Leo Spitzer
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Vietnam Project
August 16, 2017
Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[Transcriber's note: Mr. Spitzer's soft-spoken voice is often muffled by what is probably recording device whooshiness.]

[RACHEL N.]

KESLER: Okay. So this is Rachel [N.] Kesler with Professor Leo Spitzer. It's August 16th at 1 p.m. We're in Rauner [Special Collections] Library on Dartmouth College campus in Hanover, New Hampshire. We're going to go ahead and get started. If I could just ask you to begin with some simple biographical information. When and where were you born?

SPITZER: I was born September 11th, 1939, just after the start of World War II, in La Paz, Bolivia. My parents were refugees that fled Vienna [Austria] a few months before. My mother always told me that I was conceived in Vienna but born in Bolivia, so she was pregnant with me on the—on the refugee ship to La Paz. So I—I grew up in a—in a refugee community in La Paz. Bolivia took about 20,000 refugees from—from Central Europe, German-speaking refugees, mainly—most of them were Jewish but not all. And it was probably the largest emigration into Latin America. It was one of the last places that was still open for—for refugees. So that's—that's the community that I grew up in. I grew up speaking Spanish because I was born in Bolivia, but I also was this refugee community where everybody spoke German, so Spanish and German were my first languages.

KESLER: Okay. And can I ask you your parents' names, and do you mind telling me a little bit about them?

SPITZER: Sure. My mother is Rose Wolfinger (which is her unmarried name) Spitzer, and my father, Eugene Spitzer.

KESLER: And can you tell me about growing up in Bolivia and what that was like? Did you have any siblings? What was it like to grow up, as you said, in this refugee community, especially in one of the largest immigrations to Latin America?

SPITZER: Mm-hm. It was, actually, quite a thing to grow up in that community. I—it was—you sort of have to picture the fact that this was the war going on, and a lot of people that arrived, even though they, themselves, were lucky enough to be saved, had relatives that they left behind in Europe. The day-to-day events in the war and how the war was progressing was not always clear, so there was a lot of whispering of what's going on? Who's left? What's going to be—what's going to happen to us here? You know, Germans winning one day. How are the Allies doing? And so and so forth.

To be a child in that kind of community, where there—people are nervous and whispering is—it's—it was very, very intense and impressive. And it's really interesting because it's a kind of feeling that came back to me only recently, after the election of [Donald J.] Trump, when, you know, people were in such a downer, and I suddenly realized that—that was really the atmosphere that I was growing up in.

And it was—it was very interesting to me because what people tried to do in order to survive was to—try to recreate, in some sense, the lives that they had left behind. So my parents were Austrian, and there were a lot of Austrians there. They created an Austrian club in which you had all the kind of things that went on in Vienna when they were—when they were there, or in Austria. There were cabarets. There was a restaurant where they served, you know, wiener schnitzel and [unintelligible; 3:53] and all the kind of German cuisine.

There were people who came in, who were part of that refugee community—it was a very diverse community. I mean, there were people that came in who were working class and relatively young. There were other people who were middle-aged and older, and you have to sort of—I don't know if you know Bolivia well or if you know much about it, but it's—the capital, La Paz, is between 12,500 and 14,000 feet high. And it's landlocked also, so people arrived in a refugee ship, usually in Chile, in Arica. They couldn't stay in Arica, but they had to take the train up to La Paz. So this train climbed up from sea level to, you know, 14,000 feet more, and, you know, older people and others who had some kind of heart conditions found this very, very difficult.

So it was that kind of extremity, but extremely beautiful, but also the extremity of—of—of the setting. So, you know, it was—it was that kind of a place. It was—it was very, very beautiful, very intense, and the refugees tried, as much as possible, in a sense, to recreate little Vienna, little Berlin in—in—in La Paz. You know, they created a library, a bookstore—you know, all these little things that—that would in a sense make their lives seem more normal.

A part of that community—as I said, it was very diverse, so some of the people that came in [unintelligible; 5:34] refugees, were artists. You know, they were [unintelligible; 5:37] concert pianists and—and—and others. You had a whole range of—some writers. It—it—it—they very early on established a newspaper they called *Rundschau vom Illimani*, which is a—Illimani is a mountain that's above La Paz. It's a very beautiful, beautiful mountain. It's over 20-something thousand feet up. And *Rundschau* means "the view from." So in a sense that was the—the—the newspaper that gathered all the refugee news, and it was interesting, very informative. People wrote all kinds of things in them, not just about the—the everyday going-on, but they—they wrote about essays and they wrote about their nostalgia for—for what they had left behind. There was this kind of strange feeling that many had. It was kind of a Janus-faced nostalgia. On the one hand, they—you know, they missed aspects of their—of their childhood, of what they left behind. There had been [unintelligible; 6:53] lives for [unintelligible; 6:56]. And at the same time, there was an incredible anger, so you had both of these sides that were, you know, expressed.

So it was—it was a—it was an interesting—an interesting place. It was also difficult for these refugees to integrate into Bolivian society. They were—Bolivians were very, very kind in the sense that they allowed the refugees to participate economically, in a sense. That was one of the reasons they that allowed this—this immigration. Bolivia had been involved in a war in the '30s against Paraguay and lost a huge number of men, soldiers in—in that war against Paraguay, and it was kind of a stupid war over a territory called the [Gran] Chaco, where they felt that territory had—

had oil. It turned out it didn't have oil. But in any way, thousands and thousands died for nothing.

But that war created sort of a group of younger officers, military officers, who were very influenced by [Benito] Mussolini's fascism, and they—I mean, it was a kind of version of fascism that also had a modernizing aspect to it. And one of these young officers, whose name was Germán Busch. He had a Bolivian Indian mother and a German father, and he led a coup in the late '30s and became the head of state. And it was he who actually was convinced by—by one of his friends, who happened to have been the only Jewish mining [man? 8:48]—Bolivia was a mining country. I mean, tin mining at that point.

But a man named [Mauricio] Hochschild. Hochschild—you know, "You're so interested in modernizing—here are all these people in Europe who are desperate to get out. They'll bring all kinds of skills that you need," and so he actually allowed this immigration to take place. I mean, he at one point was allowed—was going to say—he was going to allow 50,000 to come in, which would have been huge. It turns out that just, at the beginning of 1940, he was assassinated, but at that point already, you know, a lot of the refugees had gotten in.

So, you know, it was that kind of a community, and I was—I lived in Bolivia for ten years. The very vast majority of the German-speaking refugees that came in in the late '30s or even up to the beginning of 1940 left, so, you know, I wrote a book called *Hotel Bolivia*. You know, they sort of thought of Bolivia as a kind of hotel. You go in, you move in, and you spend some time and go out.

And they left by trying to find places that were more European. Bolivia was very, very alien to them because it was the most Native American, most Indian of a lot of American countries. It was quite—quite poor. And you have these incredible contrasts, you know, that I just described: you know, the altitude—at the same time, if you went down on the other side of Bolivia, you were in the rainforest, so you had both jungle and—and—and mountains and very difficult conditions. Very beautiful but very difficult conditions.

So they tried to get out. Some went to other Latin American countries that had been blocked, like Argentina or Brazil. They went in through certain back-door—instead of going in through the front door [chuckles], they went through the back door. So that's what I'm trying to—quite a number went—left that way.

Others, after the war ended, tried to get into the United States. The United States had a quota system. People were blocked. And so it was very difficult, and particularly after the war, for Austrians to get a—to get a visa because Austria, again, became independent. You know, Austria had been part of Germany, the *Anschluss* [annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany]. After the war, was independent. And the Austrian quota in the United States was very small, so the number of people who got visas was small, had to wait a very long time.

So anyway, some people did—did get in. My parents—there was sort of a kind of a decision that what was left of the family—we had lost quite a number of people—what was left of the family would try to reconstitute in the Americas, not to go back to—to Europe. And so they decided that they wanted the States, and they applied for—for a visa to the United States, but they [unintelligible; 12:04] waiting for it.

Had a grandmother, my father's mother, who was a widow, and she had had a second—two marriages. From the first marriage she had had another son, who was my father's half-brother, who had managed to leave Austria and then wound up in Britain and fought in the British military during World War II and eventually made his way to the States. And he sent my grandmother an affidavit. He sent her a visa. So she actually got a visa, my grandmother. And my grandmother at that point was in her early 70s. I always thought she was ancient, ancient, ancient. But she was younger than I am now.

But she could only speak German and Hungarian. She'd grown up in a part of Austria that was German-Hungarian. And I could speak Spanish, I could speak German, and I had a few words of English. So I had a Bolivian passport, and a Bolivian—nobody from Bolivia was applying to come in the

United States, so I got—I got a visa. So they sent me at age ten to be my grandmother's translator.

And so I came to the United States three-quarters of a—almost a year ahead of my parents. I stayed here with other relatives until they got their visa.

But other—you know, other refugees—there were a small group of kind of socialists, communists who really wanted to rebuild Austria after the war, and they went back to Austria. Others went to other—you know, other Latin American countries or wherever they could.

So there was a kind of emigration—not immigration but emigration after the war, and by the 1950s, many of the German-speaking refugees had left Bolivia. There was a kind of second wave of emigration that took place after the war, where people were camp survivors, had been in—in concentration camps, mainly concentration camps and survived. Got into Bolivia.

But they were Yiddish-speaking, not German-speaking, and very different in terms of their cultural background, so there was a lot of tension between the German-speaking Jews and the Yiddish-speaking Jews. [Chuckles.] What they called the—the—what they called the Yiddish-speaking Jews the ["Polackos"? 14:36], the Polack—the people from Poland, and the other ones were called the ["Yeckists"? 14:43], which were just a kind of Yiddish word for people who wore jackets—you know, were much more formal. [Chuckles.] sort of like the Central European Jews always considered them superior to others because of German culture they felt that they were a part of. Of course, they were sadly mistaken, but that's what they—that's what they thought.

So there were these tensions. But there was a second immigration after the war, and the Jewish community that is left in Bolivia now, which is relatively small, are mainly the descendants of the second wave, of the Yiddish speakers, not of the German speakers. Most of those people left.

I did, for *Hotel Bolivia*, interview quite a lot—you know, hundreds—lots and lots of them. Many of them have now died, but, you know, [unintelligible 15:37].

KESLER: Let's go ahead and take a step back. Can you talk to me about what it was like to grow up in La Paz and in Bolivia before you came to the United States and especially in that tight-knit community that you've mentioned?

SPITZER: Yeah. Well, I mean, in terms of—of sort of general living in—in La Paz, I—I loved it. My younger sister was born four years after I was—you know, four years younger than I am. I had a lot of Bolivian friends. You know, we did all the kids' things. I had a scooter, and she had a scooter. And we lived up in the Bolivian, La Paz on the hills, so we'd scoot down.

KESLER: It was a great childhood experience to have, a scooter and a couple of hills.

SPITZER: Right, all those kind of things.

KESLER: It'll keep you busy.

SPITZER: But also politically it was very unstable after the war. In '46 there was—they called it a revolution. It was a coup, where the president was—was killed, was thrown off the balcony and then hanged, and all sorts of other people were hanged, and this all took place right out—some of it was right outside the street where we lived, so it was that kind of insecurity in the country.

The school—I went to a school that was created by the refugees called Colegio Boliviano Israelita, the Bolivian Jewish School, or Israelita School. It had [unintelligible; 17:22] requirements. It was certified by the state to have a lot of Bolivian teachers also. But it was basically a Jewish school, mainly for refugee children. But there were—there were some Bolivian children there.

I had my favorite course at that point I think was actually Bolivian history. Had a Bolivian teacher for [unintelligible; 17:47]. They also tried to have the kids—kind of to learn some Hebrew and learn this and that. I was always very bad, very early on, not very religious. My parents were not very religious. They were very secular. So we did go—I was in a Jewish school, but they were not particularly, it was not the

kind of thing where they go to synagogue on Fridays or Saturdays, or they didn't any of those—those services.

But, you know, it was—it was—in terms of—of living there, it was—it was—it was really—it was an interesting place. I had loved—there was something about the beauty of—of La Paz, surrounding the openness—you know, 12,500 to 14,000 feet. And yet[tremendous mountains still all around you. So it's gorgeous. And the smells of the city: the baking of the bread in the morning. Or they had a—they still do have—a morning [unintelligible; 19:08], kind of a morning thing called a *salteña*, which is like an empanada, you know?

