University of Washington

Women Who Rock Oral History Project

Transcript

Luzviminda "Lulu" Carpenter

Narrator: Luzviminda "Lulu" Carpenter of Ladies First & Hidmo Entertainment

Interviewed by: Alexis Hope, graduate class participant

Interviewer Association: Women's Studies 542/ AES 498 Winter 2011, Profs. Michelle Habell-Pallan and Sonnet Retman

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Camera and sound: Derek Edamura, undergraduate class participant

Transcription: Alexis Hope, Derek Edamura

Alexis Hope (AH): So our first question for you is, do you consent to this interview?

Luzviminda "Lulu" Carpenter (LC): I consent to this interview…am I supposed to look at you or look at the camera?

Derek Edamura (DE): Look at us. Yeah, you can look directly at us.

AH: He's the videographer.

LC: Ah, okay.

AH: Okay, so, our second question is, if you would, just, please introduce yourself?

LC: In what way?

AH: Um, give us like your name, and sort of, maybe what you do now, or, anything that I guess, you would want the video to focus on.

LC: Oh wow.

AH: Sorry.

LC: Oh no, it's okay…um…let's see (laughter) sorry…I don't know why I'm laughing so hard…cuz it is kind of funny, but um, cuz I always struggle with introductions, I'm like…which one should I mention? So, um…okay (laughter)

DE: Just start from the beginning.

AH: Yeah, we looked at your LinkedIn profile and you did like a million things, I was like, wow, I don't know what to ask her about!

LC: Yeah, sometimes I feel like [I forget] and I'm like, projects uncompleted, do you count those? Okay, so my name is Luzviminda Carpenter. I'm known as Lulu, some youth call me Miss Lulu, that's my favorite title, um, it makes me smile (laughter). I always think it's funny when they call me Miss Lulu, I like always wanted to be called Miss Lulu for my whole life. Okay, so I'm going to start over, because I just woke up and I just went on a tangent. Okay…god

DE: We'll edit it out, we'll edit it out.

LC: Okay. So my name is Luzviminda Carpenter. I work at Franklin High School as a community projects manager and a service learning coordinator. I am also part of Panay sa Seattle as a secretary general also the alliance chair in the community. I work with Ladies First Seattle, formerly was part of Communities Against Rape and Abuse and was a chapter, affiliate chapter, of insight women of color. I am also connected to media action grassroots network through the Hidmo Community Empowerment Project and that project has moved on to be called Hidmo Next, which I am a steering committee member of. I also do lots and lots of volunteer work in the community and try to inspire revolution, and incite revolution (laughter).

AH: Okay, um…

LC: That's my main goal.

AH: Okay, so I guess I'm kind of, what do you mean by that exactly, if you're…

LC: Incite revolution?

AH: Yeah.

LC: When I say incite revolution I think of how people resist institutions, whether they are in institutions or outside institutions, that they have critical dialogue with the people around them and try to educate themselves and the people around them not in an individual way but try to build community in order to survive, heal, as a whole person, as a whole community, in order to fight the systems that tell us we're shit. That's a summary, yeah.

AH: I like that.

LC: (laughter)

AH: So we're talking about community as this sort of way to survive…can you talk a little bit about that in context of the music communities you're part of and tell us a little bit more about what those communities are like.

LC: Okay, so, I became involved in the music community first through poetry so I consider myself an artist as a poet. I also consider myself a person that can do anything, so consistently [I try to] trying to create. I think creating community is art as well. Um, so the poetry scene, I started learning about the slam scene with my friend Rahwa Hapte late when I first came here five years ago. We were interested in that and also through the Pilipino American Student Association I learned about Blue Scholars who performed many, many times at different Pilipino, the Northwest Pilipino Alliance conferences. And so my connection to music in the underground scene has always been through community organizing and through educating youth and educating masses of people and that's how I became--knowledge within books became more heartfelt, through music. And so, through those different conferences and connections, I started listening to hip hop and started educating myself about different things that were happening around the world. Um, and in Seattle, I didn't realize when I first came here that there are many different scenes, I just met people that were teaching artists that were consistently--and I didn't know they were teaching artists at the time, they would teach me hip hop, or whether it was about the community I was entering into, right, as a person that migrated here from another part of the state. So over the past few years, I have gone to just so hip hop shows and the two main organizations that I've been involved in is Hidmo Entertainment and the Ladies First collective as well as when Pinay sa Seattle has done cultural shows and we've invited multiple artists to participate and share their art.

