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Howard Zinn Project Oral History Outline

3/7/18

-Did you know Howard before you worked together?

-He spoke at Columbia

-She’d seen him speak

-Lively people at BU

-Got to know him, go to know Roz, always doing things together

-Response to Silber published in BU news, answer to Silbers public statements

-How her and Howard worked together at BU, collaboration of ideas

-Castle at BU

-Time at BU in 76/77

-Howard, Frances, and Mary Levin

(4:18) -Did Silber try to destroy the department?

-Discussing politics between departments at BU

(5:32) -Silber wouldn’t give Howard teaching assistance?

-Discussing her wage vs. Howards

(6:20) -Why don’t you think people liked him so much?

-He confronted Silber, he wasn’t scared of Silber

-”Contest” between Howard and Silber

-Silber and Howard hated each other

-Silber wanted to bring Howard up on charges, that’s where she “plunged in”

(8:22) -Our Howard has an iron will, doesn’t he? Coming from a working class background and what he saw in the south…

-Howard’s politics are central to his life

-Discussing Howard’s background

(11:01) -What are the connections between having a working class background and ones politics?

-Discussing classist economics

-Howard growing up in Brooklyn

-Howard was involved in the political struggles of the 1930s

-Howard realized that a political life was a good life

(14:01) Discussing Roz and her political relationship to Howard

-How Howard worked better alongside Roz

-Silber charged Howard w arson at BU, Roz said he couldn’t sue Silber

-Roz was a partner, not a helper

(15:30) Elaborate on the arson

-Silber accused Howard, it was just kids

(15:56) -Can you explain part of his writing process while he was writing A People’s History?

-She didn’t read it till it was finished

-He is a solo guy

(16:43) -Discuss the strikes at BU.

-Disrespect and insult that Silber showed the faculty

-Only option was unionization

-How BU professors were, how they made the union, wasn’t easy

-She used to block the delivery trucks while they were on strike

-Professors were afraid

-Talking about taking her classes off campus

(22:00) -Acts of repression force people to take stances

-Faculty was stripped of the dignity they thought they had

-That was Silber’s way

(22:50) -How does change “happen from below”?

-Change has only ever come from below

-When lower strata people pose a threat to American institutions

-Conventional politics does nothing

-Discusses historical examples that prove that conventional politics does nothing

-Revolution, the South, Civil War, Lincoln, New Deal, etc.

-Defiant and threatening actions, that’s when a democratic government works

(28:39) -American political institutions were developed incrementally

-Privileged the elites

(29:21) -The success of People’s History is in part a commentary on most American history books

-American schools grave history into your brain

-A People’s History connects to ordinary people

-People’s History isn’t “celebratory” enough of the small victories

(32:27) -Are political scientists and historians taught from the top down?

-Howard was part of the “history from below” movement - history of “ordinary” people

-This kind of history was an effort to reconstruct the ordinary people’s history

(33:41) -How was Howard as a colleague?

-She loves Howard and she loves Roz

-She always tests her political opinions with Howard

-It’s important for her to know what Howard thinks

(34:57) -Howard wrote an article that talked about how in a time of thinking there isn’t a lot of hope in media, all of a sudden out of nowhere there comes the beginning of a social movement

-You never know when a social movement will begin

-Most people don’t pay attention

-The rest of the world sees globalization as Americanization

(37:40) -Who do you envision as the legacy of Howard Zinn?

-A People’s History is his legacy

(38:20) -How can one respond to the criticism that Zinn doesn’t use footnotes/maintain academic standard?

-Most of that is part of the ritual that academics design in order to protect their discipline from easy access.

-Howard doesn’t aim to be an academic, he doesn’t want to be remembered as an academic