KESLER: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

SPITZER: And it had, you know, chicken, beef, eggs, all those kind of stuff, and it really incredibly delicious. I mean, *salteña* is kind of a specialty of La Paz. I loved the food. My mother learned how to cook some Bolivian food. And, you know, I—except for the kind of political scariness, it—it—it was generally nice. I mean, there was—there was some anti-Semitism. There was no question about it. I mean, a number of times where somebody called me "a Jew," you know? And, you know, kids—kids [unintelligible; 19:52]. There was some taunting of that sort. But for the most part, it wasn't there. It was not very obvious. It was actually quite—I think it was quite nice. It—the—our lives as refugees were—I think people really were very decent in general. And, you know, so I'm eternally grateful. I'm sure that all the people who survived are eternally grateful to that country for—for taking them in at that point when it was such a desperate time to get out of—out of Europe.

So it was—it was a very—very complex, very interesting, but also it was a very, very beautiful, beautiful place. And, you know, I really got to—to love [unintelligible; 20:52]. The challenges—both the altitudes and going down to—to the Yungas, which is a little—went into the rainforest. And, you know, that aspect was very—very—very fascinating.

At the same time, it was also, of course, a land that had an indigenous population that was extremely exploited. And that was—in the '40s and through the '50 s and even the '60s, the conditions for—for what they call the Indios in Bolivia,

the—the—the people of mixed race were really, really bad, for the most part. I mean, it was almost like a level of slavery, and people who carry these huge loads for just a little bit of money, just to survive. In order to kind of get themselves through hunger and the day, would chew coca leaves, you know. And that—that gave them some—some kind of sustenance. But it was the social conditions, the class differences [unintelligible; 22:22] the dominant class in Bolivia, between the dominant and—and a majority of indigenous people. Vast. You know, it was vast.

And there was a lot of that kind of stuff that was going on. And it was quite unstable politically. The people were vying for power, and competing power. A lot of them were part of the elites, who were vying for that. Gradually, that became more and more a kind of indigenous movement, where—where there was some effort to improve the conditions of the indigenous majority. And that eventually happened but didn't happen, really, until the '90s, so it was a very, very long time.

KESLER: Yeah.

Can you talk to me a bit more about what—what political life was like during that time, you know, growing up, so soon in the aftermath of World War II and, you know, especially, like I said earlier, in that community? Just how did that influence your life? Were you, you know, hyper aware of things like that? You talked about the extremity of the setting. Can you just explain a little bit more?

SPITZER: I was—political life was—people talked politics all the time, and stuff went on in the Austrian club and the other organizations with politics. And I was aware from very early on—actually, from 19- —1945, I—my parents received a—a letter from one of the—my aunt Frieda [Kohn Wolfinger]—aunt/cousin Frieda, a relative who had survived the Holocaust, a camp. The first kind of sign of life that we have from—from—from her. And my awareness of what had happened really was sharpened by—by that letter. I went—but I already sensed what was going on.

And the presence in Bolivia, even, of local Nazis was—in the '30s, the country, itself—in the '20s and '30s was very—the Germans had invested a lot in that country. The—the airlines

were run by Germans. The—a lot of the—the industries, the electrical thing, the beer making and all this kind of stuff was German. And in the '30s, after [Adolf] Hitler came to power in Germany, the Germans, the Nazis made an effort to move [unintelligible; 25:16] Latin America. They really wanted to—it was already kind of a preparation the war. They really wanted to put themselves in a position where they would be able to exploit the minerals and all the resources of Latin America. So they brought up young people, the children and the sons, mainly, not the daughters but mainly the sons of the military officers to—

For example, during the Olympics [the Olympic Games] in 1936, they brought them to Germany, and on other occasions. But there was this attempt to move the elites, and there was this—this very active—relatively small but very active, vocal Nazi Party even while I was—it—it—during the war, I think the Americans put enough pressure on Bolivia so that Bolivia had to make a decision [chuckles] where were they were going to be. And they—they landed on the Allied side for a period. Some of these Germans were interned.

But right after the war, Bolivia again became a kind of haven, not only for this second group of—of refugees that I was talking about, but also Nazis who fled or were fleeing Europe. So Klaus Barbie, who was the "Butcher of Lyon," who was in Bolivia, and there were always rumors of somebody else. And my grandmother would always say, "Oh, I just saw So-and-so," you know? I mean, not that she necessarily really saw—

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: But it was like—you know, the—the awareness about—that—that the Nazis were [unintelligible; 27:07] be around in some other form was there. So I was very aware, very early on, not only of [unintelligible; 27:16], but my father and my mother both came out of, first, a kind of left Zionist thing in Austria, which [unintelligible; 27:26] sort of opportunity because they thought at that point, one of the possibilities of emigration would be to Palestine. It turned out they didn't mention they wanted to do that.

But they were also kind of Austrian Marxists, so, you know, they—they were very young when they [unintelligible 27:40]. My mother was barely 21 when she had me, and my father was a month younger [chuckles], so they were very, very young. But their politics—my politics, or my parents', were always to the left. My parents always came out of the working class in—in—in Austria. They were very poor in—in Austria.

And, you know, I—I—I took that in. I took—I took that kind of political—I don't know—I wouldn't say an affiliation but a kind of consciousness of—of—of the left and of the right and of working class, and things about class and—and—and exploitation [chuckles], something I learned pretty early on.

And, you know, that was all, then, also heightened by—by the war and the after-war. You know, the after-war is what we have—all the news about what happened during the war and, you know, what the consequences were and who lost the war and who lost what relative and where—you know, [unintelligible; 29:03] that survived.

But my aunt—my Aunt Frieda wrote a letter, in which she described her experiences—you know, her parents and her sister—she had two sisters, a younger sister and a—we had two younger sisters. My mom was older than—one was very young. You know, [unintelligible; 29:27] watching her parents and younger sister being shot inside of Riga [the Riga Ghetto in Latvia]. And she and her other sister were taken to camps, to work camps, to labor camps. They were slave labor camps, basically. She had awful [unintelligible; 29:41]. Moved around from one place to another, and [unintelligible; 29:51] at one point was pregnant. Her baby was taken from her. It was just awful—awful things.

But she wrote this in this letter, and also—that letter was incredibly powerful. I mean, I was a child, but it—it stayed with me, and it stayed certainly with my parents, you know. And Frieda eventually did make it to the States, and she became my—one of my fav- —probably my favorite aunt in the States. When I came to the States by myself, when my parents were still back in—in Bolivia. I lived with—with Frieda and her then new husband in the United States, who was my uncle, [unintelligible; 30:34]. She had the kind of a

marriage where my father's side married people to my mother's side, a double—you know.

KESLER: Mm-hm. Oh, that *is* funny, yeah.

SPITZER: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 30:40], because she had been both my cousin and my—my aunt, you know? [Chuckles.]

KESLER: Mm-hm. That's funny. [Chuckles.]

SPITZER: We always joked about it.

KESLER: Mm-hm.

Tell me a bit about your parents, and what did they do when you lived in Bolivia? And talk to me a bit more about their politics as well.

SPITZER: My—my—my father—you know, what happened was they—they were just young enough so that by the time that they—they would have gone to higher education, it was closed off for Jews, so the opportunities that they had were all some form of manual labor or some kind of—I don't know what you would call it, but some—some kind of work that—that—that—craft work.

So my mother trained as a hat maker, and all these things—all done for the possibility of—that they will be used in emigration, if you wanted to get out, although at that point Hitler had not yet—when they began this, Hitler had not yet taken over Austria. By '38, when the Germans did take over Austria and when the Anschluss came, everything was closed—my father went to a vocational school. That was the only thing that was open. And he was trained to be a plumber, electrical person—in construction, really, construction work. You know, he was very talented, but he was also, I think, most of his life quite frustrated that—they both were voracious readers, but, you know, they—they had—their education really stopped at high school.

So they—that's how they came in. And that was basically true of all the relatives that came, that they were stripped of whatever they had had before in—in Europe and became extremely impoverished.

In Bolivia, my father and other relatives of them that arrived started working. It was a period, early on, in the ’40s, where there was a lot of new construction that was taking place in La Paz. New buildings were going up and so on. And that was perfect as far as my father’s work was concerned. He got—he got work very, very fast. But we lived for a long time—when we first arrived, we—he didn’t—and this is really an early childhood memory—I mean, we all lived basically—almost, like, in one or two rooms, you know, in—in—in places in La Paz, with other people in the family with like these curtains between rooms. That’s how we—that’s how I grew up.

And—and, you know, gradually my father got more—more work, and then he built his own little plumbing company, and it was—he was—he was very nervous about it because—he was very good at what he was doing. He got—he got jobs, but he also worried all the time that he couldn’t finish something on time, that he would be sued or arrested and so on so forth, or he would worry the other way, saying, “Oh, I don’t have any work, and we’re all gonna starve.” And that a was—that—that went on even when they came to the United States. You know, it was this back and forth: things are okay, or things are horrendous. And that was passed down to us, you know, in dinner conversation.

My mother never really practiced her hat making in Bolivia. She was busy with—with me [chuckles] and—and she did a lot of stuff, but it was not—she was very talented. She did knitting, where she did all of these beautiful sweaters and made that kind of handicraft work. But not hats.

But, you know, they had—they had friends, and I think because you were in that situation of exile, friendships were very tight, and they were good friends. You know, they were good times. It was sort of not—it wasn’t all horror. People were having good times there.

I—I always thought that my—my father felt extremely frustrated about—about his—his life, that he was unable to—to develop himself the way he wanted. I think he really would have wanted to be an engineer, and for many years he was really pushing *me* to be an engineer. Of course, I had

absolutely no [unintelligible; 36:22]. [Laughs.] But that's what he wanted me to be—you know, to play out his own—his own fantasies.

You know, it—I think the question you had was a little more generally, but the—

KESLER: No, but I—I am enjoying what you're saying, yes. Was just curious, you know, about what they were doing about their politics and how they affected you as well, but it is also funny that you speak about your dad pushing you to be an engineer. My dad is also an engineer, and as soon as he found out that I was a history major, that was something that he was, like, "You could do engineering."

SPITZER: [Laughs.]

KESLER: "They have a great engineering program." [Laughs.] So it's funny to—to hear that similarity.

SPITZER: Mm-hm.

KESLER: But I'm also—also curious about—you mentioned your younger sister. Do you just have one sister? Do you have more siblings?

SPITZER: My sister—my sister, Elly [Spitzer Shapiro], was born in La Paz in 1944. And then when my parents came to the States in the end of 1950—up to that period, they had two more children, so I have a brother, [Anthony David] "Tony" [Spitzer], who was born in '52—Anthony David—and then a much, much younger brother, same parents, but they were—again, you have to realize that when they had me they were barely 21, so at age 42 my mother had Carl [Spitzer], my youngest brother. So Carl was 21 years younger than I. [Chuckles.] I'm the oldest, and only Elly and I were born in—born in La Paz. And so, you know, that's—

KESLER: And were you guys—you know, all of the siblings close, even with that age gap?

SPITZER: Yeah. I can't say we're *that* close. We have—what happened with—my sister and I were fairly close. With the others, I was more—I was really the older brother, particularly with—with

Carl. My father died very young, and he died from—from his work. He had cancer of the pleura, of the lining of the lung which was caused by asbestos. And what had happened—first of all, plumbers all the time used to line—used to line all the pipes, heating pipes particularly, with asbestos to keep the heat in, and—but in Bolivia already in the—in the '40s or in the early—in the late '40s he and others in his shop, his plumbing shop, as a kind of sideline, decided they were going to build refrigerators, because that was one thing that was very rare in—in La Paz at that point. So they—they built sort of—actually quite nice-looking refrigerators, but at that point, how do you insulate those refrigerators? Well, asbestos. You push asbestos—so he worked with asbestos all—all the time, and so he died very young from that—age 50.

And so Carl, my youngest brother—he was—he was—he was, like, six years old when my father died, and so eventually he became much more like a—like my brother and my son. You know, when he went to high school, my mother was a widow. He went to high school here in Hanover. He lived with us—you know, I kind of raised him, [cross-talk; unintelligible; 40:12] dual relationship. And, you know, with all the—all the—all the difficulties that also entailed.

