

Lynn:

Lynn Soruma, I was born in Hartford, Connecticut. My parents received, when they first got married, received the first keys to the first Federal Housing Project. And that's where I grew up, or at least that's where I was for the first 10 years of my life. It's called Bellevue Square. My parents, by that time, had long been divorced. Then my mother remarried and we moved to Bloomfield, which is a suburb of Hartford, where I went to high school and then on to college.

Lynn:

Let me just preface my remarks by saying I was a sickly child. My mothers response to that was I was pretty much in the house while kids were outside playing. I could hear them. So I, in a way, grew up a little different from the kids around me, because I was so isolated. So my favorite things to do with was to read and listen to music. And this was way back, long before your time, but at that time they used to have these radio soap operas almost, one was Helen Trent, and I can't remember some of the others, but at any rate, they were my friends. I mean, those were the constants in my life. And a lot of times, because my mother had to work, I was there by myself from the time I was really about five. [inaudible 00:01:45].

Lynn:

Board games, I loved. Again, anything that didn't cause too much physical exertion. Now, when I did go outside, one of my favorite things to do was to collect bees in jars. Bring them into the house and make my mother very unhappy. Jumping rope, I loved to jump rope. That and board games. That's what I did.

Speaker 1:

What kinds of board games?

Lynn:

Sorry and Checkers. I don't know if, I'm sure there must've been some others, but Sorry was my favorite. I had cousins, because they could come over, they could come into the house. I had cousins who lived in the building right near us, right across from us. Oh actually I had cousins in a different building right behind us.

Lynn:

Most of the time I spent outside was in the summer, because that was my best health, was in the summer. And it was a big project where we lived. It was a good project. We've had a water system for kids to run through and tennis courts. Of course I wasn't playing tennis, but handball I think too, mostly, just a pack of kids running through the projects.

Lynn:

I think one of the favorite things we had to do, there was a set of buildings that on one facing side, there were no windows and they were across from one another. So we used to take our balls and throw it up against them, because these were brick. And throw it up against the side, just throw stones up against and see how high you could throw the stone. We had to entertain ourselves and we didn't have any money. That's what we did. The only thing we did do that was different, was we sold Kool-Aid, that's cool. That's a favorite memory, but didn't have that many friends. But the friends that I had were all the time, they were constant. That and cousins.

Lynn:

What do you want to know? I told you my parents divorced. They divorced when I was three, my father was living on the West Coast. He was living in Pasadena, California.

Lynn:

He left to go into the Navy when I was three months old and basically didn't come home. But he entered the Navy. My father had been a member of the Communist Party. And when the Soviet Union jumped into World War II, that's when my father decided he'd join the war effort and I was three months old. So that was it. That was it for him. But he was a legend. He was a legend in the city and in the black community because of his political work. And before he went to California, he was a labor leader, very well known and very well known to the police department.

Lynn:

There is a story about him, that he was arrested for leading some protests somewhere. The police chief personally beat him, continually beat him, trying to break him. And he didn't take. And the next day the police chief shot himself to death.

Lynn:

My mother, as you can imagine, was crushed literally by this split. Part of it is that he politicized her. Before they married, I mean, they sort of grew up together, but before they married, he and the Communist Party had been instrumental in getting her accepted at Hartford Art School, because there were no blacks in the school at the time. She was the first black student. So a great deal of her political awareness came through association with him. And I say him, but actually it was him and his brothers. It's just that his brothers lived in New York at the time. So when he took off and wound up living with and then marrying a white comrade of his, it was crushing for her.

Lynn:

We had a real problem, my mother and I, because I was very much like my father, I didn't know him, but I was apparently very much like him. And my interests were like his, he was a newspaper man. And I, writing was my thing.

Lynn:

My mother had the most beautiful voice. She was a singer. She was an artist. She was a decorator. She could not understand where I came from. And I was her only child. And she couldn't have any more children after she had me. So that made all of that worse and it made the relationship between my mother and me very contentious for years, all the way up until I had my first child. That's when things changed, but my father, as I said, was on the West Coast. I didn't have any real contact with him. My first memory of him, I was nine years old meeting him.

Lynn:

My grandmother was a whole other story. She also lived in the project. She lived in the building across from us. She was raising her... My mother was her oldest child. She was raising her other daughter's three children, because she died. She had a kitchen table abortion and died within 24 hours. So of course, the kids didn't know that's what it was. I didn't know that's what she died of until I was 22 years old. You know how black families are, keep things very quiet. You don't get any information until it's no

longer of use to you. But my grandmother raised two of the three. There were two girls and a boy, the boy and I were born in the same year. And his mother died in June and come September, his father showed up at his birthday party with a policeman and took him away. I can, to this day, I can remember sitting there balling, look at me as I old as I am, 70 years ago. And we sat there and just cried into that cake.

Lynn:

We did get to see him again, but that was many years later, when on his own he could come back and spend time with his sisters. My grandmother was a bookie. I did not know my grandmother was a bookie. Again, nobody says anything to you until it's... I was pregnant with my first child when I found out that she, that's what she... I thought she just played the numbers, but apparently she was holding numbers for everybody in the neighborhood and beyond, but that's how she... She had married again, but that's how she helped take care of her grandchildren. She was a wonderful woman. She was, and I think the fact that she had five children made it easier for her to deal with all of her grandchildren's personalities, whereas my mother only had one child, so she had no idea that kids are different. And so my grandmother was, that was my Haven. That's where I spent my time.

Lynn:

When I left college and I'd come home for the weekend, I'd go to my grandmother, who only lived three miles from my mother. That wasn't good. But my grandmother gave up being a bookie when she was 80, because she had gone blind and she could only memorize five sets of numbers, not just the five numbers, but the boxing thing. And then she went to a nursing home and that was the end of that. I still celebrate her birthday.

Lynn:

Sometimes it's just me and a piece of chocolate cake. She raised those two girls, and they're both dead. They were my cousins. We were raised like sisters. So I've outlived everybody it seems on that side of the family, because I was the oldest, and yet all the girls are gone. I didn't know my grandfather. He was out of the picture long before I was even born. And my father's parents died when he was a child, so that was it for them.

Speaker 1:

Why chocolate cake on your grandmothers birthday?

Lynn:

It got to be a habit, the chocolate cake got to be a habit because when I was in New Orleans, I lived in New Orleans for a short period of time. One of the kids at the school where I was working had brought this chocolate cake and it was just delicious. And she gave me the recipe. And so I made it for every festive occasion and there would be people who would call and say, "Can you make me a chocolate cake?" It's really a very simple recipe, and so good. And so it got to be that when I thought of birthday or festivity, it was the chocolate cake. My grandmother liked cake. I could have had a piece of apple pie and it would have been just fine.

Lynn:

She wanted me to be an attorney. She also wanted me to be tall. Neither of those things occurred. My mother was very disappointed. My father is six feet. My mother was five three, and I never even made it to five two. She just knew, I mean, she had this idea that therefore I was going to be five seven, and she wanted me to be an attorney. I guess she figured I talked too much, so let's channel it into something. She got real excited when many years later I wound up working as a paralegal for a while. She thought, "Oh good, it's going to happen." Mostly my mother more than anyone else wanted to make sure that I was aware of where I was living, what I had to do in order not to be successful, but simply to survive.

Lynn:

I mean, yes, to be successful. She instilled great habits. My mother was a highly disciplined human being. Sometimes to a fault, but very disciplined. And she made sure, as poor as we were, that I got to do certain kinds of things. For instance, I took ballet lessons at the local Y, but I also remembered that given her work schedule, there were times when I had to walk and get on the bus and go myself at six and seven years old. So I learned to be extremely independent. I mean, I didn't think about it, that's just what it was.

Lynn:

I learned to cook very early, and I just took care of myself. I mean, she made sure I knew how to do that. I almost had a feeling that as far as she was concerned, she could drop dead when I was nine. And I knew everything I needed to, in order to survive.

Lynn:

My grandmother, my relationship with my grandmother was a little bit different. My grandmother was more concerned about dreams and aspirations and me simply expressing myself however I wanted to. The difference between my mother and my grandmother was that my grandmother never edited me... And I grew up to be the editor, but she is whatever. Then she would have her say, but she would... Even when she did, she kept your spirit intact when she did it. She was good about that. But I had a feeling that was probably because she had five kids and had to learn how to do that. My poor mother just had me and it was kind of like one shot. That's all she had. She had one shot to get it right. And I was a hard case. I feel sorry for her. I was not cooperating.

Lynn:

I didn't mention the fact that I had a horrible case of eczema as a child. Which by the way, I believe in many ways shaped who I became. And when we moved to the suburbs, I was just getting over that first threshold with the allergies. I was allergic to anything with chocolate, anything with eggs, anything with citrus, it's a lot of food. Anything with eggs, that meant no cake. It's just a lot of food. I can have spaghetti, but I couldn't have spaghetti sauce because it was tomato. Just before we moved, the doctors had said I was no longer allergic to these things. I had to be careful about how much of it I ate at the beginning because my body was still sick. But when you have a skin condition that anyone can see, it can make you a target, especially with kids. "Hey, what's wrong with you?" Which also meant I tended to keep to myself.

Lynn:

When we moved to the suburbs, we were moving to an basically all white environment that made it even worse. Not only there weren't that many black kids, I didn't know anybody who had eczema. I mean, there was nobody with a skin problem. But because of my mothers political awareness and

willingness to do a lot of different kinds of things and know different kinds of people, that I had no shyness in terms of making friends with white kids, one child at a time, but... I made some assumptions and I was wrong.

