

## Mahnaz Afkhami Oral History Content Summary

### Track 1 [duration: 1:15:04] [Session one: 5 January 2013]

[00:00] Mahnaz Afkhami [MA] Born Kerman, Iran to farming family. Description of division of responsibility within extended family. Describes household and communal living with all family in one compound of separate houses, coming together at mealtimes. Description of mealtimes with grandfather at head of dining cloth, youngest at opposite end. Evocative description of kitchen set apart from living areas and emerging platters of food, served by grandmother. Explanation of private section of household and outer areas used for greeting visitors, business, formalities, predominantly by men. Grandparents' death bringing change with each house entertaining individually.

[05:08] Remarks on speed of change consistent with change in country after Second World War. Describes intermingling of agricultural workers with household members. Describes donkeys carrying fruits from harvest, then modernisation. Describes city of Kerman, houses side by side each with garden, fruit trees. Describes characteristics of pistachio trees. Describes attendance of Zoroastrian school despite family being Sheikhi, Shi'ite branch of Islam. Head of Sheikhis, head of MA's family with belief underpinning daily affairs without observing all religious practices. Reflects on enjoyment of school atmosphere and household full of children to play with, including servant component, MA among youngest, eldest of three in immediate family.

[10:29] Divorce of parents, MA age 11, move to Tehran with mother and grandmother. Describes mother, from intellectual, academically oriented Nafisi family, among first women to attend university in Iran. Mother abandoning university studies to marry. Mentions grandmother single mother supporting herself through tailoring business. Describes confidence and strength of character of maternal grandmother, Bahá'í when faith not tolerated. Describes family as spirited, fun-loving.

[15:09] Describes parent's relationship. Describes father as supportive of MA with no distinction between MA and brothers. Comments on expectation of careers as doctors or engineers. Remarks on both grandmothers as most influential figures as growing up.

[18:53] Describes women in family owning and managing property and workers, dealing with agricultural issues, selling and buying. Remarks that case of class trumping gender. Describes women running households. Importance of books, MA encouraged to read and have opinions. Describes reading translations of Ernest Hemingway, Leo Tolstoy as child, with serialised bedtime narrations of 'Amir Arsalan-e Namdar'. Amusing observation of outmoded class distinctions of time. Describes own cross-class life experience of oscillating between privilege and austerity.

[24:52] Reflects on sense of belonging and community support developed in Kerman, upheaval of move to Tehran, Iran, living in constrained circumstances.

[29:00] Mother leaving for United States of America (USA), MA and siblings living with grandmother. Describes management as young children, of grandmother's diabetes and nighttime comas.

[34:37] Describes Zoroastrian school in Tehran as one of two best secondary schools in Tehran. Mentions mother working for Point Four Program. Describes leaving for USA. Describes mother boarding in Greek household, San Francisco, USA. Describes own hazy experience age 13, with lack of English language, enrolled into Catholic school.

[39:42] Describes first impressions of America, mother's friend renaming MA Leah, with new image. Describes experience of being sent to Seattle, USA to be immersed in American culture and learn language, living with retired middle-class family, attending all-white school as only foreigner. Describes misunderstanding of MA's educational background and early entry to college. Mentions Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre' and development of English language through immersion in characters of nineteenth-century novels.

[48:03] Story about being in the choir. Mentions baseball. Describes enjoyment of American history and politics readings. Mentions Mark Twain's 'Huckleberry Finn'. Describes expectation that would study medicine. Mentions Dr. Ehsan Yarshater.

[53:25] Reflects on relationship to boys during adolescence. Description of courting in grandmother's time, anecdote about attracting beloved by jingling bracelets. Describes how parents met, speculating on issues. Describes process of own college applications in USA. Mentions Seven Sister colleges. Attendance of San Francisco State College [now San Francisco University]. Describes rejecting financial support, attributing to reading of American civics documents. Describes daily life of college and work age 16.

[58:30] Describes difficulty of getting job. Story about dressing up to go to Market Street, San Francisco (USA) in search of job. Describes job at S.H.Kress & Co. Story about system of dismissing staff and rehiring to avoid paying holiday, MA pursuing with Local 1100, worker's union. Describes as defining experience, appreciation of solidarity building and group action.