AH: So, you when were talking about this idea of seeing…you mentioned the term "teaching artists", can you describe a little bit more about what that is, and how that's distinct from other types of…

LC: Um, artist? Teaching artist? So how I describe "teaching artists," and those are the people that I, no matter what job I have, I try to bring them in to get paid because they have created their art as a tool to educate people for the most part. Not all…it's so tricky…when you're talking about music or art, I don't want to offend anyone, I'm just trying to say what I like. And I feel like I'm not like an artist that is...I don't get paid for my art. I feel like everyone's an artist, but then there's this other genre of people that are artists that are musicians, and that is their career, that is their livelihood. So that's a completely different space to go from, right? And so that scene if you talk to someone who's part of that scene, I'm kind of like one foot in, one foot out as somebody who's curated different showcases or different shows, then, they will talk about--they all teach something different. And so, it's a

completely different way of being or seeing the world. And so like, the people that I'm in connection with, that are in my little scene or bubble or silo, are people that are educators for the most part first and their music connects to that. So some of those people would be like um, with the Hidmo Community Empowerment Project, Gabriel Teodros and Kings, who are connected to that environment, and they, Kings, is connected to the service board. He works with youth, he works with the community, to talk about his story, and he learns how to develop workshops, both of them develop workshops to talk to the community about their life and connecting with youth, and survival, and all those things, um, and those are the type of people that have an analysis about oppression that I try to bring in, like when I work at Franklin, to talk about their stories, or if I work with other organizations, like YouthSource, to come and talk about their experience because they are from the neighborhood and they are--they live here--they have experienced violence here, and can use their art for liberatory practice.

DE: Do you think the two can coexist--like the education aspect and the, sort of, business…

LC: I think that they can exist, that's why I think…it's so tricky, cuz I don't think that I'm savvy enough to do the business things, you know, and so like when people are doing music and business and finding that balance, that is such a struggle and you can talk to artists about that, like, and it's not compromising versus, like I've seen people do it very, very well, you know, and they're very open about that process. Like if you interview somebody like, Christa Bell, who, I mean I really admire her art, you know, because what her art is, is she's always pushing the envelope about being a woman, and she's a poet but she making money …she can survive on that, and be honest about what she stands for, and people are paying to see that, versus like, a music scene, which is really different. Poetry is always, you know, I don't think…poetry and hip hop have always existed together but people, over the years they've kind of split, but within music scenes it's like, it's a whole industry, right? So, it's just like, poets are known for…you know…the stereotype of a poet, you know "talking about this, talking about that, emotions, and…" you know? And so that's what they're known for and that's what they're allowed to be their whole selves, and I think it takes a very savvy artist to really get paid to talk about women's issues. It's really hard for women to talk about women's issues, and the condition of violence, um, throughout our society, and to get paid for that, because people don't want to hear that. And so, it's a hard road to travel, you know? And sometimes people want music to be liberatory, but liberatory in a way of escapism. That's just my opinion; I don't know (laughter) so…

AH: So, we also wanted to ask a little bit about your background, and how that connects to your musical experience, and your work as a community organizer…so if you could talk a little bit about when and where you were born, and sort of the work life of your parents, and things like that. Maybe how that…those things affected what you decided to do?

LC: What I decided to do…so…I was born in Mountain Home Idaho Air Force Base. (inaudible) it's just a little country, I always describe myself as a country girl and I realize Seattle is like the first big urban city I've lived in…I always lived on military bases so that's really influenced my life. And my parents, the reason why they're involved in the military is because they are very, they come from an impoverished place. My dad was born in Jacksonville, Alabama, on the cotton fields, and my mother was born in (inaudible) Philippines, um, next to Mexico, in Pampanga area, and that's mostly rural Philippines, very rural, and she married my dad when she was in the Philippines, it was, they are still together, and I was the only one born in the US. My other brothers and sisters, I have three other bros and sis, and they were born in the Philippines. It was a struggle. Family life was really, really hard, and that's influenced my life. I saw a lot of family dynamics, I don't know why I was hyper aware of it, just like the disrespect my parents would get at their jobs, from the community, from their choices to marry each other. And just the military like was kind of…military men are…I respect what they do, but it's also like…I've seen some bad family stuff. And that's not to say it doesn't happen in other communities, but that was just my experience. And so connecting family violence to military violence has always been in my mind, you know, at the forefront, and so when I went on to college I learned to connect these things, and I was mostly involved in women's organizations, like the Black Women's Caucus, at Washington State University, as well as…um, go Cougs.. um (laughter) go Cougs, go Cougs!