KESLER: Yeah, yeah. Let's take a step forward a little bit and talk about transitioning into the United States. Can you tell me about when you first decided to come over? You said that you were ten years old. Talk to me about that decision, about going over to live with your grandmother before your parents came with you.

SPITZER: Yeah. You know, it's almost a kind of natural thing. I—you know, they—they said, "Well, you should go with your grandmother. You can do this. You can be the translator" and live with my other grandparents in the United States and my other relatives that preceded me into the United States until they—they—they would come. I don't think they actually anticipated that they would still have a lengthy wait for the—for the visa. But, you know, they—they sent me.

And for me, it was kind of a natural step, you know? Like, that's what you expected, because everybody was always

talking about leaving. You know, like Bolivia was—was this hotel. It was a temporary place. And I never felt truly at home there. You know, I was born there, and I could speak the language. I could communicate. You know, I had all of these kind of affiliations with it. I had friends. I—I loved my surrounding. But I also knew that I wasn't going to stay there.

And so that was a rebuilding to my—my—my childhood. And coming to the States with my grandmother was fairly natural. So we came, you know—like, my mother and my sister Elly took me and my grandmother to Chile, to the same place where they had come up from, from Arica, and got into—the Italian Line used to run the ships to South America.

And so we left from—from Arica to Panama. That ship that went on to Europe. In Panama, my grandmother and I changed to—at that point it used to be the banana boats, one of these freight ships that United Fruit Company ran, and went from there to Baltimore [Maryland], where I was picked up by my grandfather—my—my uncle, and my grandmother was picked up by a sister that she hadn't seen in 25 years, you know? so it was—it was [unintelligible; 42:44]. So she went that direction; I went—I went to New York.

And, you know, not long afterwards—I lived—I arrived in New York. It was amazing. [Chuckles.] You know, you come—coming from Bolivia, then come into New York. And arrived at my aunt and uncle, Frieda and Julius's ? 43:06] house. And they lived in a tenement on Second Avenue, but they did—they did acquire a television in 1950, and that my first tel- —I had never seen television, even. They didn't have it in Bolivia. So they had one of these round Stromberg- Carlson black-and-white televisions.

And I remember arriving in that apartment, and all the relatives were all waiting. You know, a child was coming in. And a few—the television—the television was on, and on the television—[unintelligible; 43:40]—there was these women who were going around on wheels, and it was roller derby.

KESLER: I see.

SPITZER: You know, it was just like a weirdest kind of thing,—

KESLER: [Laughs.]

SPITZER: —[unintelligible; 43:53] around [laughs; unintelligible; 43:53]. But then television became very important in my life, as a way to learn English. I became a kind of, you know, a television addict. Watched *Captain Video* [*and his Video Rangers*] and watched *The Magic Cottage* and all kinds of programs. And it was very, very—television and actually comic books. I was an avid reader of comic books and books. I was an avid reader. I mean, the first book I bought myself was at age 12, which was a science fiction book, and I still remember that. But I did love comics, and I did love television.

And then when my parents came, my mother [unintelligible; 44:47] coming home from school, which was very close, for lunch, my mother—she would listen all the time to soap operas. Again, it was a way to learn English—you know, just a—both the slang that's involved in it [chuckles] and the—the way people talk and so on. So that was very important.

And very quickly, the thing that also became very important to me was baseball. I became an absolutely avid baseball—a Yankee [New York Yankees] fan. I knew everything: all the statistics about this guy and that guy and this game and—all of that, I just memorized, and I just loved listening to—to—to the Yankee games.

But these are all sort of ways to Ameri- —to become American, you know, Americanized and to get the language. And language was always a little bit of a—an issue because, you know, there were times when I just didn't have the words, you know. I had the words in German or I may have the words in Spanish, but I didn't have it in English, so it—it—it was that kind of a thing, where, you know, you sort of grasp for it: What is the right word? How do you say it?

But I—I—you know, I did acquire it through some of these various popular cultural ways—you know, television, radio, comics, reading—reading English. I mean, of course, school.

We lived—when we arrived—my—I mentioned my aunt and uncle, and at that point my grandparents—they lived on Second Avenue, between 79th and 80th Street, on Second Avenue in New York, in tenements. There were—there were tenements. They would be the railroad-type apartments, if you're familiar with that. I don't know if you've been to the Tenement Museum in New York. They have—

KESLER: It's on my list. It's been on my list for years now, but it's definitely—

SPITZER: Well, go see it. It's fascinating.

KESLER: Mm-hm. Yeah.

SPITZER: You know, so these railroad-like apartments. You have—you walked into the kitchen or the two entrances, and you had to walk from one room through another, you know, so the living room was on one end, the kitchen was on the other end. The kitchen—there was no bath- —there was no bath*room*. There was a toilet that you shared with—with the other ten- —the other apartment on the same floor. And there was a bathtub in the kitchen and kind of a ice box where they delivered—they delivered ice. Rather than make its own ice, they delivered ice.

You know, it was—the floors, I remember—I loved the apartment because I could play marbles, and the marbles would roll down [laughs], the floors were so slanted. Of course, the whole thing was probably—you know, it must have been condemned. Who knows?

But the rent was very low, so—and so that's where we lived. And my first school was just a couple of blocks away, P.S. 190 [Sheffield] in—in Yorkville. And, you know, then I—I was very conscious, very early on, that I had a very different experience and that somehow this—I—not that I ever thought of myself as more sophisticated, but there must have been something about it that gave me a certain confidence about school. I always wanted to be the best in this and the best in that, you know?

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: Kind of—[unintelligible; 48:44] understand that. It—it—it was—it was good. It was a good experience. I went—I went from—from the fourth grade, started in the fourth grade and got to junior high school, which was not that far from where we were living, and I was by that point put into an SP class, which is a Special Progress class, where you made two years in one.

And then my father—my father had—when he—when he arrived, got a job, but extremely exploited. He was making—this was 1950, but in 1950 dollars he was making, like, $40 a week. And he had a spouse and—and two kids at that point, right?

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: So we were poor. You know, [unintelligible; 49:53]definitely poor. It didn't feel like, in some [form? 49:59], except when he, you know, would go into one of his—his bits about, "Oh, you know, we're gonna starve." But—but otherwise, it didn't feel like that. It felt like—like, you know, we had enough—we had enough to eat, and—and there were other relatives around, so we could rely on that.

For a while, my other relatives lived in the same—same kind of tenement complex. We lived on the top floor, and they lived on the top floor, and we'd go over the roof from one tenement to the other. And then my grandmother and—my other grandmother, not the one that I came with—and her husband and Julius and Frieda—Frieda being the one I was telling you about—moved uptown in New York.

And my parents—my father got a job, a much better job, but in Jersey City [New Jersey], across the [Hudson] River. And they—they were moving to Jersey City, but I was in that Special Progress class, so they wanted me to finish the Special Progress class, so basically, again, what I did was I—I moved in with my grandparents up on 163rd Street. Took the bus every day down to the junior high school, which I—I actually felt loved. It was this long, long bus ride up—you know. You know, I just loved reading on the bus, just going on this bus [chuckles; unintelligible; 51:33]. So I didn't—I didn't actually mind it. So, you know, it was that.

And then—then I moved to Jersey City and—and started high school there, and so that's where I went to high school. But, you know, it—it was—from—from early on, there was kind of left political consciousness that was—that was expressed in the—in the family. Certainly, my parents, my father especially, and—and they passed down to me, I think, definitely.

KESLER: Yeah, yeah.

Tall to me about the transition from school in Bolivia to school in America and school in the United States, rather. Just what was that like? Tell me about, like, your first couple of days. Take me there.

SPITZER: Well, the Bolivian school—you know, I—I—I was the star in Bolivia, at the Bolivian school. I got—I got—they gave awards every year—you know, the highest this and the highest that, and I got all these awards [chuckles] at the Bolivian school. But it was also—you know, I loved history, and I loved the class in Bolivian history. We had a teacher, Señor Rébola, who I really, really loved. And I don't know, so my—my forte that that point was sort of to get the history and to [chuckles] probably just regurgitate it back, but he was always very impressed by my regurgitating of Bolivian history at that point. So he liked that.

And I had—I had friends in school, the kind of usual kind of school stuff. There were other schools in—in La Paz. There was an American school that was kind of more ritzy than ours. And there were—you know, there was a whole lot of private Catholic schools and other schools and so on.

But, you know, the schooling was okay. The only incident that I remember there was one where—in—I told you there was a religion class, and that religion class was taught by a local cantor in the synagogue, and there was one—some kind of occasion where I—I just wasn't either paying attention or whatever it is, and he—he took a ruler and he hit me in the hand, and I got very upset. And—and I told my mother, and my mother was very [chuckles] small. I mean, she was five foot one, you know. She came into school [chuckles] and she said, "Don't you ever touch him again." [Laughs.] You know, it was that kind of a thing. But

[unintelligible; 54:44] the one experience that I had that was a little exciting.

But, you know, I wasn't there that long. I was only there for four grades, and then I came to the States. And the States—I—I thought school was actually pretty interesting. I mean, the schools that I went to were—were quite good. Not—not—they weren't good in the sense that they taught science. At that point, science was really neglected. But social studies and history and literature. I—I enjoyed school. And I particularly enjoyed—they have these—in New York—programs on—on current events, and you went—every Friday there was a radio program where they chose schools—kids to go to school, and that was always my dream—you know, to go on this radio program where—current events.

And so that was—it was—it was interesting. I mean, I did like it. And so, you know—yeah.

KESLER: And what was it like to move to the United States and to live here just during the beginning of the Cold War and then during the-

SPITZER: Well, you know, I came to the United States while the Korean War was still going on, and the Cold—the Cold War—that's quite—you know, it was—it was not—it was there, but it wasn't that apparent in 1950. The Korean War was. It—it—it—that war did not affect me as much as [unintelligible; 56:45]. It was—it was—we were sort of moving out of it, and I never really understood what was going on in Korea at that point, as a child, anyway.

So it—it never—it never grabbed my conscious- —I never felt I was that much affected by it in the way that I felt we were all affected by Vietnam [the Vietnam War] or, you know, other—other things that went on later.

So it—it—New York at that point, in the '50s—it was much more, for me, the—the—it—it's more the—the conditions in the neighborhood. I lived in New York in a very tough neighborhood. Yorkville had been a kind of center for American Nazis in the '30s, and there was a very famous film, *The House on 96th* [sic; *92nd*] *Street*. It's all about the

Nazis in the U.S. And it was a German-Hungarian [neighborhood] and then became a kind of Jewish immigrant area, but it also had Italians. It did not have African-Americans. It had very few other minorities, but these sort of European groups were there.

And there were some really tough kids there. And, you know, on a number of occasions there were these little gangs of kids who held up other kids. You know, I was stopped on a number of occasions. You know, "We're gonna take your pennies" or whatever. We didn't have much more than pennies [chuckles], but that's what they took. You know, that's what would happen. So it was—it was—that—that part of it was pretty hard.

But then there was also the other side of it. You know, you go out again and play handball, you know, on the streets, and I certainly had lots of—lots of positive friends. That was—you know, it was—it was—the—the politics of the country in the—in the '50s—not feel very direct—that it affected me that directly at that point.

I was much more conscious of learning and getting into the system and becoming American, and—and I—I became conscious of—of racial discrimination pretty early on, you know, and—and in the '50s there was an ongoing Puerto Rican immigration into the States, so there was quite a lot of that that was happening, so—

KESLER: Tell me a bit more about that community in New York and, you know, being so conscious of that racial discrimination with our strong immigrant community. Did you feel as though there was racial lines, I suppose, growing up? Were you heavily aware of that?

SPITZER: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:00:15]. In the area where we lived, in that Yorkville area, there were very few African-Americans. In other parts of New York, that wasn't true, but there were very few. I had never really encountered African-America—black people in—their very unusual – to have a black person in—in—in La Paz, so, I mean, you had the indigenous populations was vast, but not—not the black population. That was relatively new to me.