[1:05:03] Describes meeting husband and marriage age 17, family opposition. Describes Iranian wedding ceremony at mother's home. Mentions Majid Rahnema. Describes lack of money on honeymoon in Carmel, California, USA. Mentions Pebble Beach, 17-Mile Drive, California, USA.

[1:11:43] Describes studies, working in boutique, birth of son, before move to University of Colorado, USA. Mentions Defense Language Institute. Describes living in student quarters and working as assistant editor of quarterly journal. 'Abstracts of English Studies'. [pause]

## **Track 2 [duration: 1:13:50] [Session one: 5 January 2013]**

[00:00] Describes time in Colorado, USA, responsibilities as mother, work on journal using technology of mid 1960s. Mentions Omar Khayyám. Describes elation as only student to achieve 'A' for Master's dissertation.

[05:40] Describes being hospitalized from overwork and stress. Reflects on son as baby.

[09:45] Return to Iran, describes culture shock.

[15:41] Describes appointment as English Literature professor, Tehran University, Iran. Mentions Dr. Describes experience of teaching as young woman. Mentions 'Survey of English Literature'. Describes discussions arising from literature among female students in social context of Iran.

[22:00] Discusses nature of discussion in patriarchal societies including USA. Development of university Women's Association, and ensuing discussions, how to navigate modernity and tradition, limitations of family life. Presents cultural comparisons between Iran and west. Describes group discussions on poetry, painting, religion. Remarks that themes remain same today.

[28:10] Reflects on own exposure to different religions and impact on work. Describes membership of university Women's association. Mentions Simin Redjali and encouragement to link with national Women's Organisation. Story about cleric speaker's advice on nail polish and prayer. Discusses idea followed that women have role in decisions affecting them.

[35:56] Describes passion for being counted, speaking out, caution in private communications, early realisation of responsibility. Story about opening savings account for son requiring husband's signature, with no rights to funds for MA. Discusses obstacles facing students outside of discussions, in real world.

[40:42] Involvement with national Women's Organisation. Describes impact of speech given by Minister of Education, Farrokhroo Parsa. Describes literacy rates among girls in late 1960s' Iran, Education and Health Corps. Mentions White Revolution granting women right to vote. Discusses significance of women seen as figures in authority in rural areas. Story about woman in Zoviyeh, Iran being made 'Elder Man' of village.

[45:40] Describes background to attending United Nations as part of Iranian delegation with Princess Ashraf Pahlavi. Assigned to Special Political Committee, for Palestinian Refugees and The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Mentions Soheila Shahkar. Story about writing and delivering speech at United Nations (UN). Mentions areas of interest to Shah of Iran. Mentions Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.

[52:30] Describes writing speeches for Princess Ashraf Pahlavi. Amusing anecdote about radio programme. Mentions Reza Shah Pahlavi. Comments that learned a great deal about UN, about diplomacy. Remarks on workings of patriarchy. Mentions

Abdolreza Ansari. Describes return to UN following year. Mentions China's entry to UN, China-Iran relations. Story about sister's involvement with Confederation of Iranian Students as Maoist Marxist and confusion at China's good impressions of Iran.

[56:22] Describes background to appointment as Secretary-General of Women's Organisation of Iran (WO), dilemmas and considerations involved. Describes challenges of position, balance of mobilizing grassroots women without level of acceptance from clerics. Comments on limitations and advantages of Princess Ashraf Pahlavi's role. Describes first initiative of ascertaining priority for individual women in Iran, investigating in 40 towns within six months, including in factories, prisons. Describes unexpected results, choice of economic independence over legal reform.

[1:03:32] Story about response of woman outside textile factory, Esfahan, Iran, breakdown of stereotypes. Describes formulation of plans to accommodate needs, consciousness raising, skills building, capacity building, literacy, classes and training for women, childcare to enable, family planning, legal support, marriage counselling. Discusses core values of identity and self-reliance promoted. Describes targeting female relatives of clergy in religious, conservative areas, to gain support for centres.

[1:08:02] Describes radical position of women being allowed out for function other than public bath or shopping duties. Describes critical observations of visiting American and European feminists. Discusses importance of cultural context, example of Qom, Iran. Gives overview of achievements over eight-year period before Iranian Revolution, 1979. Mentions 60,000 Iranian women returning skilled from studies abroad.