AH: My sister was one, so… (laughter)

LC: Okay, okay, so I'm going back, so I was involved in many, many women's organizations, that were women of color organizations and always connecting the ideas of race and gender. I became involved in Pinay sa Seattle because it connected the economics and what that meant, and class. And later on, and it's always like, how I made these connections was through people's personal stories and by me sharing them, and also really realizing the things that, in regards to my identity, that I pushed to the back to the forefront, depending on the environment that I was in, and as I got older, I'm just like, I feel like I collected pieces of myself along the way that were denied. And now I mean, years late,r I finally realized that I was queer, not realized, but I mean, how much I've been denying parts of myself or pushing things back because of shame, and that's also connected to the shame I feel in regards to the class background I have. Um, when I think of music and the healing aspect of music, of it being a liberatory practice, is how hearing the things in an artistic form that people cannot accept when you just say them is always a blessing, you know, and it's very healing, and so you know whether I speak the words of truth for myself or whether I hear other peoples stories on the mic and connecting to these higher systems of, all these systems of oppression and how can we really liberate ourselves and our communities and, you know, hopefully the world. (laughter) No big deal. Small things.

AH: (laugh) No big…

LC: Think big, think big! You know, start small, think big. So, um, basically, especially like my understanding of military and economics completely came from my family and my background and a lot of people that are involved in the scene, what they witnessed on military bases throughout the world has completely influenced them and their lives and it's also connected to a filling of always wanting to have family and community, and you can build that, and I know a lot of queer liberation movements talk about creating and chosign family, but that's with anybody, you know, it's just like, we can learn from different movements, that, with different people…some people, recently I was at Vera Project and we were talking on a panel about all-ages movement projects and they were talking about how, how are these venues or spaces created and that's a common theme right? And it's just like…a gent had said we come as orphans, and that really resonated with me and I was thinking about that and how a lot of people, whether it's in the punk scene, or music, or hip hop, or the poetry scene, sometimes we come as orphans searching for something that is not within us, you know, that was--that, we weren't given that sense of comfort and love as a child. And so we have to create that for ourselves. And oftentimes when we're creating a community, intentional community…cuz I mean, community is already there but intentional community of what we would like to see in the world, that's part of it, you know. And so for me, even though I have a family, I feel like its disjointed and sometimes I feel like I'm wandering and I need a soft place to land, and music sometimes is that.

AH: So were your parents supportive of you getting involved in music and community activism?

LC: Hmm, let's see, I don't think my parents really see me as a poet. (laughter) they're like "that's good Lulu, that's nice." You know, it's just kind of like your child getting on a stage and you're like (clapping, laughter) "Lulu! Lulu! Lulu! (Laughter) you're great girl, you're great." Um, so (laughter) are my parents supportive? I think they are overall, they're supportive of me because I think life has been really really hard for them and they see me as a person that kind of, let's see, I don't know, that's hard to say because I think I just make my parents cry. All the time, you know, whether it's from joy or from suffering, it's hard, you know, it's a struggle, because sometimes if you come from a place where everybody is depressed and sad, then it's hard to be happy when someone escapes that whole cycle, you know, cycle of depression or violence and so, in a way I don't feel like I've escaped them or I need to escape them exactly but sometimes they think that I'm ashamed of them but I'm not. And so when I think about the poetry that I do, it's really based on my experience with them, and would I ever share my poetry with my mother or father, I'm like, not really. It's just like, they see me, they just want to know that I have a job, that I can feed myself so it's not really…cuz it's not really my career, it's something that I do for myself. It's…yeah.

DE: Was it difficult to get on stage the first time?

LC: Hmm…I think it's still difficult. It's never not been difficult. But I have performed in front of my mom as an actress one time in a play. It was really hard because it was about…cuz there was a scene in there that was about her, but all of our stories were mixed up so she would never know that it was about her, um, and it was about a phone call that I made to her, um, asking her to do a certain act that she wasn't willing to do at the time. And, I'm just careful, about the things that I say on camera and that's just something you guys should know, is like, sometimes you don't want to say things until your parents pass away. Out of honor for their survival. So…and so those are things, I would not say it on camera but maybe would say it on a stage, when it's not being videotaped (laughter).

AH: So I was kind of interested in that…when you were talking about intentional community a couple of minutes ago. So, kind of interested in like, what do you think it takes to make an intentional community? As a community organizer, you probably know about…

LC: What does it take? Um, let's see, hold on for one second, I think Onion called us. How many more questions do you have?