But the kind of slurring of racial—racial slur with jokes, you know, all this kind of stuff—a lot about Puerto Ricans and a lot about—and then they were about blacks, but—but the—the—our communities did not intersect in any sense, so I didn't feel that I had much connection. And that connection only came much later, as [unintelligible; 1:01:21] Jersey City [unintelligible; 1:01:22] and in college—you know, kind of the beginnings of—of becoming aware of the civil rights movement and people's—bus rides to the South and all that stuff that was taking place. But that was later on, not at the beginning.

No, it was—it was more just being different in—in the country and not being quite the—the American, you know, that—there was always something odd about you, about me. So I'd try in many other ways to compensate for that.

One funny incident I remember in junior high school. I thought I was so proud because, you know, they had these assemblies, and the assemblies were always somebody got to carry the flag into the assembly, right?

KESLER: Mm-hm.

SPITZER: And the building itself, P.S. 30, was this really old New York junior high school, with these lamps that—that hung down in the—in the assembly hall, like globes, right?

KESLER: Mmm.

SPITZER: And one day I was picked to carry the American flag, you know? And obviously, it was such a proud thing. And I remember going with this—the flag [chuckles]—and boom!—and hitting one of these lamps, and shattered in the middle of the assembly, you know? It was just so embarrassing.

KESLER: Oh, I can imagine.

SPITZER: And I remember turning [unintelligible; 1:02:59]. But that was—you know, it was—it came out of my—my desire to—you know, to be American.

KESLER: Yeah, yeah.

SPITZER: [Chuckles.]

KESLER: And it seems like there is, yeah, like a pressure there to be American.

SPITZER: Yeah.

KESLER: You know, and whether it's, you know, watching football or trying to learn the language—

SPITZER: Oh, absolutely.Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KESLER: —that there was always something—there was always that pressure there—

SPITZER: Mm-hm.

KESLER: —to kind of try to assimilate as best as possible. Did you feel that pressure in all aspects of life? You know, home, at school, or was it just kind of something more internal, do you think?

SPITZER: Well, it was—it was both. I think there *was* an external pressure to conform in some form or another, you know, but—but it was internal. I was also trying to really get my English up to a level where I could really write it well and I could speak it well, and, you know, knowing more about the Yankees than the other guy did over there, you know? That kind of little things, knowing every little comic book and, you know, [unintelligible; 1:04:05] and Archie Andrews. I mean, all these kind of things were just all—it—it—it was more from a internal drive to—to—to know and belong and understand popular culture and feel—feel at home in it.

And, I mean, I felt pretty confident about the school part of it, but the other, I did not feel so confident about. And then I worked at it, unconsciously and consciously, but I certainly worked on it to—to belong. So, you know, there was this kind of pull into Americanization, and there was this kind of a push-you know, as you say, people want you to assimilate, and you have a desire to—to—to belong, so there's there—there is the push and the pull. And they were both at work. They were both at work.

I—I—you know, I—I still hung out a lot with the kids of persons who had been refugees or immigrants to the United States, so there—you know, your parents or grandparents or somebody had come—had come not so long before we—we had come to—to the U.S. And, you know, I did have a lot of friends in that group. But I also had, you know, people in school who came from a totally different community, although I think many of them also were probably first-generation people whose parents in that school, P.S. 190, in that area at that time—I mean, now that area is extremely ritzy, but—because they tore down all those tenements. But at that time, you know, one of my best friends in that class—her father was a taxi driver. You know, people came out of the working class, kind of menial work backgrounds, and that was—that was the community that I knew.

KESLER: I see.

Let's go ahead and take a quick, five-minute break.

[Recording interruption.]

KESLER: Okay. And so we kind of stopped off, talking about, you know, middle school being in New York. Can you talk to me about moving to Jersey City and about starting high school there?

SPITZER: Yeah. I—I moved to Jersey City—started high school in 1954 and—and—it was William [L.] Dickinson High School in Jersey City, a very large high school on a hill overlooking Hoboken [New Jersey]. [Laughs.] And it—it—it was a—Jersey City was very divided in—in—racially divided, actually, and still is. There's a part of Jersey City, a very large—I mean, a large part African-American, and the main high school there was—was Lincoln High School, and there was—I mean, the northern part of Jersey City, the one that I went to, Dickinson High School—that was, by and large, white, although very—in terms of class, I would say most of the people there were—were working class, like my parents. And there were a couple of other high schools.

And my parents moved—and the job that my father got was, you know, after that terrible job that he first had in New York, in Jersey City it was much better, and he was very—I mean, he was very good at what he was—what he did, and—and—and within that company that he was working, I think he was much appreciated. I mean, the beautiful handwork in terms of plumbing, you know? Really, he was a good plumber.

And we lived in an apartment, rented apartment in—in the northern part of Jersey City, that part of—it was—my youngest brother had just been born in '52, and my sister Elly and—and I and my parents lived in an apartment, in a building which Frank [A.] Sinatra's parents had lived in. [Chuckles.] So, it was—that had kind of a history that they loved. The people who owned the building were Italian-American. The guy drove one of these—delivery of—of oil, "erl," as he called it, "erl." [Chuckles.] And so the oil truck was right in the garage [chuckles] underneath our apartment, and that—we considered that unsafe, but it was fine, you know. [Laughs.] So, you know, that was—

The—the school, you know, was—was fine. I—I started working early on, you know, at some kind of—one thing or another. For instance, camp. The day camp counselor, junior counselor and a regular counselor, and then I got these summer jobs. But I always had some kind of job. And—and very early on, I started—I—I was a paperboy—you know, delivering newspapers in parts of Jersey City, and that was always after school for a couple of hours. It was—I guess some areas were—not hard work, but—but you had to go and collect the money from people, and some areas were pretty poor, and people never had the money, but they had the newspaper. And that—you know, that—

Anyway, the idea—I was working was with me from very early on, that I had to get some kind of money. And—and I think I may have gotten a very small allowance, but basically whatever I had, I—I earned.

So I started out a paperboy. I worked for that for a long time, and then, you know, these little jobs in camps that I got. And my father started taking me to work as a—to help him out, so [unintelligible; 1:11:24] in high school I also was a plumber's helper on Saturdays. That paid much more. That was great.

And, so you, the working was there. And pretty early on, I was kind of girl obsessed—you know, kind of girlfriend obsessed, and very early on, I had a girlfriend already. And she lived down the street. Her father was a theatrical booking agent. I thought that was really exotic. He would take us to some show in some kind of nightclub or some place where he had some person was performing, usually a comic, you know, for our age.

But he also—that father—he and a partner built a place on the Jersey shore—I don't know if you're familiar at all with New Jersey.

KESLER: Not all that much, yeah.

SPITZER: It's in Belmar, in that area, near Atlantic City. And I—he built a—a—a restaurant called The Sombrero, and it was kind of modeled on—nowadays—I don't think you have anything like that, but it was a little bit like a Howard Johnson's except that it also had these young women [chuckles], girls, in—in—in these little short outfits, on roller skates, and they would deliver the food to cars, with roller skates.

KESLER: I see. So, I mean, like a—like a Sonic, or kind of like a drive-in where you—

SPITZER: Right, right, exactly.

KESLER: Okay, gotcha.

SPITZER: So—and he hired me at The Sombrero, and I started out as an assistant short-order cook, and then very soon I became a short-order cook. And my hours were—this was in Belmar, so I had to [unintelligible; 1:13:37]. The job was—something like five o'clock in the afternoon until the place closed, which is sometimes at four o'clock in the morning or five o'clock in the morning. You know, it just went on. And The Sombrero made different types of hamburgers. That was the specialty. And it had to with triple-deck or double-decker and a kind of cheese and this and that, so you had to construct all these different things depending on what people wanted - hamburgers, French fries, hotdogs. And I began to—that's—that's what I was doing all night, cooking these—these

hamburgers [chuckles] and hotdogs and—and getting them out to both the—to the waitresses who were inside—there were always waitresses—and the girls of Karen's age who were on—on their skates to deliver them to the cars.

And, you know, it was extremely hectic. You had to remember every—all these—these different orders and—and the little iterations or the variations of this stuff. And I got more and more [unintelligible; 1:14:42]. I just couldn't stand this idea of eating a hamburger or beef—eating anything, you know?

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: You know, all I did I think that entire summer that I was working there—I started smoking and drinking seltzer. Seltzer and cigarettes, I think I sustained myself. And I decided—you know, it was—and a crazy summer, with [unintelligible; 1:15:05]. When I went to—to the beach in Belmar, I got *The Brothers K*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and the entire summer I was either working from five until early in the morning, not really eating, and reading *The Brothers K*. [Laughs.] And so—that was the kind of job that I had. You know, it was kind of a crazy, crazy job.

But, you know, then I got other jobs in camp, but they were essentially camp counselor, you know, where I slept over. I was away in the summer.

But school went well, and—and, you know, I always thought that I was going to go on to college. Nobody in my family had been in college, but I thought I was going to go to college, but I also knew that I needed a scholarship, so I—I—I worked for it. I mean, I tried to get good grades. And, you know, that—that took place. I mean, it—it—I did get a scholarship.

I could have gone to various places. But at that point, I decided I wanted to go to Brandeis [University], which was a very new school and seemed very exciting to me because it was very innovative in its curriculum and so on so forth. I had no idea, actually, about colleges in any significant way, but I did want to go—I got into Columbia [University], and I got into some schools where if—if I had gone there, I

probably would have had to commute from home, and I decided, no, I really wanted to go away.

So I got a scholarship. At that point, I think it was—$800 was a big—you know, it was ridiculous. The whole tuition was—was very low. But I got that and a work scholarship, so I had to work, and I got money. I went to—I went to Brandeis.

KESLER: Mm-hm. And that's right outside of Boston [Massachusetts], correct?

SPITZER: In Waltham, yeah, outside of Boston, yeah. You know, that was—that was really an eye opener for me because it was an incredibly good education. I mean, there were some fantastic people who taught there at that time. A lot of them were refugees. I mean, Brandeis had been founded as a—as a Jewish school. Again, continues that tradition. I went to Jewish school in Bolivia, and when I went to university it was Jewish affiliated. It had brought in, you know, people who had been in the Frankfurt school in Germany and who were really intellectuals. [Malcolm Glotzer? 1:17:56] was one of the great persons of Jewish studies. You know, really amazing, amazing people taught there, and I—I really loved it. I switched at that point to literature. I was in Spanish and then German literature. And I took some history, but not very much history at all, actually, and mainly literature courses at Brandeis.

I started out—I was very cocky because I came in, and I thought I was so smart, and, you know, I took some—they put me in some calculus class, and I made the mistake of not staying up to date, you know, and that was it. It was, like—the only bad grade I got was in that class, which was a D. And so—and I was pre-med because I thought, *Oh, you know, I should be a doctor.* And I quickly realized that would not be what I wanted to be. I was much more interested in reading and in literature and all this other stuff that was going on.

So, you know, I went through that and pretty out pretty well. I still had that girlfriend, by the way, at that point. We were quite steady, which was the thing that you did [unintelligible; 1:19:19]. And, you know, eventually I broke up. But it was—it was very—the college experience was really interesting.

That was already, now, during the period when there was a lot of activity in civil—you know, the bus rides to the South and all that kind of stuff was going on.

Brandeis had at that point relatively few African-American students, not very racially diverse, but it had some, but it was very—not very. The—the divisions in Brandeis were mainly between the—the rich—the rich students and the poorer ones. And there were a lot of kids there who came from very affluent—mainly, you know, New York backgrounds. A lot of them came from Europe to Brandeis. And then there were, you know—there were kids like me, you know, who came out [chuckles] of a very poor background. And, you know, I worked at Brandeis. I mean, during that whole period I had jobs in the library. I had one job that—it's always—it was always – I largely paid my own way. My parents relatively—because they couldn't contribute very much to my—my education, so, you know, I—I—I didn't—you know, I—I worked.

And I enjoyed working in the library. That was very—[unintelligible; 1:20:53] promoted, and I was working behind the desk, into the service desk, and then I worked in the reserve—in the science library, which was, like, a really cushy job, you know, and I could do my work; I could do other work while I was doing—

That's—that's what I—that's what I did through this period of college. And—but it was also the period [unintelligible; 1:21:17] the beginnings of—that was really the—the Cold War period. And it was also the catch-up years in terms of science. My science education was really bad in high school. And generally it was bad in the United States. And the wake-up call when it came, after Sputnik [1], after the Russia was launched [unintelligible; 1:21:34], and things began to change, and we began to encourage science and so and so.