[1:11:11] Comments on opposition groups. Describes affiliation of 57 organisations to WO, including Jewish community, Armenians, Bahá'ís. [pause]

### **Track 3 [duration: 1:11:10] [Session one: 5 January 2013]**

[00:00] Describes development of Women's Organization of Iran (WO), strengthening of network with groups of women active in different localities connecting with organisation and focusing on area of interest, skills building, legislative work. Annual meeting of branch secretaries at provincial level making decisions for each province, annual general assembly of several 100 people, held in Tehran. Describes appointment system to include religious minorities, academics less likely to have grass roots support, witnessing unique hands on involvement in central council. Describes highly interactive participatory system. Profile of women involved, backbone of volunteers.

[05:13] Describes development of necessary cadre of professionals for centres. Two schools of social thought for rural and urban areas. Describes strategy of two-year residential skills building programme in school of social welfare for candidates to encourage return to communities. Describes organisational awareness of connection between local, national and international, lobbying government to be actively involved in United Nations (UN) activities, importance of Princess Ashraf Pahlavi as head of delegation to UN and powerful person inside country. Describes UN announcement of 1975 as International Women's Year (IWY) and First World

Conference on Women, Mexico City, Mexico [Mexico], and WO's participation in preparation, organizing 12 conferences in 12 provinces to ascertain priorities and position of Iranian women in Mexico. Describes working structure as successful formula subsequently used in Sisterhood is Global Institute (SIGI) and Women's Learning Partnership (WLP).

[10:01] Describes extensive media coverage, establishing visibility of women's issues. Anecdote about recognition of WO flag alongside national flag on state visit to provinces. Describes developing draft for World Plan of Action, drawing from regional and provincial conferences by end of period leading to Mexico. Description of UN consultative committee in New York, USA, draft plan from Iran discussed by representatives from 16 countries, presented in Mexico with amendments, later adopted by UN General Assembly as World Plan of Action, distributed to different countries as template. Describes one of suggestions made by Iran, for centre for training and research for advancement of women, passed and proposed to open in Tehran, Iran, later became UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Mentions United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), already operating in Tehran, Decade of Women announced for 1975-85 with mid-term conference due to take place in Iran. Discusses international centrality of country, WO using to pressure Iranian Government for legal reforms.

[15:00] Story of MA's appointment as Minister for Women's Affairs, 1975. Mentions Elizabeth Reid. Only other Minister for Women in existence at time, Françoise Giroud, in France. Describes discussions within movement as to desirability of governmental role, opposition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), fear of co-opting. Describes preparation of National Plan of Action, 700 brainstorming sessions throughout Iran, concessionary adjustments made incorporating various groups. Describes implementation strategy. Remarks on inclusive nature, later referred to as 'mainstreaming' – discusses impact of term in detracting from focus on women's issues. Mentions Helvi Sipilä's praise for plan as model of how integration of women can happen.

[22:52] Story about attending national meeting with Prime Minister following announcement of MA's ministerial position, and dynamism of female response. Reflects on unusual and unique access as government member, to grassroots demands through WO experience and ongoing connection. Discusses new foundations laid in new post, unprecedented activity. Describes governmental focus on modernization, enabling feminist progress.

[27:50] Describes limitations of political system, pushing development and economic wellbeing as non-ideal model for political participation. Mentions South Korea. Discusses external pressures from Soviet Union, impact of US-Soviet rivalry, phenomenon of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini [Khomeini], vulnerability of political infrastructure, unmanaged nuances between tradition and culture. Discuss culture change in history, mentions context of England, Civil War and segregation in USA. Remarks on women's role in culture change in Iran, Islamic regime's focus remaining on women's status 30 year after revolution, providing conflict between traditionalists, progressives and modernists.

[33:20] Discusses set back in Family Law. Describes legal reforms achieved, Iran, 1960s, 1970s, remarking that best Family Laws in Muslim world with exception of Tunisia. Describes detail of law, relating to polygamy, age of marriage, guardianship of children. Mentions Morocco. Mentions nullification of Family Protection Law by Khomeini. Discusses impact on Iranian society today.