Lynn:

First thing I... Let's see, we moved in June, come August. I was at the house, I was outside, and a carload of white kids, boys, drove by and yelled, "Hey snowflake!" I had no idea what that meant. Why they would... I just had a feeling that wasn't a good thing, and that was about it. They attacked the house, not those boys, but some others, because there was only one black family in our section of the town. And they lived up the street and he was adopted. I guess they felt that he was acceptable.

Lynn:

My parents had a white person negotiate the sale of that land and they built their own house there. And when the Jamaican workers came out to build the house, the neighbors just assumed they were the builders. It never occurred to them they were also my family's friends. And that black people there, we knew.

Lynn:

So the house was built. We hadn't moved in and they, the neighborhood got up a petition to buy the house from us. And obviously that didn't work, but I was 10 and I was beginning to understand that my life was going to be a little bit different.

Lynn:

But my mother was very... My stepfather was a lot more nervous about what I did, what I said, where I went, than my mother was. And it may just have been because my mother had prepared me to go just about anywhere. She really did do that. So I didn't have that many friends. I went back to Hartford to be with friends, and those were my friends in high school. I had a couple of friends in my local high school, but I had to go back to Hartford for a social life. I wasn't all that popular. I was odd, I was an odd child, and I didn't care because I had spent so much time alone that I was just me, and people thought I was odd, okay. I was 22 years old when I realized that I had been raised by a 1940s feminist. And what I took for granted, other people were just coming to understand, that was odd to me.

Lynn:

What do you mean I can't make as much as a man if I'm doing the same job? I mean, that's not even a question for me. I don't understand that. As I said, I was 22 before I realized that people actually thought... I just thought I was running into very uninformed people, particularly males. So yeah, that was an interesting, really dated.

Lynn:

I found out much later that... We lived on Park Avenue, which sounds a lot better than it was. And they used to refer to my stepfather as the Khrushchev of Park Avenue. Girls okay, but you don't want to mess with their father. My stepfather was very protective. He was just very protective.

Speaker 1:

When did your mother and stepfather marry?

Lynn:

They married when I was 10, but I mean, they had grown up together, but they started dating when I was five. My parents were divorced when I was three. I think she started dating either five or six. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

And then you moved to...

Lynn:

And then we moved to the suburbs and my mother being my mother insisted, we building this house before we got married. She was making sure she was getting her house.

Lynn:

She worked, well the first job that I was really aware of, is she worked in the gift department at G. Fox store, a big store, like not as big as Macy's, but that kind of department store. And no black person had ever worked in the gift department before. But because of her art background, she was able to get hired because they handle things like vases and that sort of thing, which she loved. And she'd save her little pennies every week until she could buy a piece that she wanted.

Lynn:

But when we moved to the suburbs, she took a job at the local nursing home, down the street, as an aid. She did a lot of little things. My mother I think was just very disappointed in her life. She was an artist, but she, I guess because she was female, she just couldn't break with everything that she knew, to go and pursue that. I once asked her, this was many years later, why she just never went to New York.

Lynn:

My mother loved New York city. She would take the Wednesday train from Hartford into New York, because it was discount on Wednesdays. She'd leave early in the morning and she'd come back late at night and she'd just walk the streets of New York and she'd get a little, she'd get a ticket to go see a show. And even if she was in the standing room only, and that... Hartford didn't feed her, but she didn't know how to just break.

Lynn:

Unfortunately for her, her only child, that's all I knew how to do was say, "Oh, I don't want to do that goodbye." With no kind of hesitation, which made her very nervous. She never really worked a job that she really liked except that job at G. Fox. She loved that job.

Lynn:

My dad, my stepfather, who is the man I think of as my father, when we moved to the suburbs, he was working in a TV radio repair place, because he had done this course in Brooklyn and he would leave Connecticut. This was when he was married. He was previously married and he'd be in New York all week and then come home on the weekends. While he had a young wife and a new baby. And the young wife's mother was horrified that he was leaving, going to be gone all week. So she drove down from Massachusetts one day and put her daughter and grand baby in the car and drove them back up to Massachusetts. And that was the end of that marriage.

Lynn:

Father said, I didn't put her in that car. If she was coming back, she was coming back on her own. But again, this was a young woman who did not know how to resist her mother. But he met Eleanor Roosevelt working there, when he was in New York, because he was sent to fix her TV. So that's what he was doing, and he had a little shop when we first moved. And it didn't, he couldn't make enough money. So he wound up in the post office. [inaudible 00:27:47].

Lynn:

When I was in the project, I went to Arsenal Elementary School. It was called Arsenal because originally it had been a depository for ammunition and guns. I mean, this was a long time before, but it was also in walking distance of the projects. And I went there through fourth grade, but the friends that I had were the people I knew from the project. And in fact, Arsenal was basically the projects school. I mean, there were surrounding communities also, but there were a lot of white kids at the school, and at that time Hartford wasn't as segregated as it is now, in terms of its living arrangements.

Lynn:

But the move to Bloomfield, which was the suburbs was quite an eye opener. Some kid took my hat when I first started and ran into the boys' bathroom with it. And I went into the boys' bathroom after it and oh my God the teachers had a fit. Here comes the vice principal. "What are you doing in the boys' bathroom?" That's where my hat is. It set the tone for how I was going to go through the Bloomfield school system. They weren't used to girls who spoke up, and that's what I was taught to do. And it didn't matter whether my mother had transplanted me to this other place. This was still me. It was just a new environment. It continued all the way up through high school. I ran into a little principal problem in my senior year because I did not salute. I would stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, but I did not pledge allegiance. Another student and I got called on the carpet for it.

Lynn:

I think they were just simply afraid to make too much of an issue. I don't know why they waited. I have not pledged allegiance since ninth grade, but somehow I got caught in 12th grade. Somehow somebody finally realized it in 12th grade. I was just seen as a rebel. I wasn't disruptive, but I just had my own opinions. And they weren't used to black people having opinions of any kind, very few black students in the school. And they went through very quietly. Except for one.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:31:03].

Lynn:

My childhood and my young adulthood, because I always felt, it was almost like feeling like I had leprosy. It was the way other people reacted. Adults were not kind. And because there were such restrictions on what I could eat. Adults could be rather snotty, "Well what can you eat?" and this came from my stepfather's sister, one of them. But I was telling her that birth was traumatic, which really set up the relationship between my mother and me. She was in labor for a week. They left her in labor for a week, and the only reason why they called the white surgeon to come in and do a Cesarean, first Cesarean in St. Francis Hospital on a black woman was because...

PART 1 OF 6 ENDS [00:32:04]

Lynn:

...put along a black woman was because my mother had stopped breathing and her belly had gotten like this, and as I said, she'd been there for a week and my grandmother had also very loudly threatened this. They said, "Okay, we'll do it." They barely kept us alive. She was turning blue, I was blue when they pulled me out. They couldn't get either of us to breathe and it set up breathing problems for me for most of my life. In the end, I had the allergies. Combination of the breathing problems and the allergies really let me have a very solitary life for the first 10 years of my life. But the eczema ... Actually, I'll jump ahead and say this.

Lynn:

I thought I had dealt with the thing about the eczema and how it made me feel as a child, because what happened was, as soon as we moved, I caught poison sumac from the neighbor's dog, which then laid over the rash I already had. I had stuff I had to put up for a year and a half. The scars... I didn't know I had a birthmark on my arm until I was 23 because they had always been covered over with excellent scars. I thought I had pretty much put this behind me. When my youngest child was born, he had it. I felt so betrayed. How could this be? Here it is, back in my life again. He'll still get little patches now. I mean, we're talking about a grown man, it was bad he had... Again, I had almost forgotten I had it until the baby. Yeah.

Speaker 2:

Yeah. Where did you go to college?

Lynn:

University of Connecticut. I had a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence and my mother said, "Lynn, New York is not ready for you yet." I really wanted to go. I wound up going to them... Actually, I wound up going to the branch of the school for the first two years, which was in Hartford and I lived at home. I left home in the middle of my sophomore year. My mother and I... By that time, it was over. It was time for me to go. I lived at the [wire 00:34:59] until I went up to the campus in my junior year. I went from the University of Connecticut to New York City.

Lynn:

My father, bless his heart, drove me when he found out that I was moving to New York with \$25. He said, "I will drive you there" And lectured me. I mean, he didn't lecture, he wasn't the type to lecture, but he was imparting his wisdom all the way to Brooklyn, where I was staying with friends and gave me some more money and said, "Don't tell your mother." It wasn't much, it was more than \$25. That's... I went to New York City with.

Speaker 2:

What did you major in?

Lynn:

English. Actually, I had a double major, English and Political Science. I thought I wanted to be a Political Journalist until I realized I am not constitutionally capable of asking people embarrassing questions

deliberately. Now I may ask an embarrassing question only because I stupidly asked it or said something without thinking, but I am not an intrusive person. I couldn't do it. I realized I couldn't do it. When I went to New York, I was trying to pick up temporary jobs while I was looking for work. That's how I found that I couldn't be a Political Journalist. I had a gig of doing census stuff and... No, not census, working for some medical thing where you had to ask really personal questions that people [inaudible 00:37:01] got asked anybody. That's none of my business. I said, "Oh, I think you're going to have to give up the whole..."