AH: Um, well we have like a list, but I'm kind of deviating, so…I was going to ask you a little bit more about Ladies First and then your work with Hidmo next, was kind of like…

LC: Can we push pause, and then I can see if she's on her way…

AH: yeah

[video paused]

LC: People are wondering how to reach out to people by email and you know how I kept on telling you to text me? You should have texted me and I would have responded faster. (laughter) or facebooked me on my wall. But it's true because, you have to like, the modes of communication…I realize like, as a person with multiple identities you want to be part of so many different things but you can't be, right? But you are. You can't be, but you are. And so it's just like…

DE: You get sucked in

LC: You get sucked in, you know. And it's just like, it's learning that I just have to like, let go. And one thing, like, I'm trying to learn, is like let go and let the people behind me start it because like, everybody has to learn their own lessons…I just moved the mic, sorry.

AH: It's okay

DE: You're still good.

LC: (laughter)

DE: Yeah you're good, you're totally good.

[21:00]

LC: Check one, check two, check three. You should do outtakes, that'd be hilarious.

DE: We might. (laughter) we'll have a whole clip…

LC: What have I learned about…what was the question again?

AH: Um, oh, oh it was just sort of like, what does it take to make an intentional community? What have you learned about community organizing?

LC: I don't know…no, just joking, uh I think, okay so one thing, so it makes me really really nervous to be called a community organizer, but I call myself that only because other people have named me that, right? When people started naming me that I was just like, I would say it more in public, but it still makes me nervous, because one, um, there are so many different types of communities, and so I struggle between the intentional communities that I feel like sometimes are a privilege to make, if you even know that language of intentional community versus like the communities that are already in place, and that in many ways are suffering. And in those communities, sometimes like, I told you that I work in the south end, I have privilege because I wasn't raised here but I'm also like, I'm maybe a gentrifier, you know, because I'm a college-educated single woman just living out on my own, you know, and that's it, you know. And I know many, many people that are like that you know, we have good intentions, we have a college education, we're brown folks, and at the same time, we might be gentrifiers, you know, along with all the other artists and hipsters that people talk about. Um, and so, when I think about that, it's just like…intentional community, and neighborhoods, and the community you were raised in, right, and that influenced you…and so for me it's just like military community, right? And then intentional communities I was part of in the past was like the Filipino community cuz there was not a lot of Filipinos in Spokane. Cuz we ended up in Spokane. And also, my dad was part of the Masons, right, so like, I saw how that was a joy for my parents to be involved in a community that kind of at least respected their identity if nothing else, like their culture, um…versus like how they got disrespected at work. And so from a young age I wanted to be involved in the Pilipino community, black community, and then later on intentional women of color spaces, and as I learned about different things I was like "oh, this is what that is, this is sexism, this is patriarchy, this doesn't feel so good, I don't want to be in that environment all the time," then I need to find space that respects and wants to talk about these things and these injustices. And so, if we're talking about WSU, and going to college, then I was always involved in you know, these women of color organizations, student organizations, and then when I came to Seattle it became so

different, because, like, I have always been involved in small communities where you were a minority in so many different ways and so you created these intentional spaces, in Seattle, sometimes people don't even recognize, because the diversity, or supposed diversity, or multiculturalism, that they need intentional space. And so when I got here I was like "wow, Seattle's so cool, and I'm so naive," and now 5 years later I'm like "wow, it's been a very, very, very hard road to travel." Um, community organizing is liberatory but the more things that happen in community and the stuff that we bring to our organizing, we bring, and I'm talking about myself, I bring lots and lots of baggage, you know, from my past, you know. Whether it's suppressing my sexual identity, or whether it's just like the messed-up messages that my parents have told me, or the media has told me, all my insecurities, all my vulnerabilities that I don't want to reveal, all the mistakes that I've made that I don't want to say that I've made, and yeah, in many ways being accused of different things that I may agree or disagree that I've done, and right now, I'm trying to reflect on all the mistakes that I've made along the way, and all I can say is that I put my neck out there, and I tried. And so many people are sitting on the sidelines, not creating anything, pinging fingers, saying so many things and it's just like, I don't know, all I can say is, sometimes you just wanna lash out and go back to anger and violence and I'm just like wait…reflect on what you've created. And I'm like, all I can say is like, I've tried, I've made mistakes, I'm going to do something different. And so when I think about Ladies First it's like, if you go, some people will never sit in front of a camera and say you know what, these are the mistakes that Ladies First made, and these are the changes that we can make. But it's like, the problem is, nobody attacks the problem versus attacking an organization, and the problem is, the root cause is, there's a lot of sexism in the hip hop scene, and it's like, they're not bad people, nobody is a bad person, they're like--most people who come to hip hop are like, people that are struggling economically or with racism or need an outlet to give voice to their struggles, but at the same time, as that's happening, other peoples' voices are not being heard. And so Ladies First is not just about hip hop, but it's about, you know, women and trans folks being able to talk about violence that's happened to them due to racism you know and all these systems of oppression, you know, and because they identify as such, their voices have not been heard. And so, trying to create that intentional space, you get a lot of backlash. And a lot of people are like, why is it not okay for a woman to get onstage and talk, you know, about it if there's no other place to talk about her rape and abuse, because there aren't that many spaces. So, it's just so, unfair that people attack, will just come and not try to be part of the solution, like whether its the name change or trying to create a different space, or why are you on the outside just pointing fingers? And saying you're all haters, and no one has ever been a man-hater, we just want to tell our story, you know, most of the women have fathers, have sons, have uncles, have partners that are male identified, have always been male identified, and it's just like they're not haters, if they were haters, they would not even support anything. So they have to do double task, like create this intentional community as well as support a larger movement.