[38:42] Reflects on impression of own work for women on society immediately after revolution. Discusses impact of technology. Describes intention and process of One Million Signatures campaign, men joining effort. Mentions YouTube. Reflects on collective pain experienced in seeing hard work of a decade reversed. Remarks that women now more prepared and sophisticated, due to loss ingrained in psyche of Iranian women.

[42:27] Reflects on reception experienced on ministerial appointment, as collective celebration of barrier broken. Describes personal commitment to privacy and realisation of change with public nature of position. Discusses concepts of success, visibility and scrutiny in public positions.

[48:40] Reflects on accidental element of appointment compared to other ministers. Describes husband's response to post. Mentions female Minister of Commerce under President Jimmy Carter. Remarks on consensus among women activists that feminist husband prerequisite for success. Mentions mother's support. Describes sister's discontent at MA's work, as student activist against Iranian regime in USA, and Maoist Marxist. Describes close relationship growing up.

[53:55] Describes radicalisation and cult like nature of Confederation of Iranian Students, USA. Amusing stories about clash of interests at work. Describes sister's return to Iran with husband in support of revolution. Describes inclusive, coded language used by Khomeini, today seen in Middle East, North Africa.

[1:00:32] Relays sister's experience in Iran, regime's crackdown on groups, including Union of Marxists, arrest and imprisonment of sister's husband, sister's escape on horseback through Turkey with three-year old child, in final term of pregnancy. Reflects on commonality of experience among Iranian families at time. Refers to student uprisings of the time around world. Mentions anti-Vietnam war atmosphere, student movement in France, Kent State shootings.

[1:05:00] Reflects on sister's aspirations and experience, observations about autocratic regimes of 1970s and 1980s and link to change. Mentions Soviet Union in 1990s. Describes events around time of sister's husband's execution.

#### **Track 4 [duration: 56:32] [Session two: 5 March 2015]**

[00:00] Describes appointment as Minister For Women, Iran, 1975, in UN International Women's Year (IWY), activities including film festival showcasing women directors. Mentions Molly Haskell, 'From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies', Eleanor Perry, 'Diary of a Mad Housewife'. Describes reality of working in cabinet of 20 men.

[06:37] Describes strategy applied to know parameters and negotiate challenges. Describes benefits of being inside government as opposed to lobbying without knowing budget and possibilities. Remarks on consensus building and compromise involved in government. Gives example of negotiating for changes in Family Law with Minister of Justice. Amusing anecdote from meeting. Describes discomfort as feminist in new role involving compromise in representation.

[12:07] Remarks on freedom as advocate to be pristine and resolute. Gives example of Gay and Lesbian and Transvestite Rights, USA. Discusses public culture change. Describes feminist communities in USA and Anglo Saxon countries' anti-government stance. Discusses stance in Scandinavia, understanding of power. Remarks on shift today, where female senators, cabinet members considered positive force. Describes Iran's extraordinary Plan of Action, 1975, as most important advancement for women, setting into action 12 ministries involved in women's lives in every field. Describes workings of plan and implementation too late, 1978, coinciding with Iranian Revolution.

[17:54] Describes successful implementation of findings of research at grass roots, responding to women throughout country's expressed priority of economic empowerment and independence, by passing legal infrastructure to support. Examples of extended maternity leave fully paid by government, flexi-time with full pay. Describes methodology in establishing priorities. Mentions study, Urban Design and Women's Lives, addressing architectural impact of communities built for half population to stay home. Describes format proposed for nomadic communities. Describes inclusion of budgetary reorganization to benefit women. Discusses gradual exclusion of women with agricultural progress, need for women to be included in training. Mentions addressing all male clinics, to introduce women for family planning and reproductive health consultations.

[24:10] Describes two-year residential training for rural and city areas. Describes advantages of having Iran's Literacy Corps and Health Corps, raising profile of women in communities. Describes readiness of people to get involved, interconnection with developed and developing world.

