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University of California
Berkeley, California

Julianne Morris

*Julianne Morris:
SLATE and Student Activism*

The SLATE Oral History Project

Interview conducted by
Amanda Tewes
in 2019

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Julianne Morris, photo by Barry Shapiro, 2011

Julianne Morris is a former social worker and mediator, and was a member of the UC Berkeley student political organization SLATE in the early 1960s. Morris grew up in Compton, California, and attended UC Los Angeles, where she helped found the student political group PLATFORM based on discussions with SLATE members. She then transferred to UC Berkeley, where she became active in SLATE, attending protests and running for ASUC student representative. Morris stayed at UC Berkeley to earn her master's in social work. She then moved to New York City in 1964 and was a social worker for many years, where she helped start women's centers, rape crisis programs, and became a part of the women's movement. She returned to Berkeley in the early nineties and reconnected with former SLATE friends through reunions and an ongoing political discussion group. In this interview, Morris discusses growing up in one of the only Jewish and liberal families in Compton, California; attending UC Berkeley in the early 1960s; joining SLATE and participating in political activities on and off campus, as well as learning about political organizing and running for ASUC representative; being a social worker in New York City, where she helped establish women's shelters and rape crisis programs; becoming involved with the women's movement; gender inequalities in SLATE; SLATE reunions and political discussion group; and SLATE's impact on her career and political involvement.

Table of Contents — Julianne Morris

Interview 1: February 26, 2019

Hour 1

1

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1940 — Move to Compton, California — Experiencing anti-Semitism — Childhood exposure to World War II, the Holocaust, and McCarthyism — Father's political beliefs — Attending UC Los Angeles in 1958 — Starting PLATFORM at UCLA based on SLATE — Transferring to UC Berkeley in 1960 — Joining SLATE — Experience with SLATE and campus in the 1960s — *In loco parentis* rules for women's dormitories — SLATE's work to end housing and employment discrimination — Political ideology — Gaining political education through SLATE — Least significant common denominator — Social connections through SLATE — Duties for SLATE — Student reactions to SLATE — Supporting farm workers in Delano, California — Political activism and music — The Cuban Missile Crisis — Thoughts on John F. Kennedy — Sheraton Palace protests in 1964 — Running for SLATE representative to ASUC — Earning degree in social work — Moving to New York — Helping establish women's shelters and rape crisis and battered women's hotline — SLATE's impact on her professional work

Hour 2

20

Working with radical feminist groups to battle domestic violence at YWCA in New York City — Gaining funding for women's shelter from New York Sen. Carol Bellamy — Development of domestic violence shelters — SLATE's involvement with free speech for Cuba, and revelation of father's communist past — Mother's political beliefs and education — Grandfather's immigration experiences — Work in urban renewal areas in New York City — Work in the women's movement — Discussion of gender inequalities in SLATE — SLATE reunion in Redwood City, and impact of SLATE values on career choices — SLATE attendance at the National Student Association conference, peace march in San Francisco — Current political involvement, including the Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club and voter registration efforts — Ashby Village and work with senior citizens — Transition to work as a mediator — SLATE political discussion group — SLATE's legacy — Sense of community through SLATE — Husband's death and decision to return to Berkeley — Personal legacy

Interview 1: February 26, 2019

01-00:00:00

Tewes: This is an interview with Julianne Morris for the SLATE Oral History Project for the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library. The interview is being conducted by Amanda Tewes at Ms. Morris's home in Emeryville, California, on February 26, 2019. So, thank you so much for speaking with me today!

01-00:00:21

Morris: You're very welcome.

01-00:00:22

Tewes: Starting at the very beginning, please let me know when and where you were born.

01-00:00:26

Morris: I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, [November 7], 1940.

01-00:00:34

Tewes: Wow. How did you get to California?

01-00:00:37

Morris: Well, my parents and I came to California when I was five years old. I would get sick a lot in the winters, and they decided since there were relatives out here, that we should come to California. So that's what we did when I was five. And I will never forget coming in on the train to the station in LA. At that time there were orange trees all over, and just the smell of orange blossoms and the air. Because it was in the middle of winter, so it was freezing in Cleveland. I remember just thinking, God, I love California!

01-00:01:17

Tewes: Were you the oldest?

01-00:01:18

Morris: I'm an only child.

01-00:01:19

Tewes: The only child. Okay, so they were very concerned about your health?

01-00:01:24

Morris: They were.

01-00:01:25

Tewes: And I think we should also say what your birth name was, as well.

01-00:01:30

Morris: Julie Schwartz.

01-00:01:36

Tewes: And where did you move to in California?

01-00:01:37

Morris: Compton, California, which was very different then than it is now.

01-00:01:46

Tewes: Yeah, tell me what it was like growing up in Compton in the forties and fifties.

01-00:01:49

Morris: A lot of it was still farmland, and it was mostly inhabited by a lot of people who had come from the Dust Bowl, from Illinois, from Oklahoma. We were liberal Jews, which there was just about none of in Compton. I think in my high school, which was a big high school of about 3,000 kids, there were four Jews. [laughs] And they used to make me get in front of the auditorium every Jewish holiday to explain the Jewish holiday, because as I say, there were no Jews in the school. It was very, very conservative. It was also pretty racist. I remember a very good neighbor putting his arm around my father and saying, "Morrie, you're a real white Jew." And kids in the hall sometimes would come up and they would want to examine my hair to see where the horns were, because that's what they had learned. So it was an interesting place to grow up.

01-00:03:02

Tewes: Did you have any context for what sounds like anti-Semitism happening just after World War II?

01-00:03:11

Morris: No.

01-00:03:12

Tewes: That didn't ring a bell for you at that time?

01-00:03:15

Morris: Well, anti-Semitism rang a bell, but you know, I never—even when the kids were looking for horns, they—I almost didn't feel that it was direct prejudice. There was just no education; they knew nothing about Jews, and that's what they had heard. But I never felt persecuted at school. But my parents—I mean, we were definitely different living in Compton.

01-00:03:51

Tewes: Yes, that's definitely something I want to talk about a little later. [laughs] I want to get a sense of what kind of values you acquired from your family.

01-00:04:06

Morris: I had, in particular, intellectually, a very close relationship with my father. Both my parents were atheists, but they were very interested and involved in secular, liberal, socialist Judaism, and so we did have a kind of a Sunday school. Again, no rabbi or anything. It wasn't particularly religious, but I was confirmed. I remember I had to write this speech about what it means to be a Jew—and don't ask me to repeat that, because I have no idea what I said at this point. [laughs] And my father and one of the family's best friends was the directors of Camp—it was called at that point Camp Saratoga in Los Gatos, which was a kind of a—which was a Jewish camp with definite socialist leanings. I was a counselor there

for three years. So you know, it was very liberal, inclusive values, that one should not be prejudiced. It was very inclusive in terms of—particularly in terms of black people. That was a big issue. And my father would talk about, historically, what Judaism had to say in terms of, I would say, liberal values. And social justice was a big issue. My father told me that if you're a Jew and you do something wrong to someone else, it's not enough just to say you're sorry; you really have to try to undo for that person what you've done. I can't say that I ever read the Bible, but a lot of the, again, the social justice issues, in terms of Judaism and certainly what happened in the Holocaust were talked about a lot in my home.

01-00:06:49

Tewes: Well, how did the Holocaust ring through for your atheist-but-Jewish family?

01-00:06:57

Morris: Well, even before I was five, I mean, it was talked about, obviously, a lot in my house. My father volunteered for the Navy, I would say probably in 1942, particularly right after the Russian—Stalin/Hitler pact. And you know, I remember my mother reading the *Diary of Anne Frank* to me. I remember being very, very excited about—and my family being very excited about—the birth of Israel and what Zionism meant. I was never frightened—I mean, I have friends who really were frightened at that point of being Jewish and thinking that they would come over here and—I don't remember having those feelings. But I do remember hearing a lot in my home about the Holocaust and about what was happening to Jews in Europe.

01-00:08:13

Tewes: Well, this is also, your childhood, the time of McCarthyism. Is that something you understood?

01-00:08:18

Morris: Oh absolutely, because—now, I didn't know this at the time, but my father had been the head of the WPA [Works Progress Administration] in Ohio. And at that point—again, I knew none of this until much later—he was in the Communist Party and he had to testify before the Dies Committee, which was a predecessor of the McCarthy—of McCarthy.¹ And so it was a very scary time in my family. My father was very scared; I didn't realize how scared. He was a social worker, and he was the head of NASW [National Association of Social Workers]. I believe there was a pledge that one had to sign, in terms of not being a Communist, and they were going to do that. And my father quit the organization because of that, so he felt very, very—both my parents felt very, very strongly about what was going on in the United States at that point, in terms of McCarthy.