Lynn:

I was lucky I wound up with a job as a clerk in New York Public Library in the children's department. That did it, that was exactly where I needed to be. I had got a job in the show collection, which was the... At that time it was a Children's Room at the 42nd Street Library. It's not there anymore. At that time was where a lot of the historical children's books were also kept. For instance, there was an art exhibit of Beatrix Potter's original drawings that came through there. It was that sort of thing. Again, I was the first black person... I had to go through all kinds of vetting just for a job as a Clerk. This was in 1966, I think. I couldn't get a job as an Editor. I wanted to get into editing. Couldn't get a job.

Lynn:

The closest I came was possibly doing some sales thing. I am not a sales person. That was... Children's Room in the Library was perfect for me. I went on to go to the Countee Cullen Library, which was the borrowing side of the Schomburg. That was... Actually that's what set me on what wound up being my primary interest because the Schomburg Collection [causes 00:39:05] of historical stuff and they had galleries. There would be a lot of shows and people would come. We'd have groups of children going through to see art work.

Lynn:

I got a chance to see what it was like for kids who have never been exposed to certain kinds of things. What they... The look on their faces that first time. It was just exciting. It was exciting. I was doing a story once and Harry Belafonte walked in. Here I am trying to read the story. I was fine until I saw his face. It was like... [inaudible 00:39:52] It also gave me a real sense of how to work with children when you want them to move past certain things. I had a second grade class that had a five-year-old boy. The little boy was reading them a story. What you do is, when you have a program like that, whoever is in a library, whether it's the librarian or with me, I was a paraprofessional. We read stories to the kids and we helped them pick out books to take back to class with them. He picked out a Dr. Seuss book and his teacher took it away. She said, "No, your parents want you to read something hard."

Lynn:

He could handle the vocabulary, but emotionally he was five years old and he needed Dr. Seuss. I remember thinking that I will not teach my child how to read at a real young age. It was like ignoring who that little boy was and what he needed and when he wanted it. I couldn't understand why he couldn't take one kind of book, and then take the other kind that his parents want. No, teachers have strict orders.

Lynn:

That set the tone for me. The reason why I say that is I wound up tutoring children on the side for years. In fact, I still do. I go up to the local elementary school twice a week and tutor kindergarten kids. I hate a

child feeling that they have less than some other child. Every child's got something that they're good at, or that's a strength for them. All you have to do is lock them into that sense of this is what. From there they're strong enough to step out of wherever they've been and approach something that had seemed difficult. You've got to start with where they're secure and strong. That's what I still do. I'm Miss volunteer. It's the highlight of my week.

Lynn:

I've been doing at this particular school for six years when my grandson was there as a kindergartner starting, five years. I stayed with the kindergarten group, because I taught kindergarten first grade. I co-taught kindergarten first grade for three years. Many years... It's my favorite. Get them while they're still malleable and still like school. That interest was sparked by working in the New York Public Library in the Children's Room. I met authors. I met children's authors. It was wonderful. It was a great time. And then of course, I met my husband.

Speaker 2:

Let's go there. I'm going to ask eventually.

Lynn:

Oh, okay. Well, I didn't actually meet him in the library. I took a summer off or took a few weeks off to go back to the University of Connecticut and finish. I have left out a huge chunk. I think I'd better back up and tell you this.

Lynn:

I started college in '61. By '63, the country was in the deep throes of... That was my first real political involvement outside of family. The reason why I say outside of family is because from the time I was seven years old, my mother put a picket sign in my hand. That was a one thing, she made me very conscious of where I lived, what my... My grandmother, I remember being... She didn't want my mother to be that honest with me. She was concerned that I would become, I'd go off and do some rabble-raising thing and get killed. Because she could see what my personality was like and the fact that I was an outspoken little child. That didn't bother my mother. One of the first books I remember, the first chapter books I remember getting was [inaudible 00:44:56] when I was seven years old. My grandma said, "[inaudible 00:44:59]"

Lynn:

I couldn't understand why my grandmother was concerned. I remembered, it was, for some reason, a big deal. Actually it started in high school. Remember the Gary Power's U-2 incident? You don't remember. Well, you wouldn't remember. You weren't even born. I must've been 16, 17. A US Pilot flew over Russian territory and got shot down and captured. It was a big deal. Oh, he made a mistake. He got lost. He wasn't supposed to... I think Russia wanted them to... US to admit that he was spying, that sort of thing. For some reason, I assumed that he really was spying and he should've admitted that's what he was doing. I wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper. My mother saw it. It's because people kept calling up, "[inaudible 00:14:03], do you know what Lynn did?" I didn't pass it by her. Why would I pass it by her? I was 17 years old. What's the pass?

Lynn:

That's when I found out, that sometimes there's a life behind your life that you know nothing about. What happened after that was that, the FBI came by. Out of them coming by is when I really found out that they had been coming by for years because of my father. They would ask my mother about my father. Now remember, I told you they got divorced when I was three, she had remarried. She had a whole other life. These People came by every other year from the time I was a little kid. They came by this time because of that article. This was the first time, apparently she did not let them in the house. She met them on the front porch and she said that, "No, you will not talk to my daughter." That was the last time they came by. They had been watching for years. She said the same thing she'd always said, "Look, I get child support checks every once in a while, I haven't seen him. I don't know what he's doing."

Lynn:

I had already had a sense that things weren't going to be simple, but that didn't bother her. By '63, I was very much aware of the political tone that's in the country. When the Birmingham bombing occurred, that was an event that changed my life. I was more than horrified. I was ready to leave school and go South. I belonged to a group called NECAP, North End Community Action Projects in the North End of Hartford. The North End of Hartford is the soul of the... Was the soul of the black community in Hartford. Where my mother had been and still remained, even though we lived in the suburbs, remained politically very active, socially very active. Not socially, meaning socialty's or kind of thing. My mother is a NAACP supporter. She did a lot of voting work.

Lynn:

NECAP was a student organization. It was students from the different schools. There was three or four schools just in Hartford alone. University of Hartford, there was Trinity, which was predominantly white. They did a lot of consciousness raising in terms of organizing what it means to organize. This is something brand new to me. Oh, because even though I knew my mother was involved in these things, I didn't go to meetings. I got put on the picket line with a sign.

Lynn:

This was different. We sat in, slept in, in downtown Hartford. Sat in at Woolworths. Much to my mother's... Well, I think secretly, she was pleased, but she was scared. She was scared primarily because she and I had no contact with one another. She wasn't sure what I was doing, unless I was telling my grandmother, then she could get the information from my grandmother. That did it. That was 1963. That fall is when I went onto the campus, which then became a whole different world for me. I became the... Out of all, it was by default because nobody else would do it, leader of the... For one of a better word, Black Student Union.

Lynn:

The year that we linked our activities to the antiwar group, was the year when shit hit the fan. Actually, we knew we were being surveyed. I had a friend who worked in the registrar's office, who told me when they've set up. They've set up work, operations in, where the radio station was. You are one of the people they're surveying. I was lucky that she told me, I already had suspicions. The day I was in the campus restaurant, these guys were in there laying a cable for the jukebox. There were several of them. There was only one damn jukebox. How much cable can you lay? It hit me. The uniforms they had on had the name of a moving company, a small moving company in Hartford that I just happen to know of.

Lynn:

They wouldn't have been laying cable. This was a moving company for some other kind of stuff. These people were taking two days ... I thought, Oh no, that's not... I tested it. I was stupid enough to think what could they do? I told a friend of mine, "Look, I am going to walk out of here out of that door," which was the back door. "Don't touch my coffee because I'm going to come around the front door. I want to see what happens." Sure enough, I walked out the back door and the person apparently got up because I had asked my friend to see if anybody followed me. Followed me right out of there. I went all the way around, came through the front door and he was right behind me. I said, "Okay, that's who these people are. That's what this is."

Lynn:

I think they finally caught on that I was not... That I knew. They stood there and took full face, side shots of me with camera. There was no reason to pretend anymore. We took the bus. Right after that is when we got on the bus to go to Washington, D.C. With this combined Vietnam war black protests. Had bus full of folks. We were so pleased with ourselves because so many people had the courage to come. Just before it pulled off, the FBI got on the bus and took photos of everybody on the bus. Said, "Well, I guess we know what this is going to be." There was no problems. We had no problems in D.C. I'd almost forgotten we had gone.

Lynn:

At that point I felt, the police that I went to with such romantic idealized feelings about sitting at the feet of knowledgeable people and that these people had it in for me. It was a disappointment in the institution. I didn't expect anything different from the FBI. I had already been... I already knew what they were capable of doing. The fact that the school, what's the word I want? Not went along with it, but actually help facilitate this to... I left school. I left school without finishing. I left school with three courses left to do, because it hurt. I am hurt that they were doing that. I went to New York, with my \$25.

Lynn:

Of course, in New York, I wound up getting involved with an organization. The organization was actually a Harlem organization. That's where the libraries were. Schomburg and the Countee Cullen, 135th, 136th street. It was wonderful for me to have young people involve themselves in an activity whole hearted. There was no trepidation. People went for it. Did you ever see the movie, The Strawberry Statement? It's about a, literally, a riot that occurred at Columbia University.

Lynn:

Columbia was continuing to expand its footprint and it was buying up neighborhoods. Columbia is this piece of town borders Harlem. They were buying up our property. That's what this protest group was focusing on. We were told, you come out in the evening, we're just going to surround the school to keep any... Because the students had boarded themselves in the president's office and some other place. The word was that because they were in... Working in tandem with the outside group. There was word that the police were going to show up. If all of us came and stood outside, we could protect this students. Huge numbers of people came and they came from different groups, including the group that had originally been... Had surrounded Malcolm X. I can't think of the... Right now I'm just drawing a blank. One of Malcolm X's right-hand persons was leading this group. I had a cousin who lived in the area. I had actually walked over from his house and could not find my group. I wound up with somebody else's group. The police came. It was tense.