AH: What did you mean by the name change?

LC: Ladies First? Um, well some critiques that people have had about Ladies First is that people don't identify as a lady, you know, but it came from a song that was, because it was like the first of the month, and it was Queen Latifa's song, you know (sings) "Ladies First, Ladies First," and the whole song is kind of like, what she's trying to say in the song is very positive, but you know, as we become more aware of queer and trans folks that identify in different ways and we want to make it trans inclusive and gender nonconforming inclusive, gender queer inclusive, that name is…puts people off and don't know that it's really accepting of all people that identify as women or trans. It's just like, overwhelmingly, some people, the space itself predominately has been women and trans folks of color and has not been exclusionary of people of European descent in any way, you know, and so there's been many performers but it's been very, very diverse, but, people have said it off to the side but never said it directly to any of the organizers, so it's just like, kind of like hard, if we engage in that conversation…but a lot of people that founded it, it's coming on it's 10 years, are really attached to that and that history of the name and how influential it was to them, hearing it. You know. By Queen Latifah.

AH: So now would probably be a good time to segue into how you got involved with Ladies First, and…how it started, you said it's coming up on ten years.

LC: It's coming on ten years, yes, hold on, Onion's calling me…nope, so, um…Ladies First, lets see, was it November 2008 2009 2010, what year is it? 2011. (laughs)

DE: Oh my god.

AH: The future…

LC: I started my job 2009, and then I ended that job 2008, 2007. I was like (sings) 2007. (laughs) so a long time ago, a long, long time ago, there was an artist by the name of Ro Kanai, and I was part of Pinay sa Seattle. And, at that same time I was involved in the Hidmo, and the Hidmo was coming up, right? You all know about the Hidmo? So…

AH: Maybe we should get some of it on camera though. I don't know how much background…so…could you explain what Pinay sa Seattle is and Hidmo is, just for…

LC: Oh okay, so Hidmo Community Empowerment Project, or the Hidmo…so, there's the Hidmo, and it has four branches. I was heavily involved in Hidmo Entertainment and Hidmo Community Empowerment Project; it's a restaurant on 20th & Jackson that people say is a restaurant cleverly disguised as a community center. Um, and my best friend Rahwa Hapte owned it and she invited a lot of people & community organizations and artists and it became this hub or mecca of politics, art, community, and many joyful things. Many joyful things. Pinay sa Seattle is an overseas chapter of Gabrielle Philippines, part of a national umbrella org of Philippine women and trans folks and people of Philippine descent, sorry, women

and trans folks of Pilipino descent, people that believe in the sovereignty of the Philippines, basically. And to do that, we support the people that are in the Philippines and a lot of our folks identify as immigrants and migrants as well, or descendants of, so Pinay sa Seattle was doing an all-women's hip hop show, and that's been done before since many years past, and people were like there needs to be an all-women's hip hop show, so there was (inaudible) and at the same time Hidmo started doing a lot of neat things in the community so that was my understanding of things. And at the same time I was working at the API Women and Family Safety Center in 2006 [and] 2007 and I was volunteering even before that, so I was just learning a lot about human trafficking and DV [domestic violence] and sexual assault and that was my focus. And when this opportunity came up, my friend Onion, who was the founder had started up Ladies First after a hiatus, a little bit inspired by [inaudible], because once again, there needs to be a revival of understanding of women in hip hop. And so in 2007, I had stopped working at the Safety Center but I was always going to CARA events and volunteering and so there was a job opening that came up, it was like an admin assistant, at the same time, Ladies First coordinator who at the time was Georgina Frazier had to step down and previously had attended and volunteered for the organization, so, I basically approached one of the co-directors at the time, Ebony, and asked her, was like 'hey give me a job' (laugh) and Rahwa and I sat down and said we would like to revive Ladies First as well, um, not revive but carry it on because somebody was not able to do that. Georgina Frazier who was the previous coordinator moved to Portland so I was just like I would like to, you know, continue on and so I just I just went with it and it was all about, I was a part-time worker, I was not supposed to focus on Ladies First, um, but I did. It's amazing in regards to Ladies First because we told the history at the conference and its just like some video tape of it, of the trajectory of it, of how it became so big, and so I was heavily involved in CARA, CARA was sending me to different conferences, I was meeting different people from Incite! Women of Color, they were very inspirational, and at the same time people started saying certain artists were coming into town, so like banking on, not banking but just like using that momentum, we started getting not just local artists but out-of-town artists, and so like big name artists like Invincible, Sabrina the Witch, to Skim and Climbing Poetry and all these phenomenal women and trans folks were like coming through Seattle and we were like "let's support them," even like comedians like D'Lo were coming through, and they had a political message. 2008 was the first time that we were like, this is stressing us out and we want it to be sustainable, we're going to plan a whole season so we planned the spring 2008 season and the fall 2008 season and we started off, and I didn't know, like understand, like I admired their politics versus understanding how huge these people were at the time, like Laura Peace Kelley, she's one of the first B-girls in Seattle, and she kind of jumped off the 2008 season in January and that was my first like full year and it was just amazing how many people were crowded underneath the hut, and that time Rah was not involved in so many things all over Seattle (laughs) and so a lot of people were invested in Ladies First and in the Hidmo and so it was like a good kind of match because Ladies First wasn't always at the Hidmo, but that combination of the venue being supportive, like it wasn't just a venue, they were like "we weLC:ome in your politics