[27:49] Reflects on Iran's strong standing at cusp of revolution, relations with Soviet Bloc, Western Bloc, The Group of 77 (G-77). Comments on issues of inflation, oil prices, sudden availability of resources, port management, ambitious development. Discusses significance of changes in condition of women as key element of cultural structure, noting speed of change in country with strong traditional organisations and networks. Describes 'tax' received by clerics and related beneficiaries as comparison to philanthropic efforts in west. Discusses reaction to change as upsetting. Discusses significance of border with Soviet Union. Mentions Tsars, Second World War, British forces, USA, UN, Soviet-Marxist Tudeh Party. Describes nature of propaganda, indoctrination of intellectuals.

[34:48] Mentions Iranian government's relationship with clergy. Describes public donations from rich. Mentions Gates, Fords, Carnegies. Discusses speed of movement that brought down Shah's regime. Describes personal events around time of Iranian Revolution. Describes negotiation of final contract of INSTRAW with UN. Mentions ESCAP, Elizabeth Reid, Helvi Sipilä. Anecdote about computers in 1975. Execution

of Farrokhroo Parsa, ex-Minister of Education. Describes Islamic Republic of Iran's labelling of MA as "corrupt of the earth", remarking that honourable designation as also given to Farrokhroo Parsa and Shirin Ebadi.

[40:36] Describes early period after exile. Mentions Shahpur Bakhtiar. Discusses ideology and position of Ayatollah Khomeini. Describes contact with WO, Iran, bomb threats made to centres. Story about children in childcare evacuated onto street. Describes banks, cinemas as other targets, Cinema Rex fire in Abadan, Iran killing 800. Describes execution of colleagues, Farokhroo Parsa hanged in Tehran's red light district as 'prostitute', revolutionary court's rooftop 'trials' before executions.

[46:27] Describes suitcase as symbolic of transient state among Iranian exiles. Describes own loss. Describes undertaking research for book, 'Women In Exile', encounters with women in worse situations. Mentions Vietnamese, Russian, Palestinian, Chilean exiles. Mentions Marjorie Addison. Remarks on women's movement as 'home', carrying passion, connections, ideals and skills. Mentions Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, Molly Haskell, Helvi Sipilä, Lucile Meyer, Leticia Hani, Gertrude Mongella.

[52:00] Reflects on a century of women's movement in Iran, 11 year's of MA's involvement, and immediate reversal of achievements. Mentions nullification of Family Law by Khomeini, taking marriage age for girls from 18 to nine years of age. Describes segregation of public and private, streets, public transport, universities, enforced veiling of women, 140 majors at university closed to women and implications. Describes Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's active encouragement of temporary marriage, to legalise prohibited interaction between men and women. Reflects on population's expectations, women's participation in revolution, demanding more rights and freedoms. Discusses outcome, with women first to demonstrate one month after Khomeini's arrival, brutal suppression. [pause]

### **Track 5 [duration: 04:44] [Session two: 5 March 2015]**

[00:00] Describes exile in USA. Mentions mother living there since MA's childhood, after decision to divorce in search of education and independence. Discusses new revolutionary theocratic government in Iran as contrasting and conflicting with country's traditions, history, literature, mythology and art. Mentions new Islamic Arabia, Egypt. [coughing, pause]

### **Track 6 [duration: 1:46:18] [Session two: 5 March 2015]**

[00:00] Discusses Iran's history and Zoroastrian religion, explaining parallel set of traditions, beliefs, customs in existence, alongside newer Islamic tradition. Describes Islamic Republic of Iran's original attempt to set up religious caliphate, making everything from country's ancient history taboo. Mentions Ferdowsi's 'The Epic of Kings', Hafez, games of chess, polo, banning of Nowruz, Iranian New Year celebrations. Describes detail of celebrations. Describes initiative with colleagues from National University of Iran, to preserve Iran's literary and traditional practices for exiled community, Persian language for children. Setting up of Foundation for Iranian Studies (FIS). Describes oral history program to preserve memories of



witnesses to recent history in all fields, working with Columbia University, USA for methodology.

[05:37] Quarterly Persian language journal 'Iran Nameh' conducting research banned in Iran. Mentions readership in Japan, Central Asia, India. Describes journal's focus on literature and history banned in Iran, printing of Ferdowsi's 'The Epic of Kings', Hafez poetry for exiled community. Describes establishing ties with Freer Sackler Museum, Smithsonian museums, USA. Describes focus on information on women and keeping record of achievements, expanding to exhibitions of films, paintings, music, woman's voice, which were taboo. Describes revolutionary guards raiding homes in search of chess boards, playing cards, music, alcohol. Describes dichotomy created between Iranians' lives inside and outside home. Describes eventual reinstatement of majors closed to women in universities, reversal of forced early retirement for women as needed workforce.