Lynn:

Policemen said to this guy who had been Malcolm X's guy, "Okay, don't move them up." I realized, "Holy shit, this is staged." I was nobody. Who has got to be careful about what they said in my ear shot? All of a sudden, his group turned around and walked, started walking away. The police started pushing toward us. Guess who was standing right there from all the building and a policeman pushed against my back. Well, she's... My mother used to beat me all the time.

Lynn:

My first instinct is to sock somebody. I don't care how short I am. I turned around hand raised, red and felt somebody grab my wrist from behind, and somebody else from... They dragged me. It was instinct. It wasn't protest. It was instinct. You hit me, I'm going to... As I said, short person and the group dispersed quickly until there were only about seven of us together in a little... We stayed together for safety as we quickly got out of there. That's when the police busted the doors down and got to see inside. That's how that movie came about. The thing that stuck with me for so long was the fact that there had been some suspicion that Malcolm X had been sold out by someone close to him. I thought, "My God, is it this one?" At any rate, I went in word after that in terms of political activity. Not political interest, just political active.

Lynn:

It was one of those, the country was getting really dangerous. I didn't have a whole lot of allies. I didn't have any real family there. I pretty much put things on the back burner until I met the man I wound up marrying. I had gone up to the University of Connecticut to do a couple of courses because remember, I had left school with only three courses left to do. He was there as a student. He had matriculated at Fordham, but he had gone up to the University of Connecticut for summer school because he had a countryman there and he just wanted to speak his own language for a couple of months. He was from Uganda. That's how we met. We were there for eight weeks together and we came back together, moved in.

Lynn:

Little did I know until after we moved in, well, I don't think he knew at the time, now that I mentioned it. He was also under surveillance, which then drew me right back into the political arena. He had been under surveillance apparently from the moment he came into the United States. It was a program where they had these African students come and they took them on a tour of the South West and as, or made some sort of political comment while he was there. Apparently that, they started taking notes after that.

Lynn:

By the time I met him, he was under surveillance. He was an outspoken person. I will tell you this, although I'm jumping way ahead, as we were wound up as the head of Uganda's National Bank and the head of the airlines, then eventually, I was going to say the country's economist. It's the Economics Minister. I think that's what it was. Anyway, he turned up. What he was getting was between what? In this economy, let's see.... That's what he would get in. His whole story is a whole other kind of thing. It was just... This is where we were.

Lynn:

Just before we left New York, we had a couple of my friends... Well, she was a friend from long time before, from high school. She had married this guy out on the West Coast. They had been members of Black Panther Party. They were in New York on their way to Canada. They were quickly getting out of town. That's when Ezra and I realized our phones were tapped, because our friends were also under surveillance. I guess they had these four people living in this tiny little apartment for only, I think they were only with us for about a month.

PART 2 OF 6 ENDS [01:04:04]

Lynn:

Well apartment for only, I think they were only with us for about a month, but you could definitely hear the clicks on the phone, talking and they got out. They left during the middle of the week. We took them down to the train station and the following day a phone call came for someone looking for them, under their alias. So they got out just in time, we weren't sure exactly who was looking for whom because at that time it was also a lot of internal problems within the Black Panther Party. And I know one of the reasons why they got out, was because of the assassinations within the party.

Lynn:

In the meantime, there was my father in Pasadena California, involved with Ron Karenga and his organization, because my father remained an outspoken man. He quit the Communist Party in 1953. No, 1956, when the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia had a grassroots uprising and they came in to crush it. And so my father just said, "That's it. I'm done." But he remained an extremely political human being until the day he died. And he worked on the newspaper, but we had that in common. And so when I was 19, I went up to actually meet him for the first time and meet my brother, he was my only sibling. Exactly, six years younger to the day. My father managed to have two children born on the same day, six years apart and couldn't remember either of our birthdays.

Speaker 3:

What day was it?

Lynn:

May 26th.

Speaker 3:

May 26th?

Lynn:

Yeah.

Speaker 3:

And what year were you born?

Lynn:

'43. My brother was born in '49. No. Yeah. '49. So, okay. So there I am. My husband was at Fordham University when he got his undergrad degree. And then we went up to the University of Connecticut for him to work on his doctorate. And no! I've got that wrong.

Lynn:

I mean yes, we did go up there for him to work on his doctorate, but he did a master's degree at Fordham before he went up to get this done. And I was pregnant when we moved, just barely, just enough to be. And that's when I began to learn to edit because he spoke very good English. He spoke better English than a lot of English speaking people I know, but his writing was simple language. And in Academia you've got to present things in language. So sick that you can't... You have to read the sentence three times to figure out what somebody was... So what I wound up doing, I took a six week, a 10 week, eight weeks something editing course while I was there, because I was pregnant, I had had to do something. I mean, you can only clean a two bedroom apartments so often.

Lynn:

And I wound up editing his dissertation because his teacher hand... His major advisor handed it back and said, "I, this isn't, this isn't..." It's not that it wasn't linguistically good, but it didn't set the tone that he wanted. So all I did was I just took it and took the simple words and substituted something. You had to look up in the dictionary and step back in and he said, "Yeah, this was what I meant. Oh, this is fine." But I like the idea of being able to work at home if I wanted to or anywhere else. I could go sit somewhere else. I could go sit outside, go to the park. I love that whole notion. So let's see, he took a job with AIM. I don't want to say AME. That's not right. Florida. Florida?

Speaker 3:

Oh, AMU.

Lynn:

AMU. Yeah. And so we caravanned ourselves on down. At Tallahassee got stopped, South Carolina, I think. At night. Had the station wagon jam packed with our stuff and me and his little fat baby and these men at a gas station wanted to know where we were going. And I think the fact that we were going to Florida meant, "Oh, they're not going to settle here. That's good. But let them go." I remember some tense moments. They could tell that my husband was a burner, but we got through. I was in Tallahassee 10...? Nine months.

Lynn:

We got there at the beginning of September, but by that time things had fallen apart. I could not understand. And this is it. And I ran into the same thing at working at IBW, although the issue was different. I cannot understand how my husband who was so smart and was majoring in Economics, couldn't understand that if you change the dynamics, the economic dynamics between men and women, you're going to change the relationship between men and women. That's just common sense. He was a socialist at heart, but he's assumed that it wasn't going to change the social relations between people. That's nuts. He was nuts.

Lynn:

But as far as he's clear, I was just made for literature, what do I know. And I couldn't understand how... I mean, why would you marry someone who's educated and intelligent and to simply sit around and act like they're an idiot? So visited, and packed up and took our two year old baby and little red Volkswagen and left and came to Atlanta. Knowing no one.

Lynn:

I have a cousin who was a theater and film critic, who was working with the person who was the director of theater over at Spelman, and with Charles Hobson, who was the director of Mass Communications at Clark. And they were working... They were two separate projects. So Clayton came down because he couldn't work on both projects at the same time on set. And he said, "Well look, I'm going to be in town. Why don't you come when I'm here? And I'll introduce you to Charleston. So it turns out then I wound up... That's why I wound up moving here. It was temporary. I think we came June 7th. I was going to stay for a few months until I figured out what I wanted to do.

Lynn:

I didn't want to go back to Connecticut. I did not want to hear my family say, "Oh, poor [Lynn 01:12:43] she's got a bit..." I didn't want to hear that. And my mother wasn't good with male children. She loved little girls, but she was not good with male children and she would not gotten her hands on mine. But I didn't want to move to California, because I felt like I was being disloyal to my mother in favor of my father's family. Correct. So I went someplace neutral.

Lynn:

I came to Atlanta and wound up staying for a while. I mean, I stayed and then I left and then I came back. The only people I knew when I came here were the people my cousin introduced me to. It was Charles and I got an apartment and met the person who lived across the hall. And that's all I knew. And here I was with a new child. I mean, because he was what two, he had just turned two, in a part of the country I was not used to. With no firm job, honest to God. I woke up the next morning when my husband drove up with us, following in his car, stayed that night while we unloaded cars. And then the next morning he took off, because he was going to Berkeley for the summer. And when I woke up the following morning without him, I did not realize how captive I felt until I was free.

Lynn:

And he was like, "Hey, never going back. No."

Speaker 3:

Can I ask what ...? So he drove you to Atlanta. Had you agreed?

Lynn:

He drove behind me.

Speaker 3:

Right. [crosstalk 01:14:45] Yes, yes, yes, yes. But had you agreed to separate then? Or was it sort of like, I'm going to be in California for the summer, you go to Atlanta or...?

Lynn:

Well, yes and no. It was we're going to separate, behaved and think was ours. He didn't think I could live without him. He told my cousin a few months before that he was concerned about me, because I was talking about moving and living on my own. And she said, "Well, [Ezra 01:15:18] she lived on her own before she met you." He said, "Yes, but she's met me."

Lynn:

That's when I knew I was on the right track. Mine. Oh, I love it. Yes. And he has remained to this day that arrogant and that clueless. He's got great kids though. But he's clueless. I knew that the differences were insurmountable, because in order for me to live with him, I had to be the opposite of who I was. And that was not going to happen. That was not going to happen. I think he tolerated who I was until the baby was born. And then it was kind of like look, now I've locked you into this role and this is what this is. And this was not going to be.