01-00:09:35

Tewes: And even though this was not something you knew about, do you think that it had to do—

01-00:09:40

Morris: Well, I knew about the fear, I just didn't know about my father's background.

01-00:09:42

Tewes: Okay.

01-00:09:45

Morris: I had no idea at that time.

01-00:09:52

Tewes: I know you have a great story to tell about that and its connection to SLATE, so we'll save that for a bit. [laughs] Were you involved in any high school activism at all?

01-00:10:06

Morris: There wasn't any, basically. I remember we all had to vote in the presidential elections, you know, the whole school had to vote. There were about eight people who voted for [Adlai] Stevenson in my school, and everybody else voted for [Dwight] Eisenhower. [laughs] So no, I wasn't really politically active in high school. I don't remember that there were any outlets, in a sense, to be politically active.

01-00:10:37

Tewes: That's fair. So then you went on to attend UCLA?

01-00:10:42

Morris: Yes.

01-00:10:42

Tewes: Was that 1958?

01-00:10:45

Morris: That was 1958.

01-00:10:47

Tewes: Nineteen fifty-eight.

01-00:10:47

Morris: For two years.

01-00:10:51

Tewes: And tell me about your experience there. You were there for two years, you said?

01-00:10:56

Morris: Right. Well, what happened—and I can't remember whether it happened year one or year two that I was there—I think it was year two. But about four or five guys from SLATE came to talk about what they were doing at Cal, and what SLATE was all about, and it was really exciting to me and to several friends—girlfriends—at that time. And so we started a group called PLATFORM at UCLA, which was really based on what SLATE was doing. I remember that very well, because we were so impressed. These guys were so articulate and so passionate, and I hadn't really heard anything like that up until then in terms of my own childhood. So I then became bound and determined to go to Cal, which I did in my junior year.

- 01-00:12:03
Tewes: That's interesting that SLATE pulled you up north.
- 01-00:12:07
Morris: Oh, it absolutely pulled me up north, because while we started PLATFORM and we were pretty active—and don't ask me what we were active about, because I honestly don't remember. [laughs] It was the same kind of issues that were SLATE issues. Oh yes, after that I was bound and determined to come to Berkeley.
- 01-00:12:28
Tewes: Now, you mentioned it was you and a couple of your girlfriends who started PLATFORM.
- 01-00:12:34
Morris: Many of those came to Berkeley, as well! [laughs]
- 01-00:12:36
Tewes: Oh really?
- 01-00:12:37
Morris: Yes.
- 01-00:12:39
Tewes: That's funny! Do you mind saying their names?
- 01-00:12:41
Morris: Well, Anna Berger—her name was Anna Ofman at the time. And then I had a friend who met someone at Cal, who she married, so she also went up to Berkeley, and he was also in SLATE.
- 01-00:12:59
Tewes: Oh, that's great. But considering it was this group that started PLATFORM, I'm wondering how big it became. Do you have a sense of that?
- 01-00:13:10
Morris: You know, I honestly don't remember, to tell you the truth. Certainly, a lot of people joined, but I really—I can't say I remember.
- 01-00:13:23
Tewes: Because then when you moved to Berkeley, you immediately start in with—
- 01-00:13:27
Morris: Oh, immediately I got into SLATE, probably my first week in Berkeley.
- 01-00:13:35
Tewes: Now, had you seen *Operation Abolition* before you moved up to Cal?
- 01-00:13:38
Morris: No, no.

01-00:13:39

Tewes: No.

01-00:13:40

Morris: But I saw it that first year. I was so unhappy that I hadn't been there, to tell you the truth. [laughs] I felt like I really missed something big, and I did have strong feelings about McCarthy. That film was played a lot, and I was very excited to be with a lot of the people who were involved in that. And in fact, one of my roommates, Kate Coleman, there's a picture of her coming down—being washed down the steps. So yes, I must have seen that film at least, I don't know, five or six times.

01-00:14:25

Tewes: So it made you excited to be involved with this movement that was standing up to HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee]?

01-00:14:31

Morris: Oh yes, absolutely, particularly in terms of my own childhood, and it being talked about so much in our house growing up.

01-00:14:44

Tewes: Well, I'm interested, given that you say that, how your family felt about your political involvement at this level.

01-00:14:51

Morris: Oh, they were very pleased. They thought it was great that I was involved politically, as long as I didn't go to jail. That was my father's really big—he was terrified about my going to jail. He thought it might affect my future work, you know, that I wouldn't be able to get work. And so I actually promised him that I would go on these demonstrations, but if it was time to go to jail, I would walk away.

01-00:15:33

Tewes: And was that something that concerned *you*, about being expelled or going to jail?

01-00:15:37

Morris: No, it didn't concern me that much, it really didn't. But it was his fear and it was, as I found out, a very real fear. So—

01-00:15:51

Tewes: So when you came to Berkeley in 1960, I believe, the fall of 1960?

01-00:15:56

Morris: Yes.

01-00:15:56

Tewes: Okay, you were finishing up your first two years of your BA. What was campus like at that time, even outside of the SLATE experience?

01-00:16:10

Morris:

Well, it was magnificent! First of all, it was beautiful. I mean, Berkeley in the sixties was just a great place to be. It was very exciting; there were all kinds of new ideas. I loved my classes; I quickly made very good friends. My first semester I was in a co-op, Stebbins Hall, and so I met a lot of women friends there. And of course, you know, it was very different then. There was a curfew, where you had to be in—and God forbid that there were any men there at night.

And in fact, we really got into trouble because—and I'm trying to—I can't even exactly remember who my roommates were at that time, although they were certainly women that were also involved in SLATE. But we had a friend by the name of Ken Cloke who—and he was a good friend—and we had all gone to see a movie together. I forget what the movie was, but it was a very powerful movie. He decided he should come into our room and we should all talk about it, and this was like at ten o'clock at night. We snuck him in, and I remember we went down and we all made peanut butter sandwiches, and we were talking and having a very good time. And then two of the girls that lived there heard a man's voice, and they sat outside our door—and we were really going to get into trouble, maybe even get expelled. And so poor Ken had to climb out the window onto a tree; he nearly broke his leg. [laughs] So you know, it was obviously a different time.

When I took my son to college and saw—and everybody was in the same bathroom and so on, it was very different than when I came to Berkeley. And when I came to Berkeley, basically the fraternities and sororities ran the campus.

01-00:18:22

Tewes:

It's interesting you mention that, because one of SLATE's platforms was fighting discrimination in a lot of these fraternities and sororities.

01-00:18:31

Morris:

It was fighting discrimination almost everywhere. Housing, that was a big issue for SLATE. And the fact that black people—there was terrible employment discrimination. So yes, civil rights, even from the start—and this is very early on—was a major issue for SLATE. And really a lot of the demonstrations that we were involved in—the Sheraton [Palace] Hotel, Auto Row—had to do with employment discrimination in terms of blacks.

01-00:19:25

Tewes:

You know, I think someone who maybe doesn't know the history of California that well might say, "I'm surprised that there was that much discrimination happening in Northern California." Was that a surprise to you?

01-00:19:38

Morris:

No, it wasn't. Having grown up where I grew up, in terms of the attitudes about black people—and Jews, but particularly black people—it wasn't a surprise. I mean, one of the things we did is we would call—there would be an advertisement for an apartment at Berkeley that students would apply to. And so there was a big program to call up and—yes, the apartment was available; and

then send a black person over there, and of course the apartment would *not* be available. So I was very involved in that project. So no, it did not come as a big surprise at all. Again, my father was very involved in social justice work, and he was a social worker that worked with gangs in Los Angeles. So no, it was not a big surprise.

01-00:20:47

Tewes: I'm interested in how you would have described your own politics at the time you were in SLATE.

01-00:20:56

Morris: I would say I was a liberal Democrat. The fact that my father, as I say, had been a Communist, I didn't know at that point. I had no history in terms of—I mean, I thought my parents were Democrats, liberal Democrats, but Democrats. I had not read Marx, I didn't come from any kind of Socialist or Communist intellectual background at all. So I came in, certainly not as a revolutionary, but as somebody—as I say, we were Stevenson Democrats in my house, and that's pretty much what I was when I came to SLATE and really what I continued to be. I got a lot of information, I got a lot of history in terms of the Communist movement, the Socialist movement, the intellectual Left, in a way that I really hadn't gotten before. I never was a revolutionary, and it didn't really change my politics, in that sense, other than I became an activist, which *was* new.