So I—you know, I—I—I took some science, but I was so far behind, in a way, I had never really—it was not—it was not my—my strength, by any means. I was pretty pretty good in math for a while, until that—that period. And I still [unintelligible; 1:22:00]. That was—that was a [thing? 1:22:02]. But it—it—it was not—science was not—

The thing that—that drew me were the other—literature and history but mainly literature at that point. And I got a—a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship my last year, and the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship was a teaching—I don't know if you know about that.

KESLER: Nn-nn.

SPITZER: They were prestigious. They were very competitive. [unintelligible; 1:22:32] the Woodrow Wilson Foundation was basically a [unintelligible; 1:22:34] fellowship that people who—who were trained to become college teachers. And I got that. I wanted to do Latin American studies, and I was advised by people at Brandeis that the best place at that point to do that was to go to Wisconsin [University of Wisconsin-Madison], even though I—with the Woodrow Wilson—one of the great things about the Woodrow Wilson Scholarship [sic] was that you could—you could apply to any school. I could have gotten—and I could have gone to Harvard [University], [unintelligible; 1:23:15] schools. But [unintelligible; 1:23:17] Wisconsin is the place to go for [unintelligible; 1:23:19].

And—and so I went to Wisconsin, and sure enough, it was a really exciting time. It was incredibly exciting both in terms of what was going on in the country, with the civil rights and with the Cold War and every- —but also it was the beginning of me becoming conscious of—of other places. I—I switched in Wisconsin very early on. I was in a program where I did comparative history, so I started out with Latin American, and I have a master's in Latin American history, but they quickly switched at that point to African history because they were doing very, very interesting work in African history, [unintelligible; 1:24:05] pioneering stuff. It was the beginning of—of oral traditions in Africa, going into local communities and working there for a long period of time and getting—getting acquainted with—with—with the people their history and—and gathering oral traditions in—in these areas.

That was very exciting, and a great group of—a great group of—of graduate students that—that were going to—most of those people or many of them are now also going to retirement stage, but they all got jobs in great places and

worked [unintelligible; 1:24:44] some very wonderful books subsequently.

But it was a very exciting place, and I got very, very involved early on with Radio Wisconsin, with an interest in South Africa. In part, that came up because there had been a—a group of—of black South African academics who fled South Africa in that period. A. C. Jordan was one of them, and he went to Wisconsin, and I took some of his courses in literature and language. He taught—it was a South African language, and I became friends with his sons. He had two sons and a daughter. And, you know, I did, very early on, became very, very involved in—in—in South Africa.

And I applied to do my—my—my Ph.D. graduate work, my—my dissertation for a project in South Africa, and I prepared. I took my preliminary examinations and [unintelligible; 1:28:08], and the South Africans didn't let me in because of Wisconsin. We had been very active in anti-apartheid activities already in Wisconsin, and Wisconsin was one of these places that, because it was a large institution, with a very large agricultural school and then the connections to various, actually indigenous areas in—in—in Wisconsin and so forth, that the South African government at that point sent some people from what they called the Bantu Affairs Department to study our Indian reservations so they could apply them in South Africa, so they could set up that kind of stuff.

KESLER: Wow!

SPITZER: That was the whole idea of the Bantu [stance? 1:26:57], but one of the models was American Indian reservations, and—and so, you know, they had these—these sort of agents at the place, so they knew everything—what everybody was doing, and so there was no way, actually, that you could—you could hide it, not that you necessarily wanted to hide it, but you couldn't get—they sort of kept—

So when you applied to South Africa at that point, during the apartheid era—and I ha a Ford [Foundation] Fellowship, which was a very—really a great fellowship. It was going to cover for my entire research and stay and all this kind of stuff, and I was very excited to have that—that fellowship.

But Ford demanded that you have all the visas and kind of clearance, and South Africa at that point wanted a very detailed application if they were going to give you a—a visa, and so they wanted to know—in particular for a research visa, what we were going to do, what kind of research. Was there going to a be a publication? Who do you see there, et cetera, et cetera. It was one thing after another after another. And you had to fill it out in order—

And so I consulted with people at—at Ford, and they said, "Yes, you have to be honest. You have to tell them," so I filled this whole thing out, and they kept saying, "Oh, your visa is being processed in Pretoria," and this kept going on and on and on and on and on. And, of course, the visa wasn't being processed in Pretoria. I had been turned down—it was day one, but they didn't want to say that they were not allowing young academics into—into the country. And so they—they wanted me to withdraw.

And sure enough, what was happening, since Ford wasn't releasing money—I was a graduate student. I was running out of money. I moved back to my parents' house in Jersey City, and I kept going to New York all the time, to the consulate, to find out about if the visa was being processed in Pretoria.

But finally the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin actually intervened, and he directly contacted I think the minister of foreign whatever—the minister in South Africa—about me—you know, about this—this visa. And—and they said, no, I had been turned down right away. But they just didn't want to—

So anyway, to make this very long story short, that I had to change the field that I had been totally trained for South Africa in language, everything else, and I had to—had to switch, and I switched from—to West Africa. That's where I went, to Sierra Leone and did my Ph.D. research in Sierra Leone. But it was a totally different—I had never really been a West African [unintelligible; 1:29:45]. I was always concentrating in South Africa.

So that—that—that was that. And, you know, I came out of that, and then—at that time—we're in the—the '60s, and,

you know, it was a period when I came back from—from Sierra Leone. It was wonderful, [unintelligible; 1:30:11] and I was in Britain to do this research. And looking for—for jobs. And the number of jobs actually at that point—it was a very good time for the job market. There was a lot of jobs around.

And so one possibility of a job at Colgate [University] and Dartmouth and at—in San Diego. San Diego was [unintelligible; 1:30:43] [laughs] at that point, but my father came down with cancer. That was '67. And I [unintelligible; 1:30:52] I had to stay home. And I stayed. So that's what I—I staying there, in the area. So, you know, the Dartmouth job came up, and I took the Dartmouth job, so that's how I started at Dartmouth in '67.

KESLER: Yeah, yeah.

Tell me—take me back a little bit to your time at the University of Wisconsin. I've, you know, heard that Madison was a relatively active place as far as activism goes during that time. Can you talk to me a little bit about that and what it was like—

SPITZER: Well, it was very active.

KESLER: [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:31:25]?

SPITZER: Now, I—I missed some of the *really* big activism, anti-Vietnam activists, because I was already here. And some of the—back in '68 and '69. But it was very active in the earlier part of the '60s, particularly in this grouping that we were—you know, we were called the—the people [unintelligible; 1:31;51] African history and—and a fantastic African history program. But the people who did Latin American [unintelligible; 1:31:58]. But we were really involved in—in—in liberation movements, nationalism, decolonization, all that kind of stuff in various parts of the world, and there was a lot of—really a lot of protests, South Africa protests. That's one of the reasons [unintelligible; 1;32:18] the visa because I was on the campus and so active in anti-apartheid stuff at that point already.

So it—it—I—I was a little bit—my—my time there was a little before the time when—when the real anti-Vietnam activity

occurred. That was—that was a little bit later. So I—I—you know, I was very aware of it because I—you know, I had contacts there, but I—I wasn't there for that activity—you know, the big takeovers and [unintelligible; 1:32:53] violence [unintelligible; 1:32:57] one period, anti-activ- —antiwar violence. That—that—that, I didn't encounter.

I—[chuckles]—it was a mixed thing because I—on the one hand, you had all of this stuff and it was very intense in terms of—of education and the amount of—of stuff that you learn in graduate schools and you never ever know that much again, you know? [Laughs.] So it was—it was—that really went—went over. And I was really excited by the—by the way that people were doing history, you know, so it really pulled me into history. I loved [unintelligible; 1:33:38].

But for me it was really a new thing, coming from literature, so I really began doing history in graduate school, not before that. I—I loved—I loved that part of it. And, you know, I also loved that—there were fun parts of—of Madison. You know, Madison was a very nice campus. We located—we—

I also got into—into sports, which I never—I mean, not that I played sports, but I watched, you know, football. I mean, I was a crazy Wisconsin football fan during that period of time. But all these things have disappeared, like my baseball disappeared. You know, I'm no longer interested in that very much [I have a son who does? 1:34:29] the sports documentaries, but [chuckles; unintelligible; 1:34:32]—passed on genetically, so [laughter; unintelligible; 1:34:35].

But anyway, that was—that was—that was Wisconsin. And then, you know, moving—moving here, in part that was [unintelligible; 1:34:48] my father—my father died right before classes began here in '67. In September, early September, he died.

KESLER: Yeah. It must have been hard.

SPITZER: From cancer of the pleura.

KESLER: Yeah, yeah.

SPITZER: So when I arrived here, you know, it was [unintelligible; 1:35:07], really intense. I mean, new—new plays, teaching for the first time, and then, you know, my father's death. It was a hard time. So it—coming—coming here at first—

Also, I—I—we had had some vacations in New England, in Newfound Lake [in New Hampshire], for example. We had two weeks in—in Newfound Lake, and I loved—I love New England. I also love the idea of—of [unintelligible; 1:35:48]. But when I came up at first, I was so—I had gotten into sort of modernism in—in—in architecture, and I really loved modern houses. And the thing in Madison, where they have all the—they have a lot of Frank Lloyd Wright stuff, and I sort of loved that kind of architect- —

And I was so disappointed when I came here because I thought this place was so beautiful, but nobody has a modern house. [Laughter.] So it was—it—it was a kind of funny thing.

But the department was weird when I first arrived. It was—I was the first Africanist, and I was hired pretty much the same time as Gene [R.] Garthwaite, who was Middle East. Marysa Navarro came a little bit later. But, you know—and the group that was here was very—before Marysa was hired, there was only one woman in the department. She was—she was not—she was not on tenure track. And it was very male, very male. I mean, it was extremely male. And I was not used to that, actually. All the institutions I had ever been to had all been co-ed, and [unintelligible; 1:37:02], so this was—this was very different.

And it was—that fraternity culture was—was very strong. So, you know, that first period was very hard, and it was—it was the beginnings of—of—by—by '68, the second year that I was here, that—'68 was a year that I would say my political consciousness really went up in a million ways. Everything that was going on in '68; '68 was a really, really—I mean, the war was—early on—starting in Vietnam, you know. But basically, I—I wasn't that aware of it when I first came here. All these other things I had kept in my head: my father's death and everything else, and I was still writing my—my dissertation, my book, trying to do my courses and all these—I wasn't paying that close attention to—

But ’68, things really began to change, and—and, you know, the—the assassination of [the Rev. Dr.] Martin Luther King [Jr.] and the assassination of Robert [F.] Kennedy. It—it—it was—things were—were—were changing throughout the country. You had—you had the Chicago Democratic Convention [the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago] and the violence at the convention. You had the beginnings of—of—of kind of an antiwar movement. We had just gone through the kind of civil—some aspects of the civil rights—that was still yet to heat up in terms of Black Power, but—but—but it—that was all there.

So there was a lot of churning that was going on in—in the country. And I think that year of—of—of ’68 was—was the—was the year that—that—very, very, very influential. The first time I ever smoked grass, you know?

KESLER: Mmm.

SPITZER: Ah!

KESLER: [Laughs.]

SPITZER: [unintelligible; 1:39:20], you know? [Chuckles.] It was—it was—I was such a good boy before that, but never—that was—that was it, you know. And—and it—it was a kind of formative—the department was made of up of some really—some really old guys, who were quite politically conservative. The guy who was the chair of the department, John [C.] Adams, who was a very popular historian—he taught a huge course of modern—on European history and gave these famous lectures about the kind of German atrocities during World War I and so on. He had a very good following. But he was really an anti-Semite. You know, he was anti- —I remember when I came, there were two other Jews in the department: Louis [C.] Morton, who was a very distinguished military historian, and Harry [N.] Scheiber, who was—who—an American historian, a very smart guy. Both of them, very smart people.

And, you know, then I was hired, and at one point there was some kind of—they were going to hire somebody else, and—and—and I remember Adams saying, “The department

is getting—getting full of Jews, full of Jews." You know, so that was that kind of stuff. But then there were other people in the department that I really liked, early on.