Lynn:

The reason why... The impetus for moving happened when it did is because my two year old who was very, very verbal was starting to sound too much like his father, who was spending no time with him, no time. He gained, so tried to sell me a bill of goods, "African men don't raise little children." Yeah. Right. Okay. I want you to know I never paid for a babysitter. His little African friends would come by the house, when I was right out the baby. They babysat, they took him out, they took him to the playground, they play with him. And these were people from all different countries, which was also by the way, a wonderful experience for me because my husband and his friend were from Uganda. But they had close friends from Nigeria, from Ghana, from Southwest, from the meet, what became the Namibia, and Congo. I hated the guy from Congo.

Lynn:

I'm sorry, I did.

Speaker 3:

Why?

Lynn:

That was his roommate in New York. And he was very contemptuous of Americans and particularly American women, black American women. They get, they actually, when Ezra came into the country, his group got a lecture on, well if you've got to take up with an American woman, take up with a white American woman.

Lynn:

Of course, Ezra thought that was the most outrageous thing he'd ever heard of. So he told me. But yeah. And [Lennie Gushubi 00:01:18:05], Gushubi that was his name. I wasn't supposed to ex not... I wasn't supposed to... I wasn't supposed to have the opinions I had. I simply wasn't supposed to state them outright uninvited. But if you've come to my house, I'll say whatever I... This is...

Lynn:

He expected me to be what he thought I should be in my own home. It's not, don't do this in my home. I wasn't supposed to have a political opinion. I could have a political opinion about American politics, but

not international politics. Just a little, little things like that. But all of my husband's friends would just... Oh, they were thrilled. They were delighted because the child was an easy, easy bait. He just was an easy child period. And he was a delight to be with. And they come and take him. Sometimes I'd have to call them. "Have you seen my child?"

Lynn:

We went to a party when the baby was five months old and we were walking through the parking lot. And I heard somebody, some young woman up in the window at the party, who looked out to see us comes up. "Oh, it's the baby." You know, there are people here carrying the baby, but that was his, "Oh's baby." So, but no he did, he tried to sell me a bill of goods right.

Speaker 3:

Never [inaudible 01:19:55] children.

Lynn:

But he literally did not have anything to do with that boy. He was too important. So when the little boy started sounding too much like his daddy, mama said, "Oh no. I pore too much of myself into this." And that was it. So I knew that the marriage was over when I left. He would have had to have come up... He would have had to have made some huge changes. And he didn't even recognize that that was... I don't mean necessarily, he didn't even recognize that that was even something that you want to consider. That was fine.

Lynn:

It was fine until the... He or he left. He left. He went to Berkeley in that summer. He went straight to the university in September. What happened was he had failed his Macro, his Micro Economics qualifying exam. And Ezra had never failed anything in his life. He did not know what that meant. He really did not. He got a B in a Philosophy course, and you would've thought somebody had taken his head off. So he went to Berkeley to just do that one course. And then he went back to the University of Connecticut, took his exam. And then he called and said, "Well, I'm getting ready to go back home. I want you and [Askia 01:21:35] to come up, stop everything." By this time I'm working with IBW. I drop everything. I run up there to Connecticut, so he could see his child and what to get one?

Lynn:

I was furious because I was in the midst of some work and so I just cut the visit short and went to New York City and thought I just go up as well. Just go and see friends. But before I left, he said, "Why don't you let me have Askia? You can have other children. Never occurred to me not to have my child. I would have felt bad about taking him from his father, except his father never spent any time with him anyways. And I knew Ezra wasn't going to raise him. He didn't even want to take him down to the gas station. But it made me feel extremely insecure. Every time he came back into the country, until I realized that my... I have raised my son just like my mother had raised me. He was extremely, extremely prepared to take care of himself, which worked out real well.

Lynn:

Because when he was a high school, in his high school freshman year, his father took him to Uganda for the first time. And when they came back and had to go through London, Ezra got caught with a forge

passport. And Askia said, "Well, there's nothing wrong with my passport" and got on the plane. He was 14. So I never worried after he was 10. I never really worried, because he knew, would know what to do. He'd know who to call. He'd know. He was fine.

Lynn:

The forge passport thing just tickle me to death after the fact. At first I'm going, "Uh!" So that was it. He truly didn't believe that was the end of the marriage. He left the country, came back, left the country, came back. And then when he came back he called, and I said, "Oh gee, I was like how'd you get back in the country?" He said, "Because I have a wife and child here." I said, "You have a child here." because by that time the divorce had gone through. He could not believe I had divorced him. He said, "How could you divorce me? I didn't give you permission." As I said, I knew when I left him, that that was going to be the end. He was still thinking in the same kind of like... But, I mean, we're friendly. I just edited his last book, but it had to be this way. The cultural differences were too great. And I was not willing to give up my strengths as a woman. I just wasn't. And that's it.

Lynn:

Well, remember I told you I was 22 by the time I realized I had been raised differently. And it has more to do with assumptions. I assumed that if I worked hard, I was entitled to either compete or be considered for, or whatever. And I was wrong. Not only because I was black, but because I was female and particularly about being female. I remember thinking I must be running into the same type of people. Not realizing that the world was doing one thing and my mother was doing something completely different.

Lynn:

There was she, my mother was a real proponent of believing that women could do anything. But she also believed that as a black woman, I had to be able to do more and better and for longer, but because that's the way it was. But that didn't mean that it wouldn't happen. And she always held up certain kinds of role models like Mary McLeod, Houston, she was very good at that. W.E.B. Du Bois, which of course then became ironic when I came here and the IBW was located in the house that the boys used to live in and it used to be right across here.

Lynn:

That was a big one for her was Du Bois, but all strong women characters. And she would make sure that I had in front of me magazines with an article about somebody. I mean, we don't, we got any obviously, it wasn't casual. In other words, the magazine comes and you read it or you don't, it was instructive. My mother would open it up and read this and read it with me. And that kind of thing. And she was raised in a family where nobody went to school, nobody went to college. I should say give family that struggle. But she had ambitions for me. The mistake she made was she stopped having them for herself and then poured everything into me. And I was the only child, which is a terrible burden to place on a child, which is why I have two.

Speaker 3:

Yeah.

Lynn:

I had to have another one I was not having an only child, but it was a shocker for me. Then I started realizing this is pervasive. This isn't just me running into odd people. This is pervasive, but I was not upset with my mother for not having prepared me for what was typical. My mother would not let me take a typing class in high school because she did not want me to be steered into a secretarial job. Now I really could have used some typing lessons. because I went to college and graduate school, but I understand why she did it, but it was a surprise. It wasn't a shock. It was just kind of, how did I not...? It was like somebody opened a door and there's a whole other thing world out here. And I didn't like it. And at first I dealt with it the way I deal with just about anything. It was funny to me. We'll just laugh at this because you can't possibly be serious. But I did run into... I had a couple of confrontations where it was difficult for some guys, especially Lenny Gushubi.

Lynn:

Lenny, came from a privileged family and Ezra although he came from a... What I found is that it doesn't matter how much or how little money you have, royalty is royalty all over the world. They all are arrogant and act as if entitled. And Ezra came from what would have been considered the Royal me part of his tribe, but it was a very small tribe in Uganda. And there were times when there was family and all they had to eat was bananas, but he had that Prince attitude of entitlement. Anyway, I met the Princess of Uganda. The one who actually was always in the news web and again way before your time. Can't even think of her name now, Elizabeth?

Lynn:

Oh, she was horrible. She was horrible to her countrymen. I mean to me, she was horrible because I'm not used to people being ordered around, but the tone was exactly like my husband's. The only difference was she had money and he didn't. But that separateness, we are this and the rest of the world is this was to me, laughable. You can't possibly be serious. It's sort of like how people say, "Wow, this is 2019. You can't possibly still be thinking that way." Oh well, yeah. It's not a matter of what year it is. It's a matter of how far that person has gone in terms of evaluating with them.

Lynn:

So yeah, it made it a little different, difficult. It also made it difficult for me to really have too many women friends, who weren't raised in the same way. I mean, I've had women actually telling me I need to tone it down. And I don't think of myself as somebody who is rabble-rouser running down the street, but it just depends on where you came from, what your background was like and what people expected. And my mother expected me to take over the world or to take on the world, it's what she expected. I just went about things in a much different way than she would.

Speaker 3:

Let's just, okay, so you moved to Atlanta and went...? Give me your...

Lynn:

Within a year.

Speaker 3:

...Tell me your road to Idaho.

Lynn:

I came to Atlanta in June of '73 and just at the beginning of the Watergate stuff. And the following September '74 was when I started working at IBW. I had been working free, doing freelance work, for Clark Colleges Mass Communications Department, but the work was not steady. And at that time, [Jillian Royce 00:01:34:15] was at IBW as their editor, but she was leaving and she was going to go do some work with Charles Hobson a head of Mass Communications at Clark. But she was actually going to have a full-time job. So I went to take her place and Askia, my son, started the Learning House at that time. Now what happened was I met [Al Jose 00:01:34:09] and IBW. And a scale was at another preschool, which was near where I lived.

Lynn:

I wasn't really happy with it. He was coping because that's who he was, but I just felt he needed a different kind of environment. And she said, "Of course. He needs to go to the Learning House. Sounds good to me. So as it turns out, I wound up moving in to town closer, and he went to the Learning House, which was what a mile and a half from IBW, and then wound up going to school with a lot of what we call IBW kids. But a lot of kids whose folks were in some way assisted with the Institute and then he blossomed. It was perfect. It was the perfect place for him.

Speaker 3:

How so?