01-00:22:20

Tewes: Well, you said you got this education in political history. Was that in the classroom or was that through SLATE?

01-00:22:27

Morris: That was through SLATE. I mean, if you went to SLATE meetings, you know, you heard from a lot of people about ideas that—ideas, theories, that I really I had not known about, or it wasn't a part of my growing up, let me put it that way. If you went to a lot of meetings, which I did, there was a tremendous amount of debate about, What direction should we be going in? What should we be doing? And while I didn't speak up in terms of that debate, I certainly listened and I learned a lot.

One of the major ideas of SLATE, which I think was so important because it allowed students that really—that were all stripes of the Left, from really Democrats to Communists—and we even had some Republicans in there—was this whole theory of the [least significant] common denominator: that what you took action on was what everybody could agree with and be comfortable with. And I think that's one of the reasons that SLATE was such a success for so many years. And so I was very comfortable as part of that mix.

01-00:23:58

Tewes: It sounds like it allowed for a big tent of people.

01-00:24:02

Morris: It was a very big tent, yes.

01-00:24:09

Tewes: Were you involved with any other political groups on campus?

01-00:24:15

Morris: Well, I was involved with CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], in the sense that we went to Woolworth's every—I think it was every Saturday morning—and picketed. This was when they were having the lunch-counter protests down South. But mostly, no, I was just involved with SLATE because SLATE was kind of a—it was a magnet. [beeping in the background]. Oh, that's my coffee pot. Sorry about that! [laughs] SLATE was kind of a magnet for all kinds of people in different groups. I mean, we recruited from different groups, different groups recruited from SLATE, so it was a very heady mixture. And so I could be part of all of these different movements and be involved with SLATE.

01-00:25:09

Tewes: Because there was overlap in interest?

01-00:25:10

Morris: Oh yes, absolutely.

01-00:25:19

Tewes: So, I'm interested—you mentioned you lived at the co-op at Stebbins, and I know several other SLATE members did, as well. Did you meet them at Stebbins, or were you interested in moving to Stebbins because of the SLATE connection?

01-00:25:37

Morris: No, I moved into Stebbins because it was cheap. [laughs] And I had been in a co-op at UCLA actually, so I knew what that was all about. It was, I think, about five hours of work a week, which was nothing. And I honestly don't remember where exactly I met my best friends. They were either through Stebbins or SLATE. And there was a mixture, because I then, after a semester, went into an apartment. That was with, I believe, two women from SLATE.

01-00:26:21

Tewes: Do you remember why you moved off campus?

01-00:26:26

Morris: Oh, I liked the idea of being freer. And you know, I hated having to come in at a certain time and no men in the house and the whole way things were at that time. And so I was very happy to not be in a dorm or a co-op anymore and be on my own.

01-00:26:52

Tewes: I imagine the curfew was stifling for women.

01-00:26:57

Morris: It was, it was.

01-00:27:01

Tewes: So you met friends who you lived with off campus?

01-00:27:05

Morris: Yes.

01-00:27:05

Tewes: I'm wondering what kind of socializing you did as a group, outside of the political realm of SLATE?

01-00:27:14

Morris: I would say all of my socializing at that point was with SLATE friends and with SLATE. There were lots of parties. We also used to go to the YPSL [Young People's Socialist League] parties on the weekends, because several of my—well, particularly Anna, my friend in SLATE, was a Socialist, and so she knew Bogdan Denitch. He was very big in YPSL; he threw great parties every weekend. [laughs] But I would say almost my whole social life was involved with this group of people and with SLATE.

01-00:27:56

Tewes: And I think you also mentioned that SLATE threw beer parties as fundraisers?

01-00:28:03

Morris: No, that wasn't me that mentioned that.

01-00:28:04

Tewes: [laughs] That wasn't you?

01-00:28:04

Morris: No. [laughs]

01-00:28:07

Tewes: But do you remember that at all?

01-00:28:08

Morris: I remember a lot of parties. Whether they were beer parties, I honestly don't remember. They probably were, but I can't tell you that for sure.

01-00:28:18

Tewes: [laughs] Fair enough.

01-00:28:20

Morris: But there were a lot of parties. You know, it was a major community. So all my close friends were in SLATE, every single one of them. And we all went to Caffè Mediterraneo or Robbie's [Cafeteria] all the time. We'd have coffee and talk for hours. We ate dinner at each other's houses. We went to the movies together. It was really a complete community, and it was every single day. I don't think, before or since, I've ever been a part of a community in that regard. It was really wonderful because I had certainly not known that in my growing up, where I was really different. And all of a sudden I was really a part of something, which was absolutely wonderful.

01-00:29:35

Tewes:

That's great. I wanted to talk a bit about your personal involvement in SLATE and the sort of duties that you had. Do you remember, specifically, work you needed to do in order to advance the cause behind the scenes, perhaps not in the protest realm?

01-00:30:01

Morris:

Well, like most of the women in SLATE, we did the leaflets: we mimeographed, we passed them out. As I say, we went to the major demonstrations of the time. But it was mostly, aside from a few women, behind-the-scenes work. All of the leaders in SLATE, except for one or two, were men. They were incredibly bright and verbal, and they really—they talked in a way I had never heard before. And I way too shy and reticent at that point to join that kind of talk, other than to listen.

01-00:31:05

Tewes:

So were you concerned at all about a gender imbalance at that time?

01-00:31:09

Morris:

No. I didn't even think about it, to tell you the truth. Only later. I mean, that was really before feminism, and that just seemed like the kind of the natural order of things. Plus, you know, there was a lot of sexual attraction going on. And it was sexual attraction in terms of those times, which, you know, was very—that really changed at a certain point in time. But when I was there, it was still very much a man's world. And I didn't resent doing all of the—some of it was scut work, in a sense. I thought that was fine at that time. And a lot of what we did also was kind of—you know, there were tables set up right near Sproul Gate [Sather Gate], and I used to sit at those tables a lot. And basically, those tables were—you know, we were telling people about what SLATE did and trying to get people to join us, so I must have spent a huge amount of time sitting at those tables and passing out leaflets. As I say, I was involved in that housing project. I went to all the major demonstrations. I cooked a lot. [laughs]

01-00:33:02

Tewes:

Keep the army fed, so to speak?

01-00:33:04

Morris:

Yes.

01-00:33:07

Tewes:

I'm interested, as you're handing out leaflets at Sproul Gate, what the reaction was from other students.

01-00:33:15

Morris:

That's a good question. I mean, some were interested and a lot brushed us off. You know, it wasn't a political time particularly. This was new, and the whole idea of SLATE was to make being in college relevant to what was going on in the world. So instead of the fraternities and the sororities basically controlling the campus, we wanted students to get involved in what was going on at the time. And most of that was anti-militaristic, being for peace.

I remember, for example, when John Kennedy came to speak at the Greek Theatre, we—I was in a demonstration that was picketing that speech. So I would say it was mostly around peace activities, anti-mandatory ROTC on campus, black discrimination—let's see if there were any other major issues. Certainly anti-McCarthy. But I would say, at least for me, those were the major ones.

01-00:35:05

Tewes: Were you also interested—

01-00:35:06

Morris: Oh wait! One more: the farm workers.

01-00:35:10

Tewes: Oh yes.

01-00:35:12

Morris: I used to often go down on the weekends to Delano, and we would work in the fields and then we would sleep over. And I frankly remember that as being a lot of fun; hard work, but a lot of fun. And again, a lot of community. And community that I really hadn't been exposed to before, in terms of the farm workers. So that was a real primary interest of mine, and all of that was through SLATE. Now, it wasn't that SLATE was working with farm workers on the campus, but all of these different movements were swirling around, and so we both recruited people and we were also recruited, so it was a very exciting time.

01-00:36:03

Tewes: I'm curious what you remember specifically about your trips to Delano, the type of work you were doing and the people you interacted with.

01-00:36:09

Morris: I think we were picking strawberries, as I remember—or grapes. Frankly, it was over fifty years ago. I don't remember exactly. I remember sleeping outside in a sleeping bag, and I remember going to speeches. I'm pretty sure I remember Dolores Huerta speaking at one point. So that's pretty much what I remember.

