And I taught a course in not-for-profit leadership.

MM: Okay.

RM: And I used the YW as the model for the course. And so, anyway I was always very, very careful about the Social Security taxes. I taught until I was 70 my husband –

MM: I was going to ask.

RM: Passed away two years ago. Thought I was never going to retire. Finally said how long is this going to go on for? And so I had figured out mathematically that if I taught until I was 70 that piecing together all of the Social Security from all of these places that I would get full bore in my Social Security pension as well as my other pensions. So I think that convinced him it was worth the extra two years or whatever.

MM: So if I can just ask a slight backup question? [59:00] When did you get remarried? Right?

RM: Yes.

MM: Okay. When, when did that happen in your life?

RM: In 1990.

MM: Okay.

RM: Yes. So I was married to my husband, my first husband for 27 years.

MM: Okay

RM: With whom I still have an excellent relationship. He was just down in New York this past weekend because our grandson graduated from high school.

MM: Okay.

RM: And so he was there for the graduation and we still have an excellent relationship. And –

MM: And then you remarried?

RM: And then I remarried.

MM: And what is your husband's name? Or, what, he passed, passed away?

RM: Yep. My husband who passed away two years ago was Kenneth Duarte. That's where the Duarte comes from. I took it because he was half Portuguese so I said, "If your name was O'Shaughnessy, [laughter] or something that didn't go ethnically. But Duarte fit., But [1:00:00] he was a finance guy for NBC corporate.

MM: Oh.

RM: So I've had to learn how to go to the bank to get money.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

RM: Because he always took care of – great feminist, right? But why should I do it? Why should I fill my brain with that when I had the F&A, the F&A guy from NBC, you know, in the house?

So, but I live, as you know, in Florida now. And we had bought that home in 2002 and he kept saying, "We've got this house down there that we're renting and you know, when are we going to get there?" And we did, we did get there.

MM: That's nice.

RM: And as I say, as far as my Brown experiences are concerned, I'm happy that it provided such opportunities for me because the education that one gets here, [1:01:00] it's so difficult to explain in words, how it is to be able to have that intellectual interaction with people. I mean, I don't want to sound arrogant and superior. But it's a wonderful experience to be able to go day to day to day to be fed intellectually at that high level, and to be able to be accepted and to have your ideas no matter how bizarre they may seem as they're coming out of your mouth, be accepted and have people who can integrate them into whatever paradigm it is that you think you

were talking about. And it really it really is a wonderful place. I have nothing but good to say about Brown always.

I make [1:02:00] a distinction between the Department and Brown. And I think that that's really important. And I think that women who came through at that time have to do that. Because, you know, if I only think of the things that happened department wise, it would be very depressing. And, , and I would not have good feelings about Brown, but.

MM: Can I ask before, I'm going to ask one last question, which is setting Brown aside and we thank you so much for your contributions on your experience here, but given your expertise, might you want to share on what your feelings about what women in this country are experiencing today?

RM: Well, women in this country today are experiencing a very rough ride. I don't think that we're going to know all the true stories. [1:03:00] I don't know if I will live long enough to, to really experience all the behind-the-scenes that are going on.

When I look at the Congress that was just selected, it gives me hope. Because these young women are cut out of a different bolt of cloth. And I'm not talking about the ideological perspectives, I'm talking about the fact that they are going to do what they have to do. And their main goal in life is not to keep getting reelected. And I think that that, I mean, there were people years ago that were saying that a guy that wrote the book, I forget his name, it was called the *Washington Merry Go Round* I think and, and, you know, the lobbyists and coming back and forth and getting reelected seems to be the only thing. I mean, these people suffer. When I say these people, I'm talking about the [1:04:00] predominantly white men who don't have any self-identity except as a member of the House or a US Senator. Now, when you contrast that with, let's take it way back so that nobody can accuse me of anything contemporary. George Washington. Okay? I mean, his self-identity. Thomas Jefferson, his sole identity was not as President; it was a farmer.

MM: A farmer.

RM: Or some days, Thomas Jefferson was a philosopher. Some days he was a horticulturalist or, whatever. But they had other things in life that they found fulfilling and that they –

MM: Did.

RM: They embraced as self-identity. And these people don't. And I think that that's very, very troublesome and I don't think we've ever seen any, to the extent that there was a corruption [1:05:00] and that's always going to be difficult for women because to quote Gillibrand just a couple of days ago when she was being –

MM: On Fox News.

RM: With Chris Wallace.

MM: It was unbelievable.

RM: Yeah. And he said, when he asked her about after she said "Women have to have a place at the table," he said, "What about the men?" And she said, "You don't know that they're all there?"

MM: I can't believe he asked that.