Lynn:

They could deal with his gifts without making him feel superior. I was concerned about my little boy, because he was his father's child. And Askia was reading. When I left him, I remember saying to [Amore Uahoos 00:31:37] who was at that point the director when I registered him. "Oh, and by the way, he can read." I'm sure she must years... Two years later, she said, "Do you know how many parents tell me that." They didn't realize he really could read. And he was three that was in October. I come showing up to the school.

PART 3 OF 6 ENDS [01:36:04]

Lynn:

Was in October. I come showing up to the school January or February. And I was met at the door by Vincent Harding's then wife, who was teaching at that school. Saying, "He can read!" I said, "I know. I told you he can read." They overheard him reading to some other child and they assumed he had memorized the book. So, somebody grabbed an encyclopedia and opened it up and said, "Yeah, well, read that." He read that. He really could read. But they still treated him like a little boy. I mean, he was a little child. They didn't make him a big fuss. They didn't make other kids feel bad. And they didn't look enough, he didn't get a swell head. That's what I was doing concerned about. And that's why I said it was the perfect place for him.

Lynn:

They did a lot of cooking and that job had a lot of eating. And he would come home, talk about, "Let's see, what recipes are we going to have today?" And that would panic my mother because to her a boy who wants to cook, oh my... But he could read the recipe. And so, he could put the ingredients together

and he's fine. He's learning why you read so you can do stuff, but it was a perfect place for him. Which made it difficult to find a place for him afterward. Because my chief concern was, what place is going to be as nurturing as the Learning House?

Lynn:

I wound up in the school called the Children's School, but it was predominantly white. The reason why I put him in that school was because it was a school for kids who were different. They had kids who were as smart or smarter than he was. And they had kids who had learning disabilities. There was a child in a wheelchair, they had children from other countries. And I thought, I wanted him to stay with his age group. If I put him in public school, they were going to skip him and I did not want him skipped. He was so comfortable with adults, but not necessarily with his peers. And he needed to spend more time with kids his own age doing kids stuff. Well, he was a little bit more like his mother, he liked to read, the boy would read. I used to say, "Punish Oskia, I'd send him outside. Punish Karrum, I'd make him come in; my youngest one. But the Learning House was perfect for him.

Lynn:

And nobody screwed up his name, which was an issue. I mean, he felt for him this was family. This was the family he didn't have because we were living where there was no family. Yeah. It was perfect for him. But the issue for me particularly with couple of the men at IBW was that they didn't [inaudible 01:39:31] childless. Didn't understand that having a child requires something else of you other than slapping a hamburger in front of him and saying, "Congratulations, you're having dinner." It just requires more of who you are. And yes, I will... As one person said as I was rushing out of there at five o'clock, "Lin, the revolution doesn't end in five." And I said, "I'm aware of that. It just simply changes address."

Lynn:

He never said anything like that to me again. But I had another job and my job was over there at the Learning House. I couldn't... And linking it back to this issue with Azure and not understanding that if you're going to be a socialist, that's going to change the social relations between people. How can you be talking about recreating or creating a new kind of society and not understand that it's a whole lot better if you start with these attitudes when it's a child instead of waiting until a person gets to be an adult? This is how the recycling movement caught on. It's because teachers started targeting the message to children in the schools. We incorporated in the curriculum from first grade. So, it was a natural part of who they were by the time they were in high school.

Lynn:

That's where you start. So I couldn't understand why he couldn't understand how important this was. Again, as I said, he didn't have any children, maybe a good thing he's never had, but it's true. But what I mean is I don't understand how you can separate pieces out of what you're trying to make. It's all going to be affected. You move one part, the whole thing moves. And you adapt and do what you need to do. So, I was trying to think I was the only one... No, Al Josie had young children. Al Josie and I both had young children. Her daughter was the same age Oskia. And Haji is two years older, three years older. She understood. And then Pat had a baby while we were there, she then got it. She understood. But these people who don't have children didn't. That was mine. It was... Haven't quite thought far enough ahead in your thinking here.

Speaker 3:

So you started working in '74 as an editor?

Lynn:

No. Oh, yes. I think how I was brought on to do editing then. I did other things then, yes.

Speaker 3:

Tell me. Tell me.

Lynn:

Well, like everybody else, we just did whatever needed to be done. I was brought in as an editor, but I was working mostly on the newsletter. Well, it wasn't letter, it was like an eight page thing. And someone else was brought in later on to work on the books. I did do some layout because we had a kid come in to do layout and he just couldn't seem to function. And the thing had to get to The Printer. And so I did it. And I figured, God, if I can do it anybody can do it. Because I don't think of myself as being very spatially-inclined.

Lynn:

But I ran the liaison with The Printer, who was an outside company. But yeah, we did just about anything. I mean, we did whatever needed to be done. I got slid off to doing curriculum development. And I did that for a year. We were trying to turn Vincent's book, *The Other American Revolution*, into a curriculum for high school students. And that's what I worked out. Nothing ever came of it. And I think I still have it or have the draft of the stuff. But yeah, I did editing, did curriculum development. Those were the two things. I was there. October '74 to February '78, yeah. Because Rami was born in '77. And when we left and went to Saint Croix for six months, I think, six months from March through August, five months. I felt like I was having a nervous breakdown and I wasn't having it in Atlanta. I got to Saint Croix, took one look at that beach and said, "Why would I bother with a nervous breakdown?"

Lynn:

I had a friend who was putting finishing touches on the book and she was renting a cottage and the cottage behind her opened up for rental. It was smaller than hers and it was perfect for my budget. So, I had some money saved up for a rainy day and it was storming outside. Really what it was, was I was miserable because I had given my baby up way too early. And couldn't bear to be... I just felt like I wasn't connecting with him.

Lynn:

Rami was born in February of '77 and I was allowed to work at home for the first three months. And then I came into the office twice a week, I think, and stayed home and worked three days a week. And then I finally had to come and work in the office full-time and that's what was difficult. At first, he stayed in the downstairs office, in Ruth Arman's office who did the books. And then finally, when he kept climbing into her file cabinets [inaudible 00:01:46:48]. That's why I had to give him. And I didn't like it. And it wasn't for long. I gave him to his full-time babysitter in December. And I took him back in March.

Lynn:

I had gone up to her door to get him and he was walking. And I had said to the babysitter earlier, I said, "I don't understand, I expected him to be walking by now." Because he was physical child. And she said,

"He's walking." I said, well... As it turns out, he just wanted me to hold him and carry him. So she said, "You come to the door, don't say anything. When you pick him up and you will see." So I came to the door and she called him and he got up and walked and I said, "Oh, Karrum!" He took a look at me and sat down and then he giggled. And then you never crawled, never did that again. He got up and walked after that. And I just felt like... But that's when the eczema started. She was giving him counseling. I was still breastfeeding him and he was ill. He was as allergic as I was. And so I just said three months, forget it. I'll take him back. And he was down to one nursing, when we got on that plane at the beginning of March. And by the time I got off that plane, that boy has gone back up to full time.

Lynn:

But while we were in Saint Croix, no rash. That salt water was exactly what he needed. He wasn't getting any preservatives and he wasn't getting cow's milk. He was fine until we came back and then back in the hole. But it gave me the time I needed to connect with a new child. I just tend to feel I didn't know who this child was. And he didn't know me. But he was in... They called him an IBW baby. Well, also he was more of an IBW baby than they realized, because at the time they didn't know, his father was an IBW employee.

Speaker 3:

I was going to ask about that.

Lynn:

Yeah. I wanted another baby, I didn't want another husband. I had done that. I couldn't wrap my... But I was in my thirties and it was kind of like, if I'm going to have another baby, I better be doing this now. They're six years apart, the boys, I'm sorry that they're six years apart. I wish they were closer in age, but this is what I got. Yeah, it was an accident. They had an open marriage and I walked right into it and got pregnant immediately. Now, all those years I tried to get pregnant, I couldn't get pregnant. God put on me, this was bizarre. Second time I slept with this man, I had a baby. And so I just... And it was messy. It got messy before it un-got messy, but nobody had intended.

Lynn:

And this is what [inaudible 00:01:50:20]. So the identity of Papa remained a secret until Rami's first birthday. And then it was like, who cares? I don't care. Folk are just going to have to deal with it. The thing that's nice is all of his children are brothers and sisters. I mean, they really are. And, I don't like them. But [inaudible 00:14:50]. They've had difficult times with their father. And they've had difficult times as kids, all of them. But they know they're brothers and sisters, they interact that way and that's good. That was good. Because I still always felt bad for Oskia because he wasn't being raised around a lot of them. But Karrum had it. Yeah, that was kind of bad. That was intense.

Lynn:

And I kept saying, "I just had a baby, I didn't kill anybody here." But again, I came from a family that did not jump out of windows because somebody got pregnant. They might not have been happy with you, but the child was part of the family. The child was the child, the child was innocent. Just because you stupid, it doesn't have to spill over the child. It was a different attitude here. And that was a difficult thing for me to accept. I couldn't understand why people were getting so bent out of shape. So yeah, what can I say?

Speaker 3:

Did that influence... Was that also part of why you felt you needed to get away?

Lynn:

Mm-hmm (affirmative) That's why I went to Saint Croix. I had to get away. And when I came back, I did not come back [inaudible 01:52:44]. What did I do? Oh, no. I'm trying to think what I did. Oh yes. Oh, that's when I became a paralegal. Oh, that was painful. That whole work experience was painful for me. Part of it is asking intrusive questions, but it was painful because it was run by some very privileged white men. And one of them really thought he could do anything to anybody for any reason other than he was entitled. And remember, I had already lived with one entitled man. I knew entitlement where they came down the pike and everybody was scared of him and I wasn't. And part of this because I just knew what that was. All you have to do is challenge them, which I wound up actually, eventually doing in a screaming fit. He was screaming in the middle of the office and I just launched too.