01-00:36:40

Tewes: So would it be fair to say SLATE members were there supporting the labor movement's start?

01-00:36:45

Morris: Oh yes, definitely. And you know, unions in themselves was a big deal with SLATE, a whole union movement. Most of the songs that we sang—and there was a lot of singing—had to do with the union movement. That and a lot of the civil rights songs. And then I remember—and this was really like a big thing for me—Pete Seeger came to San Francisco, and it was right before he was going to jail, and there was a huge concert in San Francisco. We were talking about the First Amendment, and I really—and I've remembered this to this day that at the very end of the [concert] everybody held hands and we sang "We Shall Overcome," and tears were streaming down my face. A big part of that whole movement for me, and being in SLATE, was the music. You know, it was *rousing*.

So I really felt like we were going to change the world for the good. [laughs] I was very hopeful at that time, and it was all—felt like exciting work, even if I wasn't one of the leaders making the speeches or making the decisions. But of course, we all had a vote, and so I felt I was involved in something way bigger than myself, and it was a really good feeling.

01-00:38:43

Tewes: I can only imagine.

01-00:38:44

Morris: It was. I felt so lucky to have gone to Berkeley at that particular time in history.

01-00:39:02

Tewes: You say that music was very important for you. Were there other musical influences that inspired you at the time, or perhaps inspired SLATE?

01-00:39:15

Morris: Not that I can remember. Most of it was singing. Several people played the guitar or the banjo, and we would just get together and sing all of the—and a lot of them, again, they were either civil rights songs, some peace songs, some—a lot of union songs. And that's really what I remember in terms of the music, or the music that really stirred me.

01-00:39:50

Tewes: Backing up for just a minute, you mentioned that when Kennedy came to speak at the Greek Theatre, which I think was 1962, that you were part of the protest against him. That was about nuclear disarmament?

01-00:40:06

Morris: [laughs] You know, I actually called Mike Miller and asked him. I said, "I remember being at that protest and I know it was Kennedy speaking, but I don't remember exactly—" well, he didn't remember either. He thought maybe it was Bay of Pigs. But I am honestly not sure. It was one of those things, but I can't—

01-00:40:35

Tewes: I think it might have been a combination. [laughs]

01-00:40:36

Morris: But I can't remember. I mean, I also remember very well when the whole Cuban Missile Crisis came about, and this kind of gives you an idea of the community that I'm talking about. I remember we were all watching television in Sproul Hall about what was going to happen, and that it might be that there was going to be nuclear war. And so a whole group of us decided that since we might not be around the next day, we were going to have a kind of a love-in on the Sproul steps, you know, right at kind of the plaza, the administration building. And we did, we all—we brought our sleeping bags. We were singing; we were there all night. It was a lot of fun. [laughs] And luckily, there was not a nuclear war.

01-00:41:35

Tewes: But you had a real fear that it was coming?

- 01-00:41:39
Morris: Oh yes, it seemed realistic to expect that it might come.
- 01-00:41:46
Tewes: I think, yes, looking back in history, it seems inevitable that things would come to a peaceful resolution. But the—
- 01-00:41:53
Morris: Well, I don't think it was inevitable at the time actually.
- 01-00:41:56
Tewes: Exactly, when you're living through it.
- 01-00:41:59
Morris: Yes. I don't think it was ever inevitable. For example, if we had the president we have now, God only knows what would have happened! [laughs]
- 01-00:42:17
Tewes: Fair enough. My question about Kennedy really is—getting back to your first semester on campus, 1960 includes the presidential election. And I was wondering if, at that time, you'd felt an affinity for Kennedy.
- 01-00:42:36
Morris: No, not terribly. I mean, I certainly voted for Kennedy, but I think I was much more—and this was by the time I got to New York—much more taken with Bobby Kennedy than I ever was with John Kennedy.
- 01-00:43:01
Tewes: Do you know if that was personality or politics, or just your interest at the time?
- 01-00:43:18
Morris: You know, I don't remember that well. I hate to say, because I honestly don't remember that well.
- 01-00:43:35
Tewes: That's fine.
- 01-00:43:37
Morris: But I know I was not that enthusiastic.
- 01-00:43:49
Tewes: So we mentioned the Sheraton Palace protests in February and March of 1964. And I think at that point you'd said you've stopped being really heavily involved with SLATE. Is that correct?
- 01-00:44:03
Morris: I was less involved, but I was still really involved.
- 01-00:44:11
Tewes: I think during that time you also finished your BA and started your master's program.

- 01-00:44:15
Morris: In social work, yes.
- 01-00:44:18
Tewes: Do you think that affected your course load, or anything as a grad student compared to undergrad?
- 01-00:44:23
Morris: No, I think it was because I had a boyfriend who was not in SLATE, [laughs] who I was having a very passionate love affair with. And so that kind of took me out of that community somewhat, because he was not a part of it.
- 01-00:44:43
Tewes: Oh, and that would make sense. But you were still involved enough to know about this protest that was on?
- 01-00:44:51
Morris: Oh yes, I was still involved with SLATE; it just wasn't as passionate an involvement.
- 01-00:44:58
Tewes: Now, what do you remember about the Sheraton Palace [protests]?
- 01-00:45:01
Morris: Very little. I remember lying down in front of the hotel. There were speeches, there were—and I remember it was a huge demonstration, and I remember that there was talk of if you stayed, at a certain point you would get arrested—and my leaving at that point. And I remember I felt passionately about what we were trying to do.
- 01-00:45:37
Tewes: Did you return over a period of several days, or do you think it was one day?
- 01-00:45:40
Morris: I think it was one day—one night. I remember, I'm pretty sure that it was nighttime.
- 01-00:45:52
Tewes: And you also mentioned [protests at] Auto Row. Do you remember anything about that experience? I think that was the following month.
- 01-00:45:59
Morris: Yes—no, I don't. [laughs]
- 01-00:46:01
Tewes: Okay.
- 01-00:46:01
Morris: Other than that I was there and that, again, it was about employment discrimination.

- 01-00:46:11
Tewes: But you mentioned housing and employment discrimination, and I'm wondering if—you were involved with both. I'm wondering if you felt there was a more immediate concern in the Bay Area?
- 01-00:46:22
Morris: I'm not sure what you mean by that, when you say "an immediate concern."
- 01-00:46:26
Tewes: Did housing discrimination and employment discrimination go hand in hand, or was one more important than the other, did you feel, in order to achieve racial parity?
- 01-00:46:37
Morris: No, I felt everything we did, in terms of racial parity, went hand in hand. And I felt there was tremendous injustice for black people.
- 01-00:47:06
Tewes: Before we move on, are there any other protests or big events that you're really interested in talking about today?
- 01-00:47:14
Morris: Well, the only one—and I don't know whether you were going to ask me about that later—was that I did run for office, for one of the SLATE—to be a SLATE representative [to ASUC, Associated Students of the University of California]. And that was, for me, a big experience, because as I said, I was shy in terms of speaking out and I didn't think that I could do it. And Mike Miller kept urging me to do it and saying, "You can do this. I'll help you if you want, but you can do this! You're going to be able to go to all of these fraternities and talk to them about ROTC. I just know you can do it." So I did it, and I really was very frightened about doing it, and I actually did fine. So that was, for me, kind of a breakthrough, that I was able to do something like that, because it wasn't easy for me at the time.
- 01-00:48:24
Tewes: Well, and you mentioned that you felt shy even in SLATE meetings, so this was a big step!
- 01-00:48:29
Morris: I did, in terms of talking up. Yes, it was a big step.
- 01-00:48:38
Tewes: You said this was in your second year, in about 1961?
- 01-00:48:42
Morris: Yes, I'm pretty sure.
- 01-00:48:44
Tewes: Okay. Do you remember, in addition to ROTC, the other issues you were running on as a SLATE candidate?

01-00:48:53

Morris: I think the big one really was ROTC. At least that's a piece of it that I remember. And I remember going to these fraternities who were, of course, all pro-ROTC being on campus. That was really scary, but it helped me to see that I was capable of doing a lot more than I thought I was.

01-00:49:32

Tewes: Do you remember the response from fraternities and others as you were campaigning?

01-00:49:41

Morris: They were kind of polite, but hostile. [laughs]

01-00:49:52

Tewes: Was this something you were familiar with, being a part of SLATE, that you were kind of outside of the mainstream?