So it—it—that—it wasn't important for me to become aware of what was going on. And—and that was the beginning of the anti-ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] stuff. In my classes—and I think partly because I was teaching African history and kind of, you know, the—the course on imperialism, I got students who were more active. I don't know if they were all left. They were—they were whatever "left" meant at that point.

But I certainly had some students who then became members of—of the SDS, of Students for a Democratic Society, and some actually eventually got into the Weathermen [the Weather Underground Organization]—you know, really [wrapped up in this? 1:41:42] stuff. So, you know, they kind of came to my classes because of the—of the—of the subject matter.

It was also a period when I first met Jonathan Mirsky, who was in Chinese and in history—first in Chinese. I remember in '68, or the beginning or towards the end of—of—of—of October of '68, he organized a meeting of Asian Studies at—at Dartmouth and a plane that was bringing people in. I don't know if you've heard this from somebody else, but it was a Northeast Airline[s] plane crashed into Moose Mountain, and there were—over 30 people were killed in the plane. You know, people who were coming to this—to this meeting.

But, you know, it was all this stuff that was—that was going on, and—and you had quite early on already some of the people demanding students and some younger faculty demanding that ROTC be—end at Dartmouth. There was a real a focus on—on—on ROTC, that ROTC end at Dartmouth. And they began to, early on, sort of issue various—well, early on, the tactics were to block recruiters. ROTC was coming in, and they were trying to recruit people who would go into—you know, officers, or become a—and so there were those blocking the recruiters.

And they—they began to do that, and—and these—these—these various efforts to—to block recruiters and to begin to

bring what was in the background, the war that was—that was heating up in—in Southeast Asia to the surface. That—that—that was—that was beginning to boil in—in—late '68. And the ROTC demand was the biggest one. It was really pushing for the abolition of—of ROTC.

And in the history department, there was one guy, David [C.] Kubrin, who was—he was—he was the most radical—he was a very smart guy, and taught history of science, and he was very much involved with the more radical—radical students.

So they—they really began to—to push for—for the—the abolition of—of ROTC. And the faculty—you know, it was back and forth, back and forth. There was a—the faculty began to debate whether ROTC should be on campus. At first it was very—you know, it was to debate the issue and so forth. A number of people were for it; other people were against it. They thought ROTC didn't—did some thing good, that allowed some people who could not have scholarships otherwise to have scholarships and so on so forth.

But while that—while it was—that was heating up, the students were becoming—becoming more radicalized about—about ROTC, and that—that was really important. So there—there were—the ROTC issue stayed on—on the—on the kind of—on the burner, and became more and more towards the front burner. You know, it became more and more important.

And there were a number of—of times when these faculty—when these outside recruiters that came in were blocked. And one time, some faculty joined in, in the blocking, some of the younger faculty. Kubrin was one of these guys, and then there were a couple of people from the math department, a woman—there were maybe—I don't think they had—they had—they were on tenure track, but there were—I think—you know, they were not on tenure track. Actually, the woman got fired very—very quickly after that.

KESLER: I think you're right. I can't remember who—what her name was, but I think—

SPITZER: Dona [Anschel Papert] Strauss, Dona—[unintelligible; 1:48:25]. Yeah, I think—

KESLER: There was just one faculty member fired after that, right?

SPITZER: Dona Strauss and Andrew Leddy. Yeah, those were the two from the math department.

KESLER: I see. Okay.

SPITZER: Yeah. Mm-hm.

Anyway, so the—by—by the very beginning of—of ’69, the ROTC issue was really there. The—there were—the executive committee of the faculty had a hearing about ROTC, and the—there was—there was a vote by the faculty initially—let me just see—I just want to get this right—but it—it—it—the faculty approved that—that they would phase out credit for ROTC. That was, you know, academic credit for ROTC. But the SDS people, the [unintelligible; 1:47:20] at that point and the more radical said that wasn’t enough. You know, they just—they didn’t think that was enough.

There was supposed to be a recruiter that—that would come early in February, I think, of—of ’69, and there was such a threat to that recruiter that his visit was—was cancelled. That was—that was, you know, very early in ’69.

At the same time during this period, some of the scientists got in on it, not necessarily about ROTC, but they got in on the war, and they—there was a protest by some of the really leading scientists at the campus, kind of a one-day, closed research, because they thought that their—their work was being used by the military in the wrong way. So that was—that was interesting. It was kind of radicalizing of—of some of the members of the faculty at that point.

KESLER: And if you mind if we sidestep for second? There was also something relatively similar going on in the University of Wisconsin campus, with the Sterling Hall bombing.

SPITZER: Oh, yeah.

KESLER: Do you mind telling me if you were relatively aware of that, if you were speaking to other people about those ideas and what it was like to be on Dartmouth's campus.

SPITZER: Well, I mean, it was going on—it was going on at—at—at various places. I mean, it it was going on at Brandeis—actually, at Brandeis there was violence, you know. There was a lot of—in late '68 already there was violence. Columbia, of course, was a really big deal. Columbia had very little to do with the war at that point, but it had to do with the local—with the African—with the Afro-American community in Harlem, and Columbia's building of a gym in the middle of a place that had been, you know, a park, kind of taking over more and more of—of that area. They're still doing it to this very day in New York.

But, you know—so there was Columbia, there was Wisconsin, there was—I think there was a whole—whole bunch of—of them. San Francisco State [University]. That got pretty violent at one point. Spelman College. You know, it was—it was growing on campuses around the country.

But it was also growing here. And here, the—there were—there were a lot of marches and—and protests, but it wasn't that dangerous. It seemed dangerous here for a while anyway. But by—really by the middle of—of—of February of—there was another recruiter that was going—that was going to come to campus, and his—his visit was also postponed because, you know, he felt insecure until—until March.

But what happens at that point also on campus—I was involved a little bit in that because I was doing African history is that the—the African-American students at that point were putting pressure to create what would become the black studies department.

KESLER: I see, yeah. Was there a strong African-American student population on campus?

SPITZER: No, it was a very small one, but there was some very articulate and then, you know, really smart students who were very involved in—in—in—in doing that and organizing that. And, you know, actually, they came—they came

through, and they got—they got—they got some of these—the demands fulfilled. But that was—you know, it—it—it was not totally connected to—to what was growing—the kind of growing anti-ROTC and awareness of Vietnam.

KESLER: Yeah, kind of a like a side—side [cross-talk; unintelligible; 1:51:20].

SPITZER: Yeah, it was kind of a—they were, like, parallel but they weren't connected.

KESLER: Talk to me about some of your first impressions of Dartmouth. You've mentioned a couple of times just how different of a place it was. And also how—your thoughts surrounding racial consciousness. Like, those thoughts were growing and kind of continuing to pop up. Talk to me about how those kind of intersect and created your first couple of impressions of Dartmouth, especially a campus with a relatively small people of color population and also a campus that still at that point hadn't accepted women yet, or hadn't admitted, I guess is the better word.

SPITZER: Right. Right. Well, you know, my—my first impressions here were very mixed. I mean, I—it may have been the nature of courses that I—that I was teaching. I—I did—the courses attracted really interesting students. Also attracted a lot of, you know, football players and others, and fraternity types. Many—a lot of people were fraternity types. I don't know, at that point. But—but they were—they were always interesting. They were always really smart students. But for me, very early on, it felt kind of unnatural not to have women here, not to have more diversity in terms of faculty, or the faculty was—not only was it largely male, but also largely white. You know, there were very, very, very few persons of color here.

So that—that was—you know, particularly coming out of—you know, you come out of New York or you come out of Wisconsin. It was a huge university.

KESLER: Big cities, and you come to, like, a small, rural town that is just so—

SPITZER: A really small, rural town. And—and, you know, there were nice things about a small, rural town, but it was also really isolated and—and—and so separated from—from the rest of the world. I couldn't—I—on the one hand, I was always insecure enough about the future, I didn't—that I didn't necessarily think that I should go and look for another job, but I also felt, *My God, am I gonna be here forever? This is—this is really so different.*

And—and I—I—I liked some aspects of—of the institution. And I think it had a lot to do with the kind of collegiality that I found, a lot of younger people in the department. They had hired a lot of people when I was hired, and we became friends and rather close friends quite early on. And at the same time, there were, like, these old fogies who were still around.

And then I found the kind of same division in a different proportional way among the students, where you had students who, whatever their background, mostly—I don't know, whatever their backgrounds—they—they were more conscious about what was going on in the world and—and—and about the wars that were—that was—that was heating up, and about ROTC and about—about race relations was also—

And then there was, you know, a very large party place, with a lot of—a lot of drinking and [unintelligible; 1:55:23] on weekends, and the place felt kind of weird in that sense. These weekends, when women were—came here, it was really kind of—it was just so unnatural, you know?

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: It—it—it was—like, you import the cattle, you know?

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: You know. [Chuckles.]

KESLER: Yeah, yeah, like unsettling.

SPITZER: Right, yeah. And that—that—that bothered me. But, you know, I was also—you know, as I said, really kind of

concerned about keeping up with—with what I was doing. I was trying to finish up my dissertation. I was teaching a few courses. I was pretty busy. And it was—it was a hard period.

But the—these political demands and—and the—the—in some ways, maybe the fact that we were relatively small in number, the number of people who were engaged in that was relatively small—made it all the more compelling that—that I had to participate, and so I really had to participate more and more in these things, even though I had all these other things that were pulling at me at the time, which were much more—you know, how to keep your job [chuckles] in teaching and preparing your courses and finishing your dissertation.

KESLER: It's a delicate balance, yeah.

SPITZER: Yeah. But the—the ROTC thing just kept going, and it was really that—that—that first takeover of [unintelligible; 1:57:24]. You probably know about it.

KESLER: Mm-hm. Of Parkhurst [Hall], right?

SPITZER: Yeah, of Parkhurst. And I remember that vividly because Marysa had just—she had been hired that—that—that year, and Gene Garthwaite and I went to—when we heard that this was happening, we went to stand outside of Parkhurst, and there were hundreds of, hundreds of people outside of Parkhurst, and not all friendly, by any means. You know, you had the students, and some of them were—were my students and—and, I'm sure, Marysa's and Gene's, who went there and they're putting their banners out, and they, you know, kicked out the deans, and they had decided that ROTC just had to go because it just wasn't what the faculty finally voted—you know, was going to phase it out over a three-year period, I think, or something like that. They just wanted it to go right away. And so, you know, they—it was a very quick—quick move.

Again, I think it was triggered by the coming to campus of a recruiter. And, you know, [unintelligible; 1:58:41], and they just took over—took over the building. That—that was—that was my—a real first mass civil disobedience type of

experience. And particularly what happened, of course, when—when the administration called in the—the people who were sent in the National—I think it was actually the state police [sic; the Lebanon, New Hampshire, Police Department] that came and, you know, and—and made the arrests. And that was very [unintelligible; 1:59:18].

And we were all—you know, we were just standing outside, you know, while this was happening. So it—it was that event and the aftermath of that event—you know, the jailing of the students, the trials, all the kind of things that went along with that—all these were very—it was all events that really kept raising my political consciousness. And more and more, as we went on, then, through this next period, of course, we become aware of not just of ROTC but really of the heating up of the war. And so that—that just kept—kept staying not only alive but kind of—that –that fire just kept—kept burning and heating up.

The ROTC—the Parkhurst thing was in—in ’69, and what I did—in ’69 was when I received my—my Ph.D. I went back to Wisconsin. Actually, when I went back to get the Ph.D. and do the final thing, had the final exam for it, Wisconsin was calm, you know. I thought that was a calm morning, but I wasn’t there that long at that period.

Then I came back, and I decided at once that I wanted to start on a second book, and I had just finished [chuckles] the dissertation, and so---and I decided that I was going to make use of my Latin American background, and I applied for a—for a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council to do research in—it was comparative research. And the first phase was to do a year research in—in Brazil, comparative history with African and—and Brazilian.

And I was very interested. I had done my—my first book and I did—that Ph.D. thesis was on—in Sierra Leone, on the—on the Creoles of Sierra Leone, who were descendants of [the great? 2:01:55] slaves, and their evolution and responses to colonialism. I then wanted to expand that and to look at African—at—at—at responses to domination by persons of African descent. So thought I would—that’s how it started out.