[10:07] Describes response to FIS, meeting Robin Morgan, her observation that women in Iran in advanced position compared to Global South, acknowledging loss of rights post-revolution. Mentions 'Sisterhood Is Global Anthology', MA writing chapter on Iran. Establishment of Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SIGI), 1984, with 80 women who had written chapters, major figures in their countries, including Simone de Beauvoir, France, Fatema Mernissi, Nawal El Saadawi, Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, becoming international think tank for women's movement. Reflects on problem of fundraising. Describes nature of discussions literary, philosophical, visionary.

[15:00] Story of becoming Executive Director of SIGI. Mentions Marilyn Waring, Karen Barry, 'Ms.' Magazine. Describes initiative to obtain organisational status with The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Mentions Hilka Pietilä, mentions Marilyn Waring's interest in bringing unpaid work to attention of feminist community.

[20:25] Describes attendance of UN Second World Conference On Human Rights, Vienna, Austria, 1993. Describes group's hesitation, view of governments and UN as 'boy's club'. Mentions SIGI's only budget grant from The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Rights and Democracy). Mentions Ariane Brunet. Describes contacting network to see who would be attending already, and creating SIGI panel at conference including Dorothy Thomas, founder Women's Division of Human Rights Watch [HRW]. Remarks on organisation and MA's pride in ongoing involvement with HRW. Mentions others on panel, Sima Wali, Refugee Women In Development, Afghanistan, Hilka Pietilä, Finland, Gertrude Mongella, Tanzania. Mentions television programme, New Zealand, with Marilyn Waring, Elizabeth Reid, Bella Abzug, Nikki Coseteng, Philippines. Describes success of panel, providing perspective on women's movement globally, first discussions on plans for Fourth World Conference On Women, Beijing, China, 1995 [Beijing].

[25:05] Describes participation while in Vienna in Amnesty International's programme, 'Survivors of State Violence'. Mentions Alicia Partnoy, Reza Jalili, Kenneth Roth. Discusses human rights during Shah's regime. Comments that 80 per cent of world at time living under autocratic regimes. Mentions Brazil, Chile, Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, Central Asia, Africa. Discusses South Korea successfully

implementation of similar path of education and economic development, to Iran. Discusses Iran hostage crisis, and media propaganda in USA. Describes experience of deliberate exclusion of MA from events at Vienna conference.

[30:31] Story about Dalia Lama, key note speaker, banned from entering UN space as China member of UN Security Council, thousands standing in filed in rain to hear him speak, people moved to tears. Reflects on conference as learning experience. Describes invitation by Miriam Cook, Middle East Studies Association, Duke University, USA, to participate on plenary on Women's Human Rights. Describes event as unprecedented and unrepeatable. Other participants, Fatema Mernissi, Nawal El Saadawi, Deniz Kandiyoti. Describes opportunity to contextualise universality of women's rights. Remarks that all met at Vienna aspiring to rights enumerated in Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Discusses that this was regardless of culture, religion, ethnicity, class, importance of understanding priorities for each group in context. Mentions Eleanor Roosevelt.

[36:14] Describes statement developed over several months by MA for plenary, as providing framework for concept. Describes subsequent development of manual for human rights education for Muslim majority, 'Claiming Our Rights', format and approach, translated into 11 languages. Mentions Fatema Mernissi calling it, 'A new educational pedagogy', support from Gloria Steinem, Abdullah Al-Naim. Describes development of programme to organising conferences on issues of interest, beginning human rights alert system, SIGI important voice.

[40:37] Observation that women more open, not set in patriarchal, archetypal, top-down organisation. Discuss negotiating role in all aspects of women's lives, making experimentation easier. Describes response to programme in different countries, Muslim demographic in Global South. Describes tension experienced between American and western members due to cultural context, example of gay and lesbian focus on sexual rights, Muslim countries not in position to discuss, early 1990s. Discusses middle and southern parts of USA compared to liberal context of Greenwich Village, New York City. Comments on non-Muslim Africa. Discusses American documents, 'All men are created equal' in 1960s context.