01-00:49:58

Morris: Well, we were outside of the mainstream at that particular point in time. Student movements were just really getting started then, and so the majority of the campus was just not involved politically. They just didn't even see that as part of going to college. So yes, in that regard I was not part of the mainstream. But it was such a tight community that that was fine.

When I was in Compton, not being part of a community—and that meant, for example, they had all kinds of clubs in my high school campus, but you couldn't join them if you were not a Christian. So I really was not a part of the community in high school and grade school.

01-00:51:20

Tewes: And then to jump to being such a close-knit one in college, I'm sure was a very different experience.

01-00:51:25

Morris: It was a wonderful experience.

01-00:51:32

Tewes: Thinking more about your run for office, for ASUC, I wonder how this impacted your experience in public speaking, not just having these ideas, but being able to present them to a crowd.

01-00:51:50

Morris: Well, I don't know that it did right afterwards. [laughs] I was very happy to give that up, but it did as I grew older. It was a kind of boost in my self-confidence, that I think really did carry over into future work.

I graduated as a social worker; I wanted to work with the poor, that was my big thing. And a lot of people in SLATE thought going into social—being a social worker was not a good idea, because you were putting a bandage on problems. You really couldn't change anything systemically. And so there was a lot of—not

major backlash, but people saying, “Why would you want to become a social worker?” I would say, “Well, I understand that it’s not necessarily changing things systemically.” Of course, that’s what I wanted to do. But there’s a lot of horror in the world, there’s a lot of bad things happening, and I can be a part, just for one person, in making things better. That’s really what I want to do.

I have to be totally honest with you: my undergraduate work was in history and English, and I had always thought I would want to be a teacher. But I was a chain smoker at that point, and I thought, God, if I go into teaching, to work all day without a cigarette? I’ll never make it! So then I thought okay, Well, what else can I do that would really be something that I want to do?

Both my parents were social workers. My mother worked as a social worker in those days as I was growing up, which was really quite unusual. My mother had a degree, a college degree, which was also unusual at that point. And I wasn’t sure that I could get into social work school at Berkeley at that point, because they really were kind of wanting to take people with experience. But when I told them about all my political experience, they did—I was able to get into social work school.

01-00:54:24

I hated social work school. I hated it because at that time it was very Freudian, and I’ll never forget: we used to do these diagnostics. They would give us a piece of paper, a sheet with somebody and their story and so on, and you were supposed to say what was the diagnosis. And one of the stories was about this guy who couldn’t get work. So yes, the diagnosis was depression. And I remember raising my hand and saying, “Well, hey, wait a minute! What about all the social reasons why he couldn’t get work? You’re not even—are we talking about clinical depression or depression because he was discriminated against in terms of employment?” That was not even in the picture. So I remember I was—it was in that regard not a—I actually did very well in social work school, other than statistics, but it was very different than my undergraduate work. It was a great degree for me because it gave me a chance, when I moved to New York, to do all kinds of different things that I never would have been able to do had I not gotten that degree.

I do think this was a SLATE influence in my life, in the sense that every job I had, I would start outside organizations. I learned how to do it from seeing the way SLATE did it. And so when my child was born and I was home for five years, I started taking him to the Brooklyn YWCA and got involved in starting a women’s center there, and a rape crisis and a battered women’s hotline. And then I actually wrote the grant for the first battered women’s shelter that would also take children in New York in 1972. I established, in terms of jobs, about two other different crisis centers and shelters. I did all kinds of training with the police and emergency room personnel in terms of rape and domestic violence. I don’t know that I would have done that without SLATE, because I learned how to do it in SLATE. Even if I didn’t always participate in it, I learned how it was done. So I

think it really made a huge difference in my life, and I don't think—I'm not sure that I would have had that without SLATE, because I'm not sure I would have known how to do it or why it was important.

01-00:57:36

Tewes: That's interesting. You know, I am interested, when you say you learned how to do it through SLATE, what are the actual mechanics of the things you needed to learn to implement that?

01-00:57:49

Morris: That's a good question. Well, first of all I needed to be able to speak in public. [laughs] [sounds in the background] Oh shoot!

01-00:57:59

Tewes: Do you want to pause for a second?

01-00:57:59

Morris: Yes, let's pause. [break in audio]

01-00:58:02

Tewes: Okay, we are back from a break. Julianne, we were just discussing the specific things you learned in SLATE that helped you later on in your career as a social worker, and you mentioned public speaking.

01-00:58:16

Morris: Public speaking was certainly one. Going out into the community and getting buy-in from different factions and helping to really organize so that people could come together as a group and start working together in terms of, let's say, how to get a battered women shelter. For example, when I was at the YWCA, we connected with a group of much more radical feminist women, but they were also interested in domestic violence, in particular. And so we allied with them. We had a group—a board of thirty people, and we decided—because this was already feminist days that everything had to be done by consensus—so I must have been in meetings almost every night, because I was the chair of this board. [laughs] And to get anything done by consensus takes a very, very long time. But I kind of learned that from SLATE, because that's exactly what we did. I'm not sure that I would have had that knowledge had I not sat in on all those hundreds of meetings at SLATE, seeing how you can build a coalition. And so, I became very good at doing that.

01-00:59:52

Tewes: I think that's a real talent, also, learning how to convince people that your interests are aligned in different ways.

01-01:00:00

Morris: And the give and take. With this other group of women, who again, was much more radical than the board of the Y, it really had to be mutual respect and give-and-take in order to get done what we needed to get done. And so because there were so many of us, we were able to convince Carol Bellamy, who was the senator at that time in New York—I wrote the grant with the woman who was

head of this other organization; we wrote it together and we presented it to Carol Bellamy, and she was able to get money out of the New York Senate—\$200,000, which was a lot of money at that point—to fund a shelter.

01-01:00:52

Tewes: You mentioned creating this shelter, this first shelter for women and children, that it was a new thing. I'm just wondering, as someone who doesn't have a background in social work, why that was *new* at that point, why there hadn't already been shelters accommodating children.

01-01:01:10

Morris: There just hadn't—at least not in New York. I'm not sure that that was at all true in other states, but in New York they did have shelters for battered women—but they did not accommodate families. And I remember going to New York City council meetings and hearing some of these men who sat on the city council saying, "Well, one slap doesn't constitute domestic violence." So again, it was a very, very different time. I worked for several years at Norwalk Hospital in Connecticut, and I did—as I say, I trained emergency room staff and police about domestic violence, and there was really silence and ignorance about those issues. That's just the way it was then. And so the training was really important—and again, that was public speaking, something I had been very much afraid of.

01-01:02:32

Tewes: Backing up for a little bit here, you told me a great story about your involvement in free speech for Cuba and how that connected to your father. Would you mind telling that now?

01-01:02:44

Morris: Sure. Well, there was going to be a big—it was organized by Maurice Zeitlin and Bob Scheer, and there was going to be a big march for free speech for Cuba just at the time when the Cuban Revolution was starting and going on. There was a tremendous amount of hostility from the powers-that-be about that march and about supporting the Cuban Revolution. And so when I told my father that I was going to go on this march, he just became adamant that I couldn't go, and he kept telling me that it was possible that I wouldn't work again because I'd get blackballed, and he was really frightened.

So I brought him up, I asked him to come up to Berkeley, and I said, "I want you to talk to some of my SLATE friends, and I want you to hear from them directly why we're doing this and what we do, and what we've been doing." And so my father did come up, and there were about four or five SLATE leaders who came to talk to him. It wasn't until then that I found out about his Communist past, which I, as I say, I had not known anything about, and that he had been before the Dies Committee. He had been blackballed in terms of work. When he came to California, that whole life he gave up and he never talked about. So I had no idea. And so then I understood why he was so scared of me either, as I say, going to jail or not being able to work, and why the McCarthy period in particular was so frightening for him. Because we had a lot of friends who lost their jobs at that

time—my parents had a lot of friends. So yes, that was a big deal, to learn about that whole past. And it brought us—my father and I—much closer together.

01-01:05:19

Tewes: But it sounds like he didn't stop worrying about you.

01-01:05:22

Morris: [laughs] No, but that's true of most parents probably. My mother was much more sanguine about it, because she certainly knew his past, but it wasn't *her* past so—

01-01:05:40

Tewes: Was she less involved than him politically?