Lynn:

And it's just over something really stupid, but we pretty much dissolved the office at that time. All the paralegals left. It was bizarre. And then after that I worked freelance for a while and then wound up taking a teaching assistants' job at the school where my son went.

Speaker 3:

The children's school?

Lynn:

Yeah. And the kindergarten, first grade class, they hired one certified teacher for each classroom. And one teacher, they hired for a particular skill and they hired me for my ability to teach kids to read. And I guess they figured if I could teach Oskia... Oskia was just, he was phenomenal. He really was. I mean, in terms of reading. But they knew I had years of tutoring experience. That was extremely productive. I didn't make any kind of money, but I loved being there except I hated the parents. I did. Loved the kids, loved teaching, hated the parents. First their children are not supposed to come to school with headaches because their parents have put them under so much pressure.

Lynn:

I had one child in the classroom the second year I taught. Didn't [inaudible 01:55:59] this little girl, which is a good reason to have two teachers in a classroom because you're not going to like everybody. Did not like her, didn't even want to work with her. Then I met both her parents and I thought, Oh, this is what's wrong with this child. And then it made it easier for me to find some way in which I could work with her and then eventually find something to like, because everybody's got something about them. In fact, it's always a red flag when a teacher has nothing good to say about a child, that teachers shouldn't be in the classroom. And from there we went to New Orleans. That's a whole other thing.

Speaker 3:

Okay. I have some questions about that, but I want to get the timeline. So, around '78 was when you went to Saint Croix,

Lynn:

'78, March of '78. Came back in the end of August of '78 and did both freelance work and then I... No, I worked at the law office first, then stopped and did freelance work because I needed to spend a little more time with the children. And then I started teaching at the children's school in '82. '82 because I left in '85 and I taught three years. Yeah.

Speaker 3:

[inaudible 01:57:33].

Lynn:

I think I was probably closer to Al Josie, maybe, than any of the other women, just because we had children of the same age. And it's just the thing you understand. It's like a language, it's a different language. And she helped me acclimate myself to being there. There weren't that many... Fay Bellamy popped in and out until she started working there full-time, she didn't have children. But there was a thing about Fay, I think it's because... She's dead. So that's why you're not interviewing. Fay would have been a wonderful person to interview. But Fay also knew my cousin, the one who got me here to Atlanta in the first place. So that was a whole different reason why she and I became friends. And then Louise Jackson was a student I think. And then she came to work at IBW, but Louise lived on the same street. And she was younger. That's the thing, I was older than the other women, except for Al Josie. I think that's what made the difference.

Lynn:

Malaika was a kid. Malaika was 17 when I met her, I was 30. Wasn't it? That sounds about right. 31, I think, when I met her. And so the dynamic was different, except to me, she was like my little sister, I just loved Malaika and we've remained close up till now. But in terms of people actually getting it, there weren't that many because nobody was around my age, who also had children. They weren't, there wasn't anybody. Pat was older than me and she didn't have any children at the time.

Lynn:

But Pat was also a very different kind of personality. Pat was a hard-driving person. And sometimes she confused people having fun with people fooling around. But Pat relapsed a lot more once Patrick was born. Because it just expands how you view the universe. Because it's not about you anymore, that's what it is when you have children, all of a sudden you are not the center of your universe. Not until you can get them out of the house. And some of them refuse to leave. But I think mostly people who were there were male. Well, nobody was my age actually. I mean, except for Howard, but Howard Dodson ran it. He was the administrator. So, Ross was a kid. She was a college student.

Lynn:

No, I think it had more to do with the fact that I was older than just about all the other women except for Al Josie. So Al Josie and I, we just had more in common. Betty was gone. I knew Betty more, Betty Chamie, more through the Learning House because she had a son who was at the Learning House at the same time I had Oskia there. But I didn't know Betty from IBW. But these were also, some of them, my social friends. Al Josie and I became social friends. Louise became a social friend primarily because she just lived up the street.

Lynn:

But I did have some other friends, most of whom were connected to Clark College. But again, they were younger than me and nobody had kids. I mean, Oskia was a novelty because he was the only little child running around the campus all the time. I used to do a radio program at Clark in international news. And he'd come with me, sit in the studio with me and all of those young people who were learning how to broadcast, whatever, some of whom have become very well-known. And they were all kids, then. I wasn't really conscious of being that much older because, I don't know, I had felt so shut away after being married to Mr. Uganda, that it was kind of like coming back into the world. And I sort of had to feel my way through.

Lynn:

So I really wasn't conscious of being older. I'm not so sure in terms of maturation, I was a whole lot older than some of the those college students. There was a dichotomy in terms of almost a split personality, in terms of my day life and my evening. My close let's hang out friends were all media people. The radio, writing, TV, producer, one friend was a producer and they were media/arts people. And I always think, well, those are the people from my English major and these are the people from my Political Science major.

Lynn:

It's almost as if... But my English major people didn't feel that they had that much connection with the political side. And I think they've thought of it as more my job, as opposed to my... I want to say my concern, it's not like they weren't concerned, but it wasn't a part of their lives, the way it was a part of my life. And it was always, for me, trying to get the two sides together. Neither seemed to be interested in the other. And I've retained friends from that side too, for all of these years. But it's almost been... A lot of them were cultural nationalists.

Lynn:

Those people could make that bridge between the politics part and the art part. But for those people who were just interested in art, writing, poetry, being a producer, that was... And because I was a single parent, I didn't do a whole lot of hanging out. Because what do we do with the [inaudible 00:29:45]? [inaudible 02:05:46] spend some time by the way, in bars, well, nightclubs. He'll be quiet now. Just sit right here. We're not supposed to bring him. So I didn't do that. We did a lot of going to people's houses. But a lot of the go into the houses... Yeah, even that mixture wasn't there, unless it was at my house. But even then, I didn't host a lot of stuff. That costs money, we didn't have any money.

Speaker 3:

What about your interactions with the men?

Lynn:

What? Men?

Speaker 3:

Well, I mean...

Lynn:

Oh, with IBW, interactions with men. That was always problematic. I mean, not problematic in that kind of way. Most of the men were young men, were college students. So of course they were too young for my interest. I had close friends. Michael Fisher was there. Was Mike still a grad student? I'm not sure. I think he was older than that. Mike and I were close and Don and I were close, Don Edwards, because Don is Karrum's fault. Logan Kurtz was a friend. Logan did artwork and eventually, finally found somebody, found Logan to come and do the layout of the publication that I had volunteered to do. We'd lost our guy, but Logan had been in Vietnam war and he was a little older than everybody else. He was like three years younger than me. And so we had more in common, not only that...

PART 4 OF 6 ENDS [02:08:04]

Lynn:

... more in common. Not only that, over the years, we stayed friends. He got married. He had kids, and we want them living in the same general neighborhood. So, again, we had something in common, and the thing is that he was also doing freelance work, and he would... We often had mutual customers. I may have had someone who wrote something who needed artwork. He may have had someone who needed artwork, but who also needed something edited to go along with it. So we did a lot of that, and so we remained friends, but we were just friends.

Lynn:

I had always had men friends, just friends. I don't know why. I think it goes all the way back to childhood. I was a little tomboy when they let me out of the house. So I didn't... Now, then there was the other group of men, the ones who were in charge. That's where the problem... not the problem, but that's where... I didn't have any relationship with them, really, except either... With Howard, I had the closest relationship because he was the administrator onsite and he would be handing out assignments, and I'd have to do some work with him. Oh, the other thing that I did for IBW was I did... What do you hand... What do you write to get money?

Speaker 3:

Oh, grants. Yeah, it could be grant writing-

Lynn:

There you go, okay. See, I try not to think about it, but that's what I did, a lot of grant writing, and then I worked closely with Howard. Howard was very easy to work with, but then Howard also had a family. Bobby Hill came into town, sporadically. Rarely saw him. Bobby was a sweet guy. He was always... He's spoke... He was an easy person to talk with, but he was rarely there. Vincent would come in. I didn't have any real relationship with Vincent.

Lynn:

Bill Strickland, however... This is the one I said, about... what he said about the revolution ending... That was Bill. That was Bill. He just didn't get it, and it was... The thing that cracked me up was that Bill getting ready to go back up to Massachusetts, and he was going to be landing at Bradley International, which is in Connecticut, right at the Massachusetts border. He was going to be at that airport, which is right near my father's house. So I said, "I'll ski with him," so my father could pick him up from the airport.

Lynn:

Mike took us to Hartsfield to watch... This was a time when you could walk out on the field and walk onto the plane. Bill was going to the wrong plane. And you could see my little four year old boy saying, "No, it's not plane over there," and Mike fell out laughing in the airport and said, "And a little child shall lead them." But see, Bill wasn't the kind of person that would take it to... But, luckily, he couldn't see that other people could observe that he was... But it was good. It was funny. But yeah, he... It wasn't so much what someone said or didn't say. It had more to do with a kind of a dismissive attitude, as if you had nothing to contribute, beyond maybe something menial, or whatever. I did not take it personally. I just... That's just him. It did not interrupt my feeling of self-worth. That's what I mean. I just couldn't understand how anybody that smart can be so stupid. Maybe that shouldn't make it.