RM: You know, I gravitated from political science to women's studies and human agenda studies, obviously. And people used to say to me all the time, "Well, where are the men's studies? What about men's studies?" I used to say, "That's the rest of the university."

MM: Everything else.

AK: Somebody in Boston right now is pushing to get a Straight Pride Parade.

MM: No. Okay.

AK: So, yeah.

MM: Isn't every day?

AK: That's precisely what I said. Yes. Every day is Straight Pride Day.

MM: Yeah [1:06:00]

RM: So, um, it's, you know, even places like Pembroke. As a matter of fact, I applied to Pembroke in 1960. I got on the waiting list I didn't get in, but that was okay. Women were not really trained to really have a profession.

MM: That's right.

RM: You know. And it was good that they could go somewhere to get more education, but unless they were going to go into teaching or nursing, and the chances of that were miniscule given the elite nature of the people who attended in those days.

I mean, I had another aunt. You asked me earlier about people in my family. My mother, the sister next to my mother, the next oldest, graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design.  
[1:07:00]

MM: Oh, okay.

RM: Okay? A place not to be, you know, this was back in, maybe she graduated, I don't know. '32ish or something. And one of the reasons that my mother didn't get to college is because the family during the Depression couldn't afford to have two in college. And I don't know what the tuition was at the Rhode Island School of Design in the 1930s. And I know she lived in a convent someplace around here. That was where she lived, because, you know, she was with the nuns because it was so inexpensive.

MM: Was RISD single sex at that time?

RM: I think –

MM: I think it was because Sarah Doyle was involved in the founding.

RM: Yeah.

MM: Involved with that as well.

RM: Yeah. Yeah.

MM: I think it was, which is kind of –d

RM: Yeah. And I'm not sure but, but I think so. I think you're right about that. And she, she graduated, and she had this long courtship with a guy. [1:08:00] And she never did anything. I mean, she did things with it, but she did them at home.

MM: Yup.

RM: But she never worked outside of the home. And she continued to make and sculpt and do all sorts of things, you know, and was obviously very clever. Painting and so on and so forth. But it was just, it was not. And that's why my, my oldest aunt, my Aunt Emily – as matter of fact, she my oldest aunt Emily, the one who became the school teacher, she went to the Azores in 1936, I believe it was and she kept a diary. And she took photographs, and it was only after I inherited her house – she lived to be almost 98 [1:09:00] – that I put the two and two together. And I wrote an article up on it and Dr. Almeida of the Brown language department published it in one of his journals, not his, but I mean the journals that they publish; it was Gavea. She was the one that gave me the travel bug, I guess. And she, I was very fortunate she was single, she never married. And she used to say she wasn't old maid. She used to say that the difference between an old

maid and a maiden lady was that the old maids had never been asked. [laughter] And she took me under her wing, because she took all my cousins and my brother, but I was the only one she said didn't whine or complain. [1:10:00] So I was the one that got to go to Europe with her and I was the one that, you know, went everywhere, operas and the theater, and all those things put me in good stead.

I was very, very fortunate. I had an idyllic childhood. I was raised in an extended family and they were educated and they were one of the first Portuguese families there, got to know Bedford in a whaler, and I had a grandfather who understood the value of education immediately, as did his wife. So I mean, you know, the roots are the roots.

MM: Yeah.

RM: And I was very, very fortunate. And, and hopefully I've been able to impart and touch the lives of – I know because my graduate students are all over the world. I have a young woman right now working for the UN in the Congo of all places, liaisoning between the UN and the national legislature about the rape situation. She's originally from [1:11:01] Maui. People were head of Planned Parenthood in Maryland and a sex therapist in Pennsylvania, she actually did an internship in a Russian brothel for six months.

MM: Oh, really?

RM: Yeah. And so I know I mean, you get this feedback. I'm on Facebook because they say, "You have to be on Facebook Doctor M so we can keep in touch with you." And because you don't know the others that you you've touched and you just don't know about, but that's, that's just part of the teaching profession. You hope that you're making everybody's life a little bit better and thanks to Brown I've done a great deal of that. And I think I owe a great deal to my being very student -oriented. And having that inculcated as a value from Brown as well. So, [1:12:00] thank you Brown.

MM: Okay.

RM: Good life, intellectually and otherwise.

MM: Well, thank you. I think this is a perfect place to wrap up the interview. It's a nice time. I want to thank you just so much for sharing your experiences and memories with us today and with the world. So with this interview, this interview now goes into a corpus of data of other interviews from other women who've attended Brown, or taught at Brown, and it becomes a research tool. We have over almost 1,000 users a month logging into our collection to use this information. So if we can, if your interview's ever used we'll let you know you might find it floating around somewhere so we're just so happy to have you as part of the collection.

RM: It was, believe me it was my pleasure because I always think that the best revenge is success.

MM: And setting the record straight!

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