01-01:05:43

Morris: Yes, I believe so. Although as I say, she had a degree in chemistry from Carnegie Tech, which was highly unusual at that point. And my grandfather also had a PhD in chemistry, and he had come here—he had stowed away on a boat at age fourteen from Russia, and came here not being able to speak a word of English. The first thing he did was, he tells me—or he told me when I was a child—he went to have a ham sandwich. He wanted to throw all his Jewishness away. Then he promptly vomited after he ate the ham sandwich. [laughs] But he became one of the people who worked with radium when that first started. This was many, many, many years ago, and most of the people on the team with him all died of cancer because they didn't know radium was so dangerous. My grandmother was not educated at all, but I came from a family that was pretty highly educated. My mother became the head of all volunteer services in Los Angeles for a very long time. She was the only mother that I ever knew, in high school, that actually worked. That was unusual.

01-01:07:18

Tewes: Yet another way you stood out.

01-01:07:20

Morris: Right. Although all the kids used to like to come to my house after school, because there was, of course, no parent there. [laughs] But—

01-01:07:36

Tewes: I want to talk about your transition to New York, and what made you make the move from Berkeley to New York City.

01-01:07:46

Morris: Well, almost all the guys that I knew were in SLATE—not all of them, but most of them were Jewish and they were from New York. [laughs] And they all told me I just had to go live in New York for a while, because New York was so exciting, and that there was nothing in California like New York. And my boyfriend at the time, who was from New York, said, “Well, if you want to go work in the slums, you have to go to New York, because there are no really good slums in California. All the good slums are in New York.” So I decided, okay, I would move to New York for a year. And then, of course, I met my husband, and I stayed in New York. But that was really the principal reason I moved to New York.

I was able to get a job from Berkeley in New York in this very, at the time, interesting, imaginative program that the City of New York was doing under [Mayor John] Lindsay. They were just looking for people who had master's degrees in social work, and so I got a job in New York before I even got there! It was a really interesting job, in the sense that it was in urban renewal areas, and Mayor Lindsay did not want to throw all the poor people out of urban-renewal areas. So they devised this plan where this psychological company went in, interviewed everybody in the urban-renewal area—this was in the upper eighties and nineties on the West Side of New York—and gave them numbers in terms of social problems. And anybody who got a four or a five, which was the worst, was to be not just interviewed but seen by a social worker. We worked out of a storefront and—to try to help them so that they could stay in the urban-renewal areas without such great problems. So it was a very interesting experiment, and individually, I think I really helped a lot of people.

But systemically, everything was against them. And so when the people in SLATE said, “But you're not going to be able to change anything as a social worker systemically, you can only do that as an activist or part of a movement,” I really hadn't understood as well as I did after eight years of working there. And I worked in every single really bad slum in New York, and I was pretty disillusioned by the end. At that point I was right under the director of the organization, and we were involved in many urban-renewal areas, and I realized that there was, in that sense, no possibility of real change—at least in terms of what I was doing. Not that there was never any possibility of real change, but in terms of—and it was, in a sense, as one of the guys in SLATE said, “putting a bandage on a cancer.”

So I worked there for eight years, and then I got pregnant and had a child. That's when I got involved with the whole women's movement—and particularly domestic violence and rape, which is what I was really interested in.

01-01:11:37

Tewes:

I hadn't made that connection actually. Was it the women's movement that brought you to that interest, the [violence against women]?

01-01:11:43

Morris:

Oh yes. And in fact, one of the things I did at that point was to do a peer counseling group of women—this was arranged from Brooklyn College, the Psych Department and the women's center. They were working mutually to train peer counselors, and so they were looking for people who would do the training. I don't know how they got my name, but they called me and I did that group for two years. And it was interesting because I was a middle-class woman at that point. I had a husband, I had a child—these were all women who were much more radical than I politically, most of whom were lesbians. I did not know that when I said I would run the group, and they were very hostile in the beginning. But by the end, we really became good friends. And I, who knew very little about

homosexuality, learned a tremendous amount, and we formed a kind of mutual respect that I wasn't sure we were going to be able to do at the beginning.

So my major interest in terms of the women's movement was not so much a personal one, in the sense that I did not feel, I did not feel that I had been terribly discriminated [against]. I had a husband who was a feminist, a kind of a natural feminist, and I was okay with my life. But I was very aware, once I started to get involved in the women's movement, that again, domestic violence and rape, for me—again, those were social justice issues. It was different than my personal life as a woman, and so that's why I got involved in that part of the women's movement.

01-01:14:03

Tewes:

That's interesting. I'm wondering again if we can pull on some threads there to see if there was a throughline from SLATE—or other women who were involved with civil rights who became involved in the women's movement. Did you see that in your experience?

01-01:14:23

Morris:

In SLATE?

01-01:14:25

Tewes:

No, in the women's movement, that women had a background in civil rights activism.

01-01:14:31

Morris:

Not necessarily. I mean, some did, absolutely, but not necessarily. I think for a lot of women the women's movement was very personal in terms of their lives. The way they had been treated, the way their lives were currently, the fact that they felt there had been no choices offered to them. If you just read the book by—I'm trying to remember the title, [*Woman at the Edge of Time*], but it was by Marge Piercy who was one of the really wonderful feminist writers of the time. So many women felt that they really didn't have a choice. They were in unhappy marriages, unhappy relationships—that was just really not true of me. And in fact, I wouldn't say it was resentment on my part, but I felt like I could be a feminist and be married, middle class, have a child, and be fine with that.

So in terms of SLATE, you know, at the time I didn't see that there was any problem in terms of women doing most of the scut work and men as the leaders. I think it was in the 1980s, SLATE had a reunion, and this came up. There were a lot of women who were really angry about how it had been. I don't know that I was angry, in the sense that I really felt it was a different time and one can't judge one time by another. But there was no question that that's the way it was, and that's what kind of was accepted. I remember women talking—many women talking about, in this meeting, talking about how unfair it had been, which it was. I also remember some of the men—some men got really defensive and some men didn't. I remember one of the men saying, "Well, I don't think you realize how hard it was for us to always have to be the leaders. We always had to appear

strong, and that we knew everything when we didn't. And so that whole power imbalance also took a toll on us." So it was a very interesting discussion, and I think it was a very healing discussion.

Because when I came out here in 1992—I think in 1993 or '4, there was talk about another reunion. And since I wasn't working at that point, I helped organize it. And I felt very strongly that instead of having it on campus, we should see if we could find a retreat center and all go and stay overnight for a couple of nights, and so be together in a way that wasn't just a political happening, but a much more personal experience. And that's what we did. A lot of people were saying, "Oh, this will never work. This is going to be terrible." But it wasn't; it was a really great reunion. And the SLATE reading group—or discussion group that I'm in right now—and we meet once a month—came out of that reunion.

01-01:18:09

Tewes:

That's great. I'm wondering if you felt then that these concerns about gender were resolved within SLATE after discussions.

01-01:18:21

Morris:

It's hard to know, because I went back to New York. And of course, none of these men who were from New York ever went back to New York. They, of course, stayed in Berkeley. [laughs] So it's hard to know. It certainly seemed resolved when we had this retreat, when I came back here. And it's interesting to me now that some of these men who were in the leadership of SLATE are in this discussion group. I used to be really intimidated by them, and that's just gone. Not only do I feel perfectly free to speak up in a way that I never would have when I was younger, but often I facilitate the meeting, which again, is something that would have terrified me earlier. Part of that is just growing older. So it always kind of amuses me sometimes that I'm so outspoken in this group, [laughs] or almost in any group that I'm in! A lot of this is probably my own personality, but I do think that a lot of that initial confidence really did come from SLATE. And confidence in the sense of just being at *so* many meetings where *so* many people spoke out, and they spoke out in a way—I don't remember hardly any anger in these meetings. There was some real disagreement, but it really kind of taught me how to proceed in a group.

01-01:20:23

Tewes:

I think that's definitely an important skill—life skill, if not politically.

01-01:20:28

Morris:

Yes, a life skill definitely.

01-01:20:31

Tewes:

You mentioned organizing the reunion in the nineties. Do you remember where that was, that retreat?

01-01:20:39

Morris:

It was a Catholic—I think it was in Redwood City. Is it Redwood City, down the—

01-01:20:46

Tewes: I believe so.

01-01:20:48

Morris: Yes, and it was a Catholic retreat center, and we chose that because it was one of the more inexpensive retreat centers. [laughs] We didn't have that much money, and we wanted something that was close by.

01-01:21:06

Tewes: A rather practical group. [laughs]

01-01:21:07

Morris: Right, and it was a great—I think over a hundred people came. One of the things that we did was that we went around as a group and talked about what our lives were like now. And no one in that whole group went into business. Everybody was an organizer, a teacher, a social worker, a psychologist. It was so interesting that this group of people kind of, in some ways, stayed true to what we all went through in college. It really formed our lives.