[45:08] Discusses dilemma of stance. Describes passing on directorship of SIGI. Mentions Maria de Lourdes, Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, Canada, organisation's now solid funding base. Reflects on organisation's survival. Describes anthologies produced in period, 'Muslim Women and the Politics of Participation' gaining interest at Beijing, 'Rights of Passage', 'Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights In the Muslim World', taught in universities, USA. Mentions Syracuse University Press. Describes SIGI funding, mentioning Margaret Shink, Shaler Adams Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy. Mentions 'From Basic Needs to Basic Rights', Women, Law and Development, Marge Schuler. Remarks on huge reception at Beijing compared to Vienna.

[52:05] Describes gathering at Beijing to discuss missing areas of focus, now that 35,000 diverse women's organisations together in one place. Reflects on difference of MA's experience at Beijing compared to First World Conference On Women, Mexico, 1975 when part of Iran delegation. Mentions INSTRAW, ESCAP. Describes delegates met in Beijing, Princess Basma of Jordan, Mervat el-Talawi. Mentions

Jordanian Women's Union. Reflects on physically exhausting aspect of Beijing conference due to control of Chinese government. Description of NGO village in Huairou, China. Story about journey to speak at Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) event at Beijing, arriving muddy and wet. Mentions Bella Abzug.

[59:03] Discusses Beijing Platform For Action, describing as 'perfect' document. Discusses role of NGOs at conferences. Discusses networking opportunity between organisations, and media. Describes giving daily interviews broadcast on radio in Iran. Describes Iranian delegation at Beijing as a government organized non-governmental organization (GONGO), black-clad women chaperoned by men. Describes involvement of Azar Nafisi at Beijing as only non-governmental representative from Iran. Mentions Margaret Shink. Describes plan for human rights workshop in Iran featuring literature, as opportunity to experience other ways of living without imposing. Describes use of 'Claiming Our Rights' to adapt to Iranian situation, workshop becoming basis for Azar Nafisi's bestseller, 'Reading Lolita in Tehran'. Remarks on possibilities of connection with closed societies with international involvement, and trustworthy and understanding funder. Describes relationship established with Sakena Yaccoobi of Afghan Institute of Learning, and introduction to Margaret Shink and Shaler Adams Foundation enabling work, 'Claiming Our Rights' implemented in Afghanistan.

[1:05:45] Describes involvement of Asma Khader, as Palestinian in Jordan, Margaret Shink funding Sisterhood Is Global Institute Jordan, SIGI Jordan. Mentions Jordanian Women's Union. Describes publishing 'Claiming Our Rights' in Persian language based on Azar Nafisi's workshop and work of Mehrangiz Kar.

[1:10:25] Describes pre-revolution Women's Organisation of Iran's legal literacy programme for ordinary women, using articles of UN Declaration on Equal Rights to compare to laws in Iran and present disparities to raise awareness as indirect campaign for change. Describes Mehrangiz Kar's doing same using now The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with Margaret Shink's support. Describes private workshop with cleric Seyed Mohsen Saeedzadeh, looking at 'Claiming Our Rights' in context of religious texts.

[1:14:00] Discusses conclusion reached with women's network after Beijing that issue facing all is nature of decision making with top down processes, and structures limiting involvement and expression outside of designated areas. Gives example of parent-child, school-pupil, boss-worker, political leader-civilian relationships and how programming to limit ourselves, losing dynamism, creativity and energy. Discusses worst case as women's.

[1:17:05] Discusses need for horizontal leadership allowing experience of participation, for growth. Describes founding Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) and intention of learning, with everyone's involvement. Describes learning organisations. Discusses need for curriculum to reflect this, importance of exchanging experience to create knowledge. Describes start with three countries, Morocco and Nigeria, Palestine, then Afghanistan, Jordan. Discusses limitations of individual work, importance of organisational work to reach grassroots networks.