So I thought that Brazil [unintelligible; 2:02:22] compare it with, so the Afro-Brazilian—[unintelligible; 2:02:31] Afro-Brazilian. Of course, I did—I did get a fellowship. I was away from—from here from 1971 until—until the—September of 1972. [unintelligible; 2:02:55] the war had really heated up. You know, all kinds of stuff had happened.

And when I came back in—in '72 from—from Brazil, there had been a lot of activity on campus done by—both campus and community activity. People who were involved in—in trying to disrupt the—the recruitment—you know, soldiers and buses and so on so forth that were going to recruitment centers.

And Jonathan Mirsky was very much involved. He was one of the big organizers of this and others. And while I was gone, there had been a whole series of activities on campus. I kind of kept up a little bit with them when I was in Brazil, but I was basically in Brazil, you know. And I came back, and sure enough, they had had three or four big actions, or actions, in—in Lebanon [New Hampshire], where [unintelligible; 2:04:15] campus. You had faculty, students and—and community people who were actively blocking buses, recruitment buses, in protest of Vietnam.

And in—this was in—the first ones I think were somewhere in—during—during the—before the summer. But then they went on in the summer, and there was one in September, on September 21st, I think, and then I decided I was going to also participate in that and in the next one, which was being—which was planned for—for October of—of—of—let me get the dates now. Yeah. It was October, yeah, of—October of '72.

And so the whole plan was to go down to Lebanon, to the recruitment center, and to block—sit—sit down in the street and block the buses. We'd go down very early, and a group of us, sure enough, went down, and we sat in the streets, and they asked us to move. At this point, the Lebanon Police [Department] had become fairly expert at this kind of thing. They gave us the time limit, but, of course, we didn't move, and they arrested us.

And the—the pattern had been people were arrested, were then given a choice. I think they had to pay a hundred dollars for bail, or they had to spend ten—ten days in jail. I was teaching. I was starting—you know, I had just gotten back, and I was going to teach. So I decided that I was going to do bail.

But then there was a trial that was scheduled, and there were a bunch of us that were arrested in my group. Actually, Brenda [R.] Silver was one of the people. There was Marlene [Gerber] Fried, who taught in philosophy. She was one of the persons that was arrested. Her husband, [William D.] "Bill" Fried, was arrested. And a couple of other—I think there was—in my particular group, there were, like, seven people.

And our charge was—it was a kind of strange charge. It was—it was—it was based on some New Hampshire statute about mob action, but actually it was conspiracy to sort of create mob action. So we were getting charged with conspiracy, this group. And so we had a trial. The guy who had been the attorney for the—for the—for Lebanon—you know, [unintelligible; 2:07:43] to try to get the—the people who had been arrested convicted had been named a judge, and he became the judge. He was—he was our judge, Popandopolous, Popandopolous. I should check that. I don't know exactly what his name was.

And the kind of pattern was when you got into the trial, people could make a little speech or something. I remember actually writing a speech, and I have that speech somewhere, and I was looking for it when, you know, we decided to do this interview. It's in New York, unfortunately, so I couldn't—I couldn't find it. But it's in New York. I might send it to you as a supplemental document if I can find it. [Chuckles.]

KESLER: Mm-hm. Yeah, yeah.

SPITZER: But, you know, I do remember in this speech I was really sort of drawing on my—on my both refugee and immigrant status in the United States and my parents' refugee status, and how [Friedrich] Schiller—you know, the German writer, Schiller, had a little line in one of his—in one of his writings,

which is "*Amerika du hast es besser*," ("America, you have it better.) And I made this impassioned speech—you know, why I was doing this and why I did this and what I felt was—you know, how—how we had deviated from what we should be, you know, as a country.

And, of course [chuckles], it didn't do any good. We were convicted, all of us. But, again, you had a choice. At that point, a conviction was—the fine was not that high. It was two hundred fifty dollars, or you a month in jail. I paid—I paid the two hundred fifty dollars. And it turns out, after some—month later, that our case had gone up to the New Hampshire Supreme Court, and it was thrown out as unconstitutional, that that whole thing of conspiracy for mob action was an unconstitutional thing, you know.

So we were—all of our records were erased, and I don't have an arrest record. None of us have an arrest record, which is kind of nice. Not that they ever returned the two hundred fifty dollar fine. I don't think we ever got that back, but [chuckles] we don't have arrest records.

KESLER: Mm-hm. You can only ask so much, I suppose.

SPITZER: [Laughs.] But that was—that was the—the action—you know, the arrest. And, of course, then after that, the—the consciousness of war—of that war, of what was going on in that war and the horrors of that war—I really became involved in—in that. And, you know, the campus was—had really heated up. I mean, in—in—in—in many, many ways, people were being radicalized. It was also, you know, the beginnings of all the anti- —you know, the—the countercultural stuff that was—that was beginning to—to come into being. So you had the hippies, the long hair. All that kind of stuff was coming—was coming at the same time.

And, you know, it was kind of an interesting period on campus. That's for sure. But it—the kind of divisions that I guess still exist between you know the very sort of strong fraternity culture [unintelligible; 2:11:39]. I think both were definitely there. And they never went away.

But, you know, my kind of involvement in all of that continued in—first directly in—at Vietnam until the war

ended. But then after that, really more and more, in working on South African stuff, anti-apartheid. And there, I became very, very, very involved in some—

KESLER: And that was more in the ’80s, right, when the anti-apartheid protests [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:12:16]?

SPITZER: That was in the ’80s. Yeah, that was in the ’80s. Yeah, much later, yeah.

KESLER: Mm-hm. Tell me a little bit about that and about your involvement, how it compares to your involvement with the anti-ROTC and –Vietnam War protests.

SPITZER: Well, yeah, the anti-ROTC—I was involved only in the form of marches and maybe, you know, I may have said one or two things in a faculty meeting or something like that. But, you know, I—I was more of a—I won’t say a spectator, because I was certainly involved, but not—not—not in any really major way.

KESLER: Mm-hm. How did other faculty members react to things that you might have said in meetings, or how did it seem [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:12:59]?

SPITZER: Well, faculty members—you know, they were—they were very reactionary faculty members, as well. They really were against those kind of activities. They thought the institution should just concentrate on teaching and, you know, should stay out of politics. And so there was a lot of opposition to any—any passage of—by the faculty of anti-ROTC resolution.

And there were interesting debates because the—the faculty meetings at that point, when I first came, first—particularly in the early—in early years under [Dartmouth President John G.] Kemeny, there were a lot of faculty memb- —meetings, and these faculty meetings were really meetings. You know, people really talked, and there was a lot of stuff that went on there. But there were also a lot of people in the faculty who were opposed to any of this kind of change. So they—they reacted unfavorably.

Some people—for some people, it was actually—it was much more costly than for me. That is, they—they did lose their jobs because they were much more vulnerable because they didn't have tenure, and that was—that was happening. But the—the more involved—my more—my—my greater involvement really came in the later part of—of—after I came back from Brazil, that short period in the '70s until the end of the war. I was pretty involved in all kinds of antiwar activities here.

And there was a kind of hiatus after the war calmed down. The switch then was much more of African and black studies and—and, you know, opening up the campus for, you know, the women—all that kind of stuff that was—that was happening on campus. And, you know, it was pretty exciting, some of these transformations that were occurring.

KESLER: Mm-hm. Was it kind of like a drastic change? Did you notice a lot of, like, vast differences, or was it more like a slow mover?

SPITZER: No, there wasn't—I mean, in '72, that same year that—that I was arrested—and that was the first year that women—so that was the first admission of that—I really—I thought that was just great, a terrific thing. I was involved early on about equal access for women and all that kind of stuff, all these activities.

I was involved with African-American Studies program and with—I mean, I was even—I was in Women Studies when they first—when that began to—

KESLER: And you helped found some of those departments—right?—as well as the Jewish Studies program, I believe?

SPITZER: Yeah. Mm-hm.

KESLER: Okay.

SPITZER: Yeah. So, you know, I was involved in all these programs and—and creating them and keeping them alive, and the controversies that were going on. I was a faculty member [unintelligible; 2:16:21] that—that became very important for me because I was appointed by Kemeny to be on the faculty

committee that looked at Dartmouth investments. It was the faculty administrative committee, to look at Dartmouth investments and—and [unintelligible; 2:16:59] a—a Jew, whether these were socially okay. So, of course, I began to investigate all those investments in South Africa and companies that were doing business in South Africa and doing a lot of it, and so that was—I was really involved in—in trying to get Dartmouth out of—to divest from South Africa. That was very, very interesting. That was early on.

But in some funny way, these were all connected, you know? I mean, I could see a kind of—an arch, you know, from—from becoming more and more conscious about the ROTC to Vietnam to what was going on on campus in terms of—of bringing in minorities or women. You know, all of these activities, and then the South Africa activities. And the South African activities became fundamental to me. It was really, really important to me.

KESLER: And talk to me a bit—let me see—let's—let's dive more specifically into the anti-apartheid protest, itself. Talk to me a bit about how faculty were involved and about your own involvement and just exactly what that campus climate was like, especially, you know, compared to seeing those anti-ROTC protests and now kind of jumping over into in this time period of almost equal activism, it seems.

SPITZER: There was a—the—the anti-apartheid activities kept escalating. It started out relatively small. I—I—I was teaching on a fairly regular basis by that point—of course, on the history of South Africa, and fairly soon after that, I began to teach a course that eventually I taught with [Douglas E.] "Doug" Haynes. I taught it with [Bob unintelligible; 2:18:57]. But it was called "Theories and Practice of National Liberation." So they were all courses about liberation in various places.

And those courses definitely attracted students who were interested in that kind of question. And more and more students really became interested in—in what was happening in South Africa. And they—the—there was a—a very interesting grouping of students that came in in that part of the '80s—much more diverse. It was from India—you know, Indian—British Indian Indian. You know, from various

places. And—and very, very involved in—in trying to get campuses to divest from holdings in South Africa.

And, you know, I had—as I said, I had been involved in this faculty committee that first look into Dartmouth investments in South Africa, so I—I was pretty prepared with—with materials for—for that. So I became very involved in it, both as a kind of—in teaching, and I think there were a lot of students that took the course because they were in—they enjoyed—they wanted to know more about what was going on in Africa and South Africa but also who needed someone they kind of—almost factual guidance about what was actually going on in terms of investments. And I—you know, for one reason or another, I—I could supply some of that, so, you know, I—I was—I became very active in—with students.

But I would say that the—the leadership of that, if there was a leadership, [unintelligible; 2:20:54] they, themselves, would acknowledge, that there was any—any leadership because it was so diffuse, and everything had to do about—you had to make decisions by somehow agreeing, you know. There were no votes or any of this sort.

I think—I think the—the students, themselves, were the ones who really went to the forefront with—with—with this, and—and when the shanties were first built, I was actually surprised that they came up that fast. You know people had been talking about some sort of action, but at that—that happened, and they—and the involvement of students and how this generated a good deal of—of—of discussion and activity on campus, as you can imagine.

It was also the time when—when you had the kind of growth in campus of—of *The Dartmouth Review*, so you had that sort of other side that was here. And the—the—the—that—that—that student involvement and the increasing militancy but also the kind of smarts that went with it, you know, that they had sort of—that it was developing as they became more and more involved, really kind of a political smarts and a kind of confrontational smarts—you know, how—how far can you go and still remain in that kind of civil disobedience without going to—

It was really—the effort was always to be nonviolent, but, you know, there are—there are limits to that, so that—that was—that was there. And it was very important for me to know that these students were—were both counting on me, and I was counting on them, so I—I—I felt both privileged because I—I—you know, I had some of the knowledge of the—of the history and other that—that I could help with, that I could supply and that they—they—that helped them out. But it was also for me just a very, very important—important time.

KESLER: Yeah. And it seems as though it—it would feel like such a privilege to have students who, you know, are able to take that knowledge that you can provide and kind of just run with it and to be able to see those actions take place on campus.

SPITZER: And some of those students are still involved in that kind of stuff, and that's the amazing thing. The DCD [Dartmouth Community for Divestment] that was created—some of the students that I had absolutely—I mean, now they're [chuckles]—they're in their 40s and 50—almost in the 50s. In fact, one of them had their 50th birthday yesterday. You know, they're—they're going—they're getting up there, but they're—they're involved.