01-01:22:00

Tewes: What did that tell you about the importance of SLATE?

01-01:22:03

Morris: That is was extremely important. First of all, I think it was one of the first organizations that was involved in such a thing on campus. Then it, of course, spread all over. And maybe there would have been the Free Speech Movement [FSM] without SLATE—or maybe not. I don't know.

01-01:22:33

Tewes: But your work in PLATFORM at UCLA certainly testified to the way these ideas were spreading to other campuses.

01-01:22:37

Morris: Right. And I remember we went—we went in Herb Mills's old station wagon, a group of us, to the National Student Association conference. And I remember when we came in, and everybody was kind of well-dressed and we came in in our Berkeley attire, which was—everybody said, "Oh, this has got to be the contingent from SLATE at Berkeley." [laughs] And that was a really fun trip.

01-01:23:13

Tewes: Where was that held, that conference?

01-01:23:14

Morris: At the University of Wisconsin in Madison, which—and that was a lot of fun.

01-01:23:26

Tewes: So that would probably have been '61 or '62, I think?

01-01:23:29

Morris: Yes.

01-01:23:31

Tewes: Okay. That's quite a road trip!

01-01:23:34

Morris: It was, and we were in this station wagon. There were bets that we couldn't make it, that the station wagon would break down.

Just like, one of the things I did was a peace march from—oh God, well, it was a fifty-mile march; I forget where it started—to Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. And again, several SLATE friends went on that march. That was the thing: once you were in SLATE, you got involved in all of this other stuff that was going on. And so this was a march for peace and an anti-nuclear war march. There were bets, again, that I would never make it—fifty miles! [laughs] But I did, much to my shock and surprise. I mean yes, I think all these things were important, but they were also, very honestly, a lot of fun.

01-01:24:37

Tewes: I think that's hard to underestimate how important that is—

01-01:24:40

Morris: Yes.

01-01:24:40

Tewes: —to maintaining student involvement.

01-01:24:42

Morris: Yes, it was.

01-01:24:48

Tewes: You know, we've been talking a bit about this, but I am curious how your involvement in SLATE has carried through your political life. Do you still feel politically connected?

01-01:25:01

Morris: Oh yes. I'm in the Wellstone Club, which I helped start—the Wellstone Democratic [Renewal] Club, which was really composed of people who—most people who had not been in electoral politics. Now, I had been heavy duty into electoral politics when Bobby Kennedy was running. I was very much for Bobby Kennedy, and almost everybody I knew was for Eugene McCarthy—except for my husband, who I had just met, who was also working for Bobby Kennedy. During Bush's regime, many people who had been Communists or in the Green Party or Socialists, who had not been part of electoral politics, came together and we formed the Wellstone Club. I wasn't one of prime organizers, but I was certainly in on all the very early meetings, because we decided that we had to go into electoral politics in terms of what was happening in the country. And so that's a very kind of left-leaning political Democratic club. So I've been involved in that for several years.

01-01:26:24

Tewes: Just to clarify, this is George W. Bush?

01-01:26:28

Morris: No.

01-01:26:29

Tewes: H.W.? The father?

01-01:26:29

Morris: Wait—George W. No, the son.

01-01:26:31

Tewes: Okay.

01-01:26:31

Morris: Yes, the son. And I wouldn't say while I was in New York, other than Bobby Kennedy, most of the work I was involved in had to do, again, with rape and domestic violence. It wasn't electoral politics. But when I came out here, I did get involved with Wellstone. I just did a lot of work on this last election, going down to Tracy.

01-01:27:19

Tewes: Were you campaigning there?

01-01:27:20

Morris: No, I was—

01-01:27:20

Tewes: Or volunteering for campaigns?

01-01:27:21

Morris: I was volunteering to go out to register voters. I did a lot of voter-registration work, but this was to register voters and to ask people to vote for Josh Harder. So I've always been involved one way or the other.

Now, I'm very involved in Ashby Village. I don't know if you know anything about the village movement.

01-01:27:47

Tewes: No, tell me about that.

01-01:27:49

Morris: Well, it's for older—for seniors, for older people, and it's a way of trying to make a community for seniors. We do all kinds of things. I'm the head of the social care team, which means if somebody is in crisis or major transition in their life and they would like some help, we go in for several visits and we try to refer them for help or try to get help for them or try to help them figure out what they want to do at this point. But Ashby Village does all kinds of things, from driving people to doctor's appointments, to getting groceries, to some handyman work, decluttering, helping people with computers, all kinds of—and the village movement is all over the United States right now, in terms of seniors. It's a major, major movement, in terms of helping seniors stay in their homes, if that's what they want.

Well first of all, when I initially came out here I decided I didn't want to do social work anymore; I wanted to become a mediator. So I had an internship with Family Court in Hayward, and then I went to work with an attorney as a family and divorce mediator. My partner, Barry [Shapiro], was a trainer, in terms of—for all over the State of California, and frankly all over the country, in terms of sexual harassment and prejudice reduction, and so I did several projects with him. So I've always been involved one way or the other, even after I retired. For example, when I first—finally stopped doing the divorce, family and divorce mediation and custody evaluations, which was very hard work, I got involved with Daily Bread, which is an organization which takes food from restaurants and stores and so on, and volunteers bring them to battered women's shelters, for example. I ran that organization for six years. And when I stopped that, I got involved with Ashby Village. So I've always tried to keep my hand in, one way or the other.

I think almost everybody I know in SLATE has done the same, which is why it was so kind of moving when we had this reunion to hear about what people were doing. Now, did SLATE make everyone—all of us do that, or would we have done it anyway? Hard to know. But I think for most of us, SLATE was really important.

01-01:30:59

Tewes:

That's impressive. And you mentioned the SLATE political discussion group. Can you give me a sense of what that group is about?

01-01:31:09

Morris:

Well, we pick a topic once a month, always a political topic. For example, at our last meeting we discussed the BDS [Boycott, Divest and Sanctions] movement and anti-Semitism. We have discussed what's going on with—these are just recent discussions—with the yellow vests in France. We decide at the end of a meeting what we want to discuss politically at the next meeting, and people send out readings of different kinds. We pick a facilitator for the meeting. But it's always a political discussion, and it's with old friends. And so sometimes we fight with each other. [laughs] Hopefully most of the time we don't, but we have very different opinions. It's a group of about ten of us, and we've been meeting once a month for ten years, ever since, really, that reunion. No, it's more than ten years, because that reunion was—I think it was 1994, so we've been meeting for a long time.

01-01:32:30

Tewes:

I'm wondering, in having these discussions, if you've seen your own political beliefs change in a certain way?

01-01:32:38

Morris:

No.

01-01:32:41

Tewes:

You feel pretty consistent?

01-01:32:42

Morris:

Yes, I've always been consistent. I've never been a revolutionary, although there were certainly people in SLATE who *were*. But that's never been—I've never seen that as a good answer. I wouldn't say my politics have really changed particularly. They've been pretty consistent. Always left, but there are things in the Left which bother me. I think there is a kind of an identity politics and an intolerance sometimes that really bothers me. I'm probably much more evenhanded, although I don't feel at all evenhanded about what's happening in this country right now. But for me, violent revolution would never be an answer.

01-01:34:13

Tewes:

You know, that just made me think—you mentioned one of the things you loved about SLATE is that you felt so hopeful for world change, and I'm wondering if—

01-01:34:22

Morris:

That's gone away. [laughs]

01-01:34:24

Tewes:

Okay!

01-01:34:24

Morris:

I can tell you right now. I mean, that went away, that went away fairly soon that I really thought, Oh wow, we can change the world. I now realize it's *much* more complicated than that, and that change comes very, very hard. But I also believe that you try to stick with it.

01-01:34:54

Tewes:

Well, I'm speaking about a lot of the ideals and values that SLATE held. I'm wondering if you've seen progress or stagnation on any of those issues, like civil rights or nuclear disarmament?

01-01:35:08

Morris:

Well, certainly there has been major progress in terms of civil rights. We have a very long way to go, but I would not say—I would say, if I were thinking about the early sixties/the late fifties, that there's been tremendous progress in terms of civil rights. Again, a long way to go.