[1:22:40] Describes key curriculum, 'Leading To Choices' in Arabic, English, Persian, now in 20 languages. Describes process of gathering most thoughtful, experienced, wisest people in field from network to test scenarios in curriculum. Mentions Kumi Naidoo, World Alliance for Citizen Participation (Civicus), Association for Women's Rights In Development (AWID), Joanne Sandler at The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Aruna Rao, Gender At Work, Farhad Kazemi, Rabéa Naciri, Asma Khader, Regan Ralph, Fund For Global Human Rights. Remarks on comment of Charlotte Bunch, Center for Women's Global Leadership, that leadership can't be taught. Describes own problems at start, intention of practicing what preach and making all decisions in participatory way. Describes developing organisational respect for the voice, and scenarios where implementation not possible. Describes fast growth and expansion and successful adaptations of material.

[1:28:03] Describes 20 partners in four regions. Discusses reason for primarily Muslim majority country partnerships, where most limitations on women. Compares some rights granted to Muslim women before Britain and USA, with examples. Discussion of cultural and religious contexts where advancement was slowed. Comments on high level of education in Muslim majority countries, higher number of university-educated women than men. Describes WLP's cultural diversity, mentioning Brazil, Nicaragua, post-communist Central Asia, Africa, Asia. Describes work to build relationships with policy-makers, to get women into government, curriculum focusing on how to be a citizen, political participation. Mentions success in Central Asia, Jordan. Describes Asma Khader appointment as Head of Electoral Commission, Jordan. Describes advocacy campaign in Morocco, successful claiming of government managed land by Soulaliyate women despite low literacy.

[1:34:11] Discusses all WLP's work originating from grassroots, learning from spirit of interaction and free association. Describes system of expanding ideology and exchange to more countries without compromising success of smaller group brainstorming, through regional replication. Mentions The Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD-A), Lebanon, L'Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), Morocco, working with Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Lebanon with Iraq, Syria, Jordan working with Palestine. Mentions Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC). Describes maximising opportunities through language, Brazil working with Mozambique, Angola, Morocco with Senegal, Cameroon.

[1:39:22] Describes unfamiliarity of concept of learning society when started, 2000, support from Oxfam Novib, remarking that adopted by Oxfam as 'transformative' leadership. Describes principle of 'Grow without growing', multiplying effect to change culture of top down decision making in society, to listen to and include people.

[1:42:03] Describes seed funding for WLP from Margaret Shink, and National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Mentions George Soros, Open Society Foundations (OSF). Reflects on personal learning, from experience of Iranian Revolution, and later with SIGI in USA, discussing role of religion, becoming taboo conversation in feminist circles. Remarks on need to address if considering

universality of rights, religion large element for significant portion of society. Discusses WLP's achievement of bringing religion into conversation. [telephone rings]

**Track 7 [duration: 17:03] [Session two: 5 March 2015]**

[00:00] Discusses religion, recognition in women's movement that important to many, but rejecting its role in civic organising policy making and governance. Describes efforts at SIGI to bring relationship between religion and women into dialogue. Mentions MA's book, 'Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights In the Muslim World' and 'Claiming Our Rights' manual. Describes success and interest from academic community, evolution of 'Islamic feminism'. Discusses term as contradictory, feminism in essence not open to qualification, independent of shaping. Discusses framing and definition. Comments on work of activists interpreting texts belonging to history, to question relevance today. Example of polygamy.

[05:37] Discusses need for freedom to choose religion in private realm, with legal structuring of society independent of religion. Discusses impact of more positive interpretations of aspects of religion, limitations of empowering women in Muslim context of clerical establishment. Compares to captains and generals in army. Comments on common call for women to issue fatwas as way of highlighting issues, deeming fruitless. Comments that freedom of religion only achievable with secular government.

[10:11] Reflects on women's movement 40 years after Mexico, 20 years after Beijing, UN Conference on Women. Comments on recognition today of importance of gender, effecting significant reorganisation of human relationships in all realms. Discusses emphasis on military intervention following events of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Discusses democracy today. Remarks on backward turn on human rights, sacrificed for security. Discusses threats of environmental crisis, poverty, health, need for global cooperation for change. Discusses mis-definition of safety and security, commenting that human security being sacrificed for military security, which sacrifices democracy and human rights.

[15:40] Describes collective concerns as witnessed as board member of several organisations.