[Kimberly A.] "Kim" Porteus [Class of 1988], who was one of the women who was in one of the shanties when—when *The Dartmouth Review* people smashed the shanties. You know, she went to South Africa, and she—she still—she lives in South Africa. She runs the Nelson Mandela Center for Rural Education [sic; the Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural Development] in South Africa. And she comes out of this whole background. You know, she's a little California blonde woman, you know, interested at that point in—in science and math and this stuff. And, you know, she's done incredible political work.

And a lot of—there were really a number of people in that group who—who, one way or another, either as—went into law or some—but always in—in—in—to—to help other people. And—and—and that's—that—that's really enriching. It's fantastic. And to know that that happened.

KESLER: Yeah, very heartening to know that, like, you were able to help them along the way as well.

SPITZER: You know, that I was—I was sort of part of that experience. So, you know, that means so much to me at this point, you know? Kim just came—came back up to visit from South Africa with their daughter, and it was just lovely to see her, you know.

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: And I go to South Africa and—and always visit her and other people who are still around, or people who are in England now, the people in New York. You know, they're all—they're all over the place, you know?

KESLER: Yeah, yeah.

Talk to me about helping to create and found these programs that you did. Talk to me about where that interest came from and exactly how you went about—you know, with the African and African-American Studies program, the Jewish Studies, and the Women and Gender Studies programs—all of which you were involved in the founding of. Can you just tell me about that?

SPITZER: Yeah, yeah. I don't know if I can take credit for women and genders. I was involved with women and genders. I probably still am the only male chair ever of Women Studies. [Chuckles.]

KESLER: When I saw that, I was, like, *I am so excited to talk with him!* [Laughter.] It's a very cool little tidbit to see about, like, [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:26:12].

SPITZER: Co-chair, the co-chair. I was a co-chair. I was not [unintelligible; 2:16:15]. But I was—but I was a chair. Yeah, African- —Afro-American Studies—I think just by the very fact that I was the only Africanist around at that point, and so the—the students of color—you know, they were looking for advisers, and they didn't have that many on campus to draw on, so, you know, I was quite early on involved in the creation of that program. We wrote up this—with some of the students—actually, the first plan of what the program—what

it should be like. And, you know, that—that worked—that worked quite well.

And then out of that program, early on, we created a foreign study program in Sierra Leone, and I—I actually went to Sierra Leone to establish that all. From—from the research I had done for my Ph.D., I had a lot of, you know, connections at the—at the college in Sierra Leone. So we established that. It didn't work out for very long, but it—but it did for a while. Like, you know, it did exist. So that was-that came out of the early African and Afro-American Black Studies program, it was called.

There were—but it was also—you know, it was—I don't want to romanticize it, because it was also a hard period. There was a lot of black-white tension on campus, particularly—I—I remember that first group that I took to Sierra Leone, and they had room for, I mean, I think maybe 16 students at the university, so in my wisdom, I chose, and I think we came—came, like, eight African—black students and eight white students who were going to Sierra Leone.

And they hated each other, you know? It was really a hard time. And there were all kinds of incidents in—in Sierra Leona at that—in that period, where some of the African-American students, who thought that the local population was too bourgeois, you know, kind of—the revolution was going on here. At first they thought they were just going to be welcome in Sierra Leone as black brothers and sisters—I say brothers at that point—and that didn't happen. You know, it didn't happen. And then they thought, *How bourgeois all these people are!*

You know, in the meantime they had their own little bourgeois phase. You know, they wanted to live in certain dorms, only there, and, you know, that [unintelligible; 2:29:00]. You know, there was a lot of tension between them—between the students, between the students and—and some of the local population. And it—it was hard.

But it was—that was—that was what was going on in the country, you know? That was really the beginning of the height of black power. And so there was a lot of—a lot of that going on.

The—the—the—you know, there were—it—it—it was—I forgot the question.

KESLER: I just wanted to—to know about, you know, helping to found these programs and helping to create—

SPITZER: Oh, founding the programs.

KESLER: —them. You know, like, how [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:29:48].

SPITZER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, you know,—so anyway, that one was I think just founded because I was around, and at that point there were not that very many other people to draw on, and I was very happy to—to—to get involved in that early stage with—with the [unintelligible; 2:30:02].

But it was not African Studies, it was Afro-American Studies, and it was very clearly defined at that point. They did not want to have it as African and Afro-American [cross-talk; unintelligible; 2:30:12].

KESLER: I see.

SPITZER: So it would be just plain old black studies, African- —Afro-American Studies. So—you know, so I did my Africa thing, and then the program was—was started.

The—you know, the women studies thing was—was very early on. I just taught a course with Marysa Navarro on—on Women in Revolution. So, you know, there was a lot of activity here by the women faculty and women faculty members that were here. There were not that many of them, but they really worked together to organize and try to change the place.

And one of the ways that they wanted to—or one of the ways that they wanted to go was to create a women studies program. And that made total sense to me, to create courses that were very gender oriented and to try to bring gender into almost every other aspect of—of teaching here. So I—you know, I—I participated with Women Studies. And then at one point, you know, I was elected co-chair. And I was involved

in that program for many years, and—and felt very comfortable being involved in that.

And Jewish Studies came much later. And—and it was—it was—you know, it was actually strange for me because it was almost like I was always—not that I didn't hide being Jewish, but it wasn't something that I—I would have thought of having. But then it became kind of—the possibility of it occurring here and that somebody was willing to give money to fund this program—you know, Leon [sic; Leo] Baeck and—it made it natural.

And, again, there weren't that many faculty members here who were interested in it. And what was happening for a—was that I started teaching at that point with my wife, with Marianne Hirsch. We started teaching a course on—on—on representations of the Holocaust. I had never really done anything with—with teaching an aspect of—of the Jewish experience, but I think it came out of—out of—the beginning to sort of take—take a kind of look at—at my own past and how, you know, that refugee experience and my parents and all this other stuff and—and—and try to connect it to—to where I was and what—what I wanted to do.

So teaching these courses became natural, and just to teach about more and more [unintelligible; 2:33:18], teach courses that have to do with memory, not just Jewish memory but memory. But the—but the Jewish Studies program—I always—I never thought of myself as being a Jewish Studies person, but I thought that I at least could participate in that program and—and help it along, so I always thought of myself as a kind of interim person in that sense. And I always thought, from very early on, that we had to hire some people who were really Jewish Studies—which is not—I would never consider myself being as one of those.

So, yeah, that's—that's—that's how it went. It—I—I taught and still—for a long time—I taught many times a course on the Holocaust, and I thought it became—it became very important for me to do that. But I think it—it kind of coincided also with my—my beginning to work on—on writing about the refugee experience in Bolivia, coming out of my—that book that I did, that came out of that Brazil-Africa connection, which was *Lives in Between[: The Experience of*

Marginality in a Century of Assimilation]—you know, there was this—that book, where I did both—it—it picked up another dimension, which was really [decisive? 2:34:50].

It finally dawned on me, while I was thinking about that comparison, thinking about what I had been doing [unintelligible; 2:34:59]—basically most of my academic life I have been teaching about people who had been subordinated at some point or another. And I realized that the group that I had not been really working at—the Jewish—it was the Jewish experience, which is [chuckles; unintelligible; 2:35:18] my very own.

So it—it—it began to—to—to look at, and it was very, very [strange? 2:35:26] and excited to—to expand that—that book that initially had an African and a Latin—and Afro-Brazilian component, by putting a third component in it, but just looking at the experience of—of marginality, of coming out of marginality and being in between and being excluded and—and—and, you know, responses to that exclusion.

So I started looking at that in the African—in Afro- —in the Afro-Brazilian way and decided, well, this is also the Jewish story. And not only that, though, I was also writing and doing that—when I was working on this—on—on—on Brazil and the west Africa part of it. I was really working on—on the period of emancipation. This was the 19th century. It was the century of emancipation. It was the emancipation of—of Catholics. It was the emancipation of—you know, all these various groups are emancipated. The emancipa- —the slave groups are emancipated in the 19th century.

But it's also Jewish emancipation. Jews are not really emancipated until—into the 1860s in many places in Europe. So it—it—when—when—when this all had dawned on me that this was—I'm really looking at that experience of moving out of subordination into the world of the dominant and what happens when you move into that world of the dominant and you perceive exclusion. You suddenly perceive something that—that—some kind of wall in front of you, which triggers some kind of crisis of identity. You know, *Who am I?* You know, *Am I black? Am I white? Am I Jewish? Am I not Jewish? What am I*, you know?

KESLER: Yeah.

SPITZER: And—and once you—once that—that crisis comes about and you begin—and you—you—you seek an answer to that question, who I am, it becomes really interesting. So I began to look for—to do this book by looking at a series of families, looking at the experience of these families over time: Afro-Brazilian family, west African-Creole family. And I decided to do a central European Jewish family—or families—from the 18th century, which is sort of the period of subordination as you move into the 19th century, into the century of emancipation. What happens after emancipation occurs in some form or another, and what happens with the arising of a new racism at the end of the 19th century, and the exclusions, biological racism that comes in, and people from the [unintelligible; 2:38:04] begin to see themselves as *no matter how much I tried to belong and be pulled into this society, I'm really not*, you know? And—and—and the various responses to that, which ranged from killing yourself because you can't make it, to becoming a revolutionary to try to overthrow the whole system. So you have to [unintelligible; 2:38:21].

So I started looking at the European component, and I—as a child already, my parents were very, very much of a fan of a German writer—an Austrian writer named Stefan Zweig, and Stefan Zweig was a very popular writer, not a great—not a great—I can't say he was one of the great 20th-century writers, but he did write an incredible autobiography called *The World of Yesterday*[*:Memories of a European*].

And I—one of the first books that I received in Bolivia from my—from my parents was a Spanish translation of a book by Stefan Zweig, so I definitely got a—sort of on a lark, I—I went in New York, and I decided I was going to try to include a Jewish component in the book. I went to the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, which is the largest archive for [the] German-Jewish experience—you know, of documents and everything else in Europe.

And they were—they were then located somewhere in the 70s. They had a card catalog, an old-fashioned card catalog that you could pull out with cards. And I thought, *Oh, why don't I look up Stefan Zweig*?—you know? So I go to Zweig,

and it says, “Zweig - See Spitzer.” And so it turns out that they had some kind of document that in the 18th century—that Zweig—the family of Stefan Zweig married the Spitzer family in what was that point Bohemia—Czechoslovakia, it eventually became.

And so I thought, *My God!* You know? It then became a kind of—kind of like a project of—of—of trying to not only to look at Stefan Zweig but also to see in what way is this connected at all possibly to—to my own family in—in—in—in Austria.

So I began to do this research on the—on the family of Stefan Zweig and include that—that research, which took me—the whole reason for this book was crazy because, you know, you did it in west Africa and went back to Sierra Leone to do research. I did research in—in Brazil. I did research in England. I did research in Austria. I did re- —in all of these places for—for this book. It was an insane undertaking.

But it was also really interesting, in sort of what I—what I learned. But part of it was really to—to understand that what I was really interested [in] over a long period of time was that experience of coming out of subordination and somehow trying to either liberate yourself from the subordination or, if you are liberated with some other form, what happens if—if—if one is getting—experiencing some form of exclusion, and of responses to—to that exclusion. So I was really interested in that phenomenon.

KESLER: Yeah, yeah.

I don’t want to take up too much of your time, so—

SPITZER: I’ve got to actually—

KESLER: Get going here in a second? I suppose, then, is there anything else that you would like to add, any, you know, like, lasting thoughts or stories, ideas that we didn’t touch on?

SPITZER: Well, you know, I don’t know. I’m sure that there are things. [Laughs.]

KESLER: It’s always tough to kind of come up with them when they’re in the moment, yeah.

SPITZER: Sure, there are many things. You know, at this point—you know, there—there—once you start going like this, it triggers all kinds of memories. There are a million different things. But I—I—I think we did—I think we've covered a lot of territory.

KESLER: Mm-hm. Definitely, definitely. Well, with that, then, I suppose—thank you so much for sitting down with me. It was absolutely wonderful to speak with you. And, you know, just thank you so much for the contributions that you've made to the project. You know, all of us really appreciate it, and it was, like I said, lovely to speak with you, so thank you.

SPITZER: Thank you, Rachel. It was really lovely to talk to you.

[End of interview.]