Certainly in terms of peace and antimilitarism, I wouldn't say that there's been lots of progress. We have managed to keep ourselves out of a nuclear war—so far. I still feel there's a tremendous amount of racism in this country. Every time I hear about how exceptional we are, when I think of our—in many ways, really terrible history, starting from the Indians; to black people; to the Chinese Exclusion Acts; to the Japanese, putting them in prison camps; I mean, you know, to the black-site torture—and I mean, I can go through a whole history. So yes, I was a lot more hopeful then than I am now, and I certainly don't see this country as exceptional.

01-01:36:46

Tewes: I'm wondering if that's something that you started thinking about in college in SLATE, or something you've learned along the way.

01-01:36:54

Morris: I think I started learning it in SLATE. You couldn't help but learn it because we were talking about all of this stuff all the time. As I say, I got certainly some ideas from particularly my father, in terms of social justice. But until I came to Cal, most of this was, in many ways, unknown to me.

01-01:37:29

Tewes: I want to start talking about the legacy of SLATE. We've discussed, certainly, how it has impacted your personal life. I'm wondering what you think SLATE's legacy is?

01-01:37:43

Morris: Well, I would say one of the things is that, again, it was one of the first of the student—of the Left student movements. And I think it influenced a lot of people in that regard. I wouldn't say there wouldn't have been any of these without SLATE, but I think certainly SLATE was a big piece of that. I don't know what I would say in terms of legacy, other than that. I think there was a very personal legacy for so many of us who were involved in it. Whether there was a real historic legacy, I can't say.

I wish one of the legacies had been on the Left—but I don't think that's really happened—is the whole idea of [least significant] common denominator, which I really felt was important. I think it enabled us to do as much as we did with people who had—they were all pretty—they were all left, but they had very, very different politics. And I think we learned, in terms of what had happened before us, what happens when you can't do what we did in SLATE, when you can't get some kind of a common identity.

But as a major historic legacy, I don't know. I'm not sure that I can really answer that question; only from a personal point of view. And it's not just my personal point of view, but I think so many of the people who were involved.

01-01:40:01

Tewes: I think often when people talk about student movements, they think of the Free Speech Movement.

01-01:40:05

Morris: That's right, they do! [laughs]

01-01:40:08

Tewes: Do you feel that has overshadowed SLATE at all?

01-01:40:11

Morris: Yes, I do. I think for a long time people—a lot of people didn't even know about SLATE. What they knew about was the Free Speech Movement, but I'm not at all sure that the Free Speech Movement would have happened without SLATE. But

the Free Speech Movement kind of put student movements on the map in a way that SLATE didn't. So unfortunately, I missed the Free Speech Movement because I went to New York in June. I was very upset because I was getting all these letters from friends who were a part of the Free Speech Movement, saying, "Oh, this is so fantastic!" [laughs] And I was missing it all. So—

01-01:41:06

Tewes: [laughs] You were just right in the middle, between the first HUAC [protest] and the Free Speech Movement.

01-01:41:09

Morris: I know! Very upsetting!

01-01:41:14

Tewes: How would you measure SLATE's success?

01-01:41:22

Morris: I think we got a lot of students involved in movements and causes that they would not have necessarily been involved in or even knew about. Because as I say, things were really apolitical initially when I started college. Ask that question one more time.

01-01:41:56

Tewes: How you would measure SLATE's success.

01-01:42:00

Morris: I think we were very successful in those years. We got a lot of people elected to the campus political organization, and I think people started thinking, at Cal, a little differently. They got woken up in a way that perhaps they would not have been.

01-01:42:35

Tewes: That reminds me. I didn't ask you too much about the impact on campus life and SLATE's relationship to university administration. Did you have a sense of the politics between the administration and this student group?

01-01:42:52

Morris: No, I really, to a great extent, didn't—we met off campus. I don't think I ever felt that the administration was shutting us down, although I suspect some people in the leadership knew much more about that than I did, very honestly. I don't think it was a warm relationship, in any way, as far as I remember. And there may have been some things that went on that I'm really not that aware of, or frankly, that I've forgotten.

01-01:43:48

Tewes: Fair enough. You know, I've been asking this throughout, but is there anything you'd want to add about the impact SLATE has had on your life?

01-01:44:02

Morris: Well, I guess the only thing that I could say is—and I've probably been searching for it, in some ways, ever since—is the idea of community. Those were, in some ways, probably the happiest years of my life.

01-01:44:32

Tewes: Because you'd found this community of like-minded people?

01-01:44:37

Morris: Oh yes. And it wasn't just like-minded people, but we were together all the time. As I say, we ate our meals together, our social life was all—it was a very, very tight community. I remember, for example, one night we had a—myself and my two or three roommates that I had—this was on Walnut St., I believe—we did a dinner party. We got a recipe—actually, again, from Mike Miller—hamburger stroganoff, and we must have had a hundred people there! There was always stuff like that going on, so it was a wonderful way to be in the world.

01-01:45:29

Tewes: I really am getting this sense of the *community*, as you would call it, when you discuss SLATE. So you returned to the Bay Area in the early nineties, it sounds like?

01-01:45:45

Morris: Yes, after the death of my husband. I had always wanted to come back to Berkeley; I never thought I was going to stay in New York. But when I met my husband, he was a lawyer in New York and all his family were in New York, and so even though my family was out here, I stayed in New York. When he died suddenly, I—and my son also wanted to come to California—I decided, If I don't make this move now, I'll probably never do it. I was young when he died; I was fifty-one when he died, so I was still pretty young. And I thought, This is really when I *can* do it. So I came back to [California] about a year after his death.

01-01:46:42

Tewes: And you'd been gone for about twenty years?

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Morris: Oh, thirty years.

01-01:46:44

Tewes: Thirty years at that time.

01-01:46:46

Morris: I mean, this was what was amazing. When he died, I had this incredible urge to start calling all these old friends from SLATE who, I hadn't seen most of them in thirty years or maybe once in thirty years. You know, we had been totally separated. And I started calling, and it turned out that most of them still lived in Berkeley. I mean, it was amazing! So when I came back to Berkeley, I had a lot of friends here already that I became friends with all over again. Meeting old roommates—I mean, it was pretty amazing really. And that I had such an urge to call them and to get in contact again after his death, which tells me how much all

of that meant to me. And so I'm now in contact with everybody, pretty much, that's still out here from SLATE! [laughs]

01-01:47:59

Tewes: Well, it sounds like *that* stayed the same for you. But were there other changes in the Bay Area you noticed, having been gone for so long?

01-01:48:07

Morris: More cars. [laughs] A lot more cars. I'm not in tune really that much with what's going on on campus. So in that sense, it's been very different. I lead such a different life now than when I was in school, so it's very different. And I reconnected with that lover from graduate school, and he is now my partner. [laughs] So when I say I reconnected, I *really* reconnected! One of my closest girlfriends was one of my roommates. Several of my women roommates I'm still close to, so it was kind of amazing to me how easy it was to reconnect after thirty years, which is a long time.

01-01:49:27

Tewes: That is pretty amazing. We talked briefly about your career and the work that you did in New York, and the political work you've done since, and I'm wondering what kind of personal legacy you hope you leave.

01-01:49:47

Morris: Well, it really pleases me that I've left a legacy of two crisis centers and two battered women's shelters, and all of these rape crisis programs in hospitals and battered women's programs in hospitals. I worked as the director of social work in several hospitals in New York in the last many years that I was in New York. And as I say, I always left a program. One of the programs actually was for seniors who had too much money to be on [Medicaid] but didn't have enough money to pay for help. All of those programs that I left are still going on. And so that, for me, is very important.

And I don't know, I feel like I've left a legacy in terms of friendships, in terms of, really, all of the work that I've done, which has always been, in some ways, political or to make things better for people. And so I do feel, in that regard, I've left my own personal legacy. Not big, in terms of some major social-change thing, but in—but programmatically, I think I've done good work over the years.

01-01:51:45

Tewes: It sounds like it. Is there anything else you'd like to add about SLATE that we haven't discussed yet today?

01-01:51:57

Morris: I don't think so. I think I've pretty much said what I can say. [laughs]

01-01:52:06

Tewes: Is there anything else you'd like to add about your personal life or your work that we haven't discussed?

01-01:52:13

Morris: [laughs] No, I think you have a pretty good idea at this point.

01-01:52:19

Tewes: Okay. Well, thank you so much for your time today, Julianne. I appreciate it.

01-01:52:22

Morris: You're very welcome.

[End of Interview]

ⁱ The Dies Committee, named after Congressman Martin Dies, Jr., later became HUAC, House Un-American Activities Committee.