and your art and what you're trying to create in this space. And its part of our values." And so the image of Hidmo is connected to Ladies First in 2008 and vice versa, and it was mutually supportive, people wanted to support the Hidmo surviving and Ladies First as well and in many ways the people involved in both of those things, and I cant even begin to name all of the people, there were so many people that I don't believe that anybody as a Ladies First coordinator would say that they did it all by themselves. Like there was somebody supporting them, you know? And so when I think back to my time doing LF it was like expanded beyond hip hop as well so it was not just…it was other women as well from different places and [who] needed support or wanted to support themselves, and we opened it up to people that were not just poets or MCs or B-girls but also opened it up to having mercy there and people who were visual artists and to people that were in the punk scene, to people that were just acoustic guitar, to people that were comedians, and all kinds of people.

AH: So now that the Hidmo space is closed, what's next for Hidmo? And what's next for Ladies First? Or what's the state of Ladies First right now, I guess?

LC: The state of the Hidmo is that it is now Hidmo Next, and you can go to www.Hidmo.org--you can see that I practiced this--and you can see how to volunteer and become part of--it's going to become a collective. We don't know what it's going to look like, but the meeting is going to happen. I forgot the date at this point but…basically, it's based at Washington Hall, it's an anchor tenant, and with other organizations they are going to help create that space.

AH: Cool.

LC: And Ladies First is going to go back to its--because it got a grant it is a little bit different--it's not--CARA has, is, it needs to figure out how to be part of CARA and it's own entity at the same time. And so Ladies First is basically going to become a collective, so right now all the coordinators have reconvened and just kind of shared their stories and that history as it comes on it's ten year mark and we're going to perform at Folklife [Festival] and going to try to see what people are interested in doing and bring it back to collective status versus having one coordinator--cuz it's a huge task.

AH: Yeah, it sounds like it.

LC: Basically. A huge task.

AH: So it sounds like the future is pretty open at this point?

LC: Yeah, and just like, going back to its community focus of, how do we…because people have become invested in both of these things and these organizations and so when people have become invested in these organizations, this brainchild of the person who founded it, people want to be a part of it, and how to get all of those

people involved and still keep to it's mission, both for Hidmo or Ladies First it really depends on the founding principles as well as the people that have, they've grown into monsters, monsters like fuzzy monsters. People are loving the big fuzzy monster but people want to pet the big fuzzy monster but how do we feed the fuzzy monster? (laughter)

AH: A good metaphor.

LC: (laughter) I was just like, let me go back to metaphors. That's easier. The fuzzy monster needs to be fed.

DE: Sometimes it feels like a lot of organizations they reach like a limit, and then at some point they sort of come back. Is that…

LC: Um, yeah, when it becomes very big and grandiose and everyone is like 'this is cool' it's just like…but people don't see the sweat and the blood that it took to make that, right? People just want to come and enjoy the environment, which is fine because people need healing, but it takes a lot of work to create an environment, or, it just takes a lot of good people, you now? Because as everything becomes bigger, everybody wants a piece, but not everybody has good intentions. You know…people want the fame and notoriety and not the work.

AH: We also had some questions, I guess this kind of segues into, what challenges you came up against when trying to do all of this community organizing, or maybe like what social divisions play out in your scene…

LC: I think the hardest thing…well, I mean, my organizing and understanding has come from a DV [domestic violence] and rape lens, you know, and I don't know if people fully understand what that means, but just like understanding how intimate partner violence happens. And so what's challenging about that is you have to always question, and I think other people should do this, is like question how your trauma is affecting your organizing, and in some ways you might not see it, you know, in some ways you kind of throw your trauma around. So it's like when people push your buttons, it's not really about that person, it's like, understanding why does this make me so angry, you know? And how they push that invisible button that reminds you of every single childhood trauma that has ever happened to you. So, what's hardest is just like, you have to constantly educate how to be healthy, like there's never a set answer, and so I feel that when you're organizing from that lens it's just like, it challenges you and it challenges other people and you always have to constantly dialogue and talk about it, you now? And many people, like, may have experienced those traumas but they don't have the analysis. Does that make sense? So like, a lot of people--not that, they have their own experience and that's valuable, but when you're organizing around it, like "how do you prevent it?", a lot of people are coming from many different sides or experiences and it will always come up like "well I'm a survivor too, I'm a survivor too," so, those are difficult things to combat. Other things is just like, over time, I'm like, you're not going to get along with

everybody but how do you still work with people? Cuz it's just like, you don't want to be that throwaway mentality, and I've seen a lot of people that just walk out of organizations instead of struggling with it, and if you really want to create a scene, then you're going to struggle with someone in your organization. And do you struggle with love and good intentions, or do you, I mean, do you come to a point where you can't? And if you can't, then how do you work with different people, you know? Knowing that, you know, this person doesn't fully love you and you don't fully love this person, how do you really build trust? Those are complicated questions. And oftentimes, if you come from a marginalized community, or even just like marginalized political ideas, there's going to be tension and there's going to be hard things to get through. And, who has the privilege to walk away and who doesn't, is always a question you know, and when does self-care, is an individual right or is that also a privilege, or you know, and it's just like you start getting into these depressing games of like how do you really unify with the person or another organization because you need allies, you can't do this on your own and you can't do it with only your organization, you have to build alliances. And, can you have points of unity with another organization but not agree with everything that organization does, right? And so, that's a constant struggle, because sometimes when people come into organizing they just want to yell and scream on a street corner and it's just like, that's important, and that rallies people but also it's just like, what are the negotiations that happen inside homes, you know, with your partner, at work, you know, it's just like, it's more than just the street corner. And sometimes I can say that like sometimes in Seattle there's so much racism in the Seattle scene and nobody wants to admit that they're, you know, that they're causing it, but it's just like, white culture is dominant, you know, even in the hip hop scene. You see who makes it and who doesn't. And that's not to say that the people who do make it aren't saying great things, but it's just like, it continues to play itself out, these systems of oppression, within relationships, within friendships, within organizations. And so it's just like, when you see that, you just get really, really tired. And you're like, what are the new strategies, and it's just like, there's some old tools that we need to learn--to use, that have been forgotten, you know, that people have created, that have been forgotten, and then there's new ones that we need to make, you know. But I don't know why I still think that revolution is the answer (laughter) but it is the only answer, you know? I don't know, education.

AH: So I guess getting back to, you mentioned--

LC: I rambled. That made me really sad (laughter). There's so many things going on in community right now, I'm so stressed out (laughter).

AH: …that it makes you tired. So what's your response…

LC: To racism making me tired?

AH: Yeah, just all of these things making you tired, because you have to continue to grapple with them. What's your response to that?

LC: For me, my answer is, what I'm struggling with in regards to self-care is this is just one political moment, you know, and I have been doing it a long time, and you know, just feeling like there is that martyr tic, you know, in the community. Like, well "I worked hard and I worked until 10-o-clock tonight, and I haven't slept in five days" and I'm like, "okay, I become this kind of martyr and I'm not taking, you know, nobody asked me to become a martyr." Like nobody needs another dead person, or stressed out person, it's not helping anybody, so it's just like, taking a year off and just like, letting it lie. And that's the hardest thing. Is like, I need to just rest, and or let go of some projects, you know, and like, that's the hardest thing is letting go of something that you helped create or…yup, that's the hardest thing, but that's the whole thing that people talk about, "Founder's Syndrome." You know, and there's some good examples of people truly letting go of a project and trusting the community to create what they need, right, and it's just like when do you become the person that's like, you know, don't control things. You know, like power and control, when do you become the person that is a representation of institutions within your actions, if that makes sense, because like you start trying to control people and situations when it's just like "no, you need to let go and let the community, and trust the community, right," but once again, it's like the community and the organizations that you are trying to influence, versus the community at large, you know, which is, you definitely don't have control over the community at large. So, yeah, or maybe even the ideas that you have that you want to create, the community doesn't need, you know, and so you're really wasting your time and turning your, you know, wasting all of your energy on something that nobody wants, you know, and if people are not behind you, then you're going to be a lone soldier and you don't have a movement of one, there's no, I don't--I really hate those military ads, 'Army of One', that's not true. You can't do it (laughter) There's no Rambos, these images of individualism that society gives us, you know, it is work and struggle to be part of an organization, to be part of a community, to be part of a movement, not that you have to compromise but you have to really investigate, you know, whether you're contributing to an organization or whether you're harming them. And you may have good intentions, but that doesn't mean anything when you're harming people, yeah….And Seattle's passive aggressive so it's even harder. Not even going to go there, because some things that would not even be said, they're just right on in Seattle…Seattle's weird.

AH: Seattle is…

AH: So we have one more, like, official question. And also we can talk about anything else you want, that you want to add to your story. It was, uh, looking forward twenty years form now based on your experience and your projects…

LC: Oh, can I push pause for a second?

AH: Yeah, of course

LC: …because I don't know if she's in the building or not so I'm like, worried…

(camera pause)

AH: Okay so, are we recording?

DE: Yes

AH: Oh cool, so our last question was, kind of….

(difficulties with clip on mic)

LC: (to Onion) What do you guys want to go eat? Nico doesn't know. Does he like pho? Let's go to Toshi's teriyaki, it's down the street. For some reason I've never been there. (etc…more conversation with Onion)

[51:30]

AH: Okay, so the one last question we had is sort of looking forward twenty years from now based on your experience and your projects, how do you imagine music communities and scenes in Seattle are going to be different than they are today?

LC: Twenty years?

AH: Or, you can make it up, just in the future.

LC: That'd be nice…to look at this twenty years from now.

AH: Yes.

LC: What I envision twenty years from now? I envision, I would like a vibrant scene--music and art scene--I don't see it separate for me, that embraces, for me I just want, gosh, okay, I would like to see a vibrant art and music scene that stands up against violence and intimate partner violence, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, in all ways. In their venues and in their organizations and what they intentionally try to create. I want to see artists paid for their worth, I would like to see more outlets for women and trans folks, and that's also for them to have opportunities to teach in the community as well as to be embraced by the community. I would like to be part of a scene and community that embraces being challenged and that is for something besides just individual art but for community and collaborative projects and art, that uplifts the community, I would like to see more artists in (laughter) That's, I was about to say uncle, Auntie Boo, who gave those to my students when they came and visited…Anyway, sorry…(laughter) so, okay, cut all that out…let's see, I think because some people are my friends I want to see them really be paid as independent artists that they're able to create their own studios and create projects and that they're financed without

having to compromise their art or what they value or their politics. Um, definitely create a fan base of folks that are willing to pay, and sustain these artists in the community, that are saying things, not just back up by saying "wow, they're great," but financial backing. I think that's really crucial and important--and it's like, how can people continue to create challenging art if they're not embraced and supported to do it in many different ways, even, especially, financially. You know, people need to eat, people have families, you know, and it's draining to put out energy to say things other people are not willing to say and then be shut down.

AH: Any last words?

LC: What did you--any last questions? I don't know, anything at all? Onion do you have any questions for me?

AH: So it's part of this broader Women Who Rock project so we're just interviewing lots of women who rock.

LC (to Onion Carrillo):They're in the lady Michelle's class, that does the Fandango at UW.

Onion Carrillo (OC): Oh nice. So you guys are students at the U?

AH & DE: Yeah.

OC: I'm over there too, I'm at the school of social work.

AH: Oh, excellent, nice, are you in the Master's program?

OC: Yeah.

DE (to LC): So what do you do here at Franklin?

LC: I'm a community projects manager and try to get students involved in all types of politics, whether it's a protest, whether it's gardening, whether it's volunteering for a day, finding them internships or fellowships, connecting curriculum, teacher's curriculum to service learning and taking students to Olympia, coordinating conferences for the students, all to show them that they can also do public service and also get paid. In the long run, by giving back to the community, but just, yeah, mostly service learning and politics.

AH: What are some of the challenges of bringing politics and education together?

LC: Well, it's American government classes, I'm connected to American government classes and English classes so it's challenging…it's not challenging because they're learning it. It's interesting because the history of politics is what they're learning now, so, yeah, challenges, challenges, so many challenges…children, youth are not

the challenge to be honest (laughs) youth are never the challenge. It's adults that have issues, trying to speak for them….I'm done if Nico and Onion want to be interviewed.