Lynn:

But there tended to be a sense of a hierarchy. You can understand the hierarchy, if there is a certain positions that are firm and these are the people in them, but that the position is what should dictate what happens, not who the person is. Do you know what I mean? It was as if only they could make these decisions. It was only they that had anything important to say. That's it. But they also got pushed back, because Pat was a vocal person, and so was [Faye 00:02:13:46]. You don't intimidate Faye. Faye walked on the front lines of Civil Rights, so you didn't intimidate Faye. And she was tall.

Lynn:

And me, it wasn't... I didn't feel I had anything invested enough to make this an issue, not with them. Might've been different if they were... if he had been a different personality, or if it was... There was just that feeling of hierarchy. The men did the thinking, and the women did the work. And, usually, we did all of the work. We were closer to the males who did physical work, Don, who ran the press, and Logan, who did the layout. They did physical work, and they also had children. But the other gods who sat on high... Yeah.

Lynn:

I don't know that Bill quite ever understood, and I know Pat probably tried her damndest to make him understand, because they had known each other for years. I worked on a different floor, which also helped. Logan and I were in the same room. We had the same office. Big, one huge room... Trying to think about... And then, eventually, they gave me my own office, but it was in the little room right next to the big room, but it was upstairs. It was kind of away from the other stuff.

Lynn:

Actually, we were a little concerned about whether Howard was being appreciated by the absentee landlords, because he was there and he had to oversee everything, which may be the reason why it made him a lot easier to work with. And then Bill finally came, and we call him... We all meet. We meet, about every two months, and have dinner together. He's the only male. We considered him our honorary woman.

Speaker 3:

And this is Bill Lee?

Lynn:

No, Bill [Dorsey 00:08:54].

Speaker 3:

Oh.

Lynn:

Bill Dorsey came in as the manuscript editor.

Speaker 3:

Oh, so he was the one who did the books, the-

Lynn:

Yeah.

Speaker 3:

Yes, yes, yes. People mentioned... [crosstalk 02:17:07] that job has come up in a couple of our...

Lynn:

Yeah. Yeah, he did the books. I did the news... sort of like a newsletter, but it was a little bit bigger than that, and then I did the grant writing, was my favorite thing. As I said, I didn't have that much interaction. Quite possibly, if I had been younger and not have a child, so I would have been a little more free to do whatever I wanted, they would have been very different. Although, I am not... And I will admit it, I am not a particularly social person. I'm not. You have to drag me out of my house, half the time. But that wasn't it. That wasn't the case. I was older and I was a parent, and then I became a parent again. And then, I really didn't.

Lynn:

I wasn't all that aware of there being any kind of tension, in terms of vision. I was aware that IBW was seriously considered to the left of the King Center, and that some folks had come from the King Center and from that ideology. It was the learning habits... was even more of a dichotomy, because... What was the name of the school? I can't think of the name of the school. There was another preschool that was born out of the King Center, and then IBW actually spawned the Learning House. And that was different. The kids were different than... The other school was more integrationist based. I think, with IBW, at least with the folks I knew well, we weren't all that different, in terms of our outlook, no.

Lynn:

I was raised to think more progressively, anyway. So some of these... I wasn't meeting some of these ideas for the first time. This was part of my childhood, so it was easy for me to actually move to a point where I'm starting to wonder if this integration's such a good idea. I was raised to believe in integration, but by the time I got to be a functioning adult, I wasn't so sure that worked out too well. I was not... The one place that was a stumbling block for me was nonviolence.

Lynn:

Nonviolence was a problem for me, because, on the one hand, I have had family members laugh as I'm chasing around the house, trying to get a little bug into a jar so I could put it outside because I'm not going to kill a bug. On the other hand, I also remember when I was like when I was in New York and that policeman's billy club went up against my back, and my first instinct was to slug somebody. I'm not a nonviolent person, and I would have struggled. This was the reason why I wound up not going South, in my senior year in college. I couldn't... I knew I had to agree, to swear, to promise to be nonviolent, and I knew I couldn't do it, not in conscience. I couldn't do it. Now, that doesn't mean I was going to go out and try to find somebody to beat over the head, but... So that was not a difficult move away from that, for me, just because I knew that, constitutionally, I wasn't even... It was a struggle.

Lynn:

Oh, and the other problem for me was I was not raised in a religion, so there was no turning the other cheek business going on here. I knew that as an idea, not as a practice. I wasn't raised in a religion. My mother did not raise me in a religion because she was still in love with my father. So she didn't go to church. She wasn't a communist, but she was what they called a fellow traveler. She espoused some of the ideas. She certainly understood what was going on, but she didn't raise me in a church, so it's just not part of who I am. And the nonviolent revolution was born out of the black church, so that was always a kind of a thing. I wasn't quite sure. And you don't want to attack people's religious beliefs, kind of steer clear of certain kinds of discussions. Faye and I saw the world in the same way. That is Faye.

Speaker 3:

Any more about that, seeing the world in the same way?

Lynn:

Part of it, I think, is because Faye and I were almost the same age. She might've been a year or two older. She was a couple years older. I worked, obviously, as friends of [inaudible 02:23:35], so I was on campus at a time when she was on the front lines, but we knew some of the same kinds of stuff. And that always helped, and for me, that was great, because then I could talk to somebody about something that was important to me from a long time ago, who I didn't even know them. But we also had the same kind of... We didn't take a lot of things too seriously. It's kind of... Well, we had some hard liners. Faye and I were not hard liners. We were a lot more likely to let things lie, as long as it wasn't something critical. People's attitudes of what they are, people when... You don't have to jump down somebody's throat every time they say something slightly inappropriate.

Lynn:

I think that's probably the reason why she and I hit it off so well. And I could see that Molly [Ika 00:16:54]... The thing about Molly Ika that I liked so much was that she was so willing to take on something new and to look at things in a new way. And she's so smart and so talented. She was just a wonderful kid. I keep thinking of her as a kid. She wasn't a kid. She was 17. But to me, she was... I think, with IBW, I felt the real tensions had more to do with personality than ideology. If there was anyone whose ideology was so far different from anyone else's, they never let on, at least not within my earshot. I think, if there was a big difference, people who would have been the most aware would have been Pat, and maybe even Al Josie.

Speaker 3:

What do you miss about Faye?

Lynn:

Her easy laughter. Faye and I would start giggling and couldn't stop. We started giggling during a church service, somebody's funeral. I can't believe we... It's terrible. And we weren't little. This was just, about, what, seven years ago, six years ago. We saw human behavior through the same prism, and that was good. As I said, we didn't take certain things too seriously. It was just... That's just the way they are. That's just somebody's style. We weren't the type of people to insist that everybody conform to a certain [inaudible 00:19:01], because I was raised by a very rigid mother, so I was always elbowing my way out of stuff. [inaudible 02:27:10] It's just who I am.

Speaker 3:

Do you feel like IBW achieved its mission?

Lynn:

Yeah, in a way, in one way in particular. IBW was extremely... What's the word I want? Not beneficial... influential in jump-starting the Black... not history, but...

Speaker 3:

Black studies?

Lynn:

Black studies movement, and I think, if nothing else had come out of IBW, that was like the prelude, because it's still ongoing and expanding. I just finished editing a compilation of essays on Black studies departments from all over the country. Yeah, in that, I think it really did. I think IBW had ambitions it couldn't pay for, but then, so what? Don't we all?

Speaker 3:

In your opinion, when did IBW close, and why?

Lynn:

I don't know when it closed officially. I wasn't even aware of exactly when it closed. I'm not even sure I was... Yes, I was. I was still in Atlanta. I hadn't gotten to New Orleans, yet, but I didn't have that much contact with IBW people, aside from... Well, I was going to say, "Aside from Al Josie," but Al Josie had remarried and gone off to Northern Georgia, also.

Lynn:

Actually, it just felt to me like it petered out. I just think it just was overwhelmed by its own... about as much as it wanted to do and couldn't get done. I don't think it petered out because of lack of interest. I think it just couldn't sustain itself. But I left in March of '78, and although I did go by the office when I came back, again, I was also trying to keep certain part of that life at an arm's length because of [Karam 00:22:19], because of my youngest son. So I wasn't over at the IBW site, although I did see some IBW people. I always went to whatever parties there were, because they were usually family events, so then there was no concern about what I'm going to do with the kids. And then I left for New Orleans in '85.

Speaker 3:

I want to talk about you going to New Orleans, but I just have one last question. So you said you were keeping them kind of at length because of Karam. Was it just a sort of fall out around his parenting?

Lynn:

Yeah.

Speaker 3:

Yeah, so tell me about going to New Orleans, and eventually coming back to Atlanta.

Lynn:

When a person I met, when I... The first year, when I first came to Atlanta and was working with mass communications, was a woman named [Quovatis 02:31:28]. At that time, she was Quovatis [Checks 00:02:31:28]. Quo was hired... She's a New Orleanian. She was hired to get the radio station up and running. She was the programmer. And the station wasn't even on the air, yet, when she came. And we wound up living in the same apartment complex. She was younger. Like everybody else, she was just much younger than me. If I was 30 when I came here, she must've been 21. 22, 21, something like that, but we remained friends. But she was the art side and the music side, and she truly, truly had no interest... Aside from the general concept, she had no interest in politics. She felt that wasn't who I was, because she knew I wrote, which she did, but she couldn't mesh the two.

Lynn:

But she wound up having a child, and then she decided to go back to New Orleans. That was a better place for her to raise him. And he was just a few months older than my youngest one. So we would... Because she went back, we would drive back and forth and go visit. And, eventually, we just moved. We moved. We were there for four years. I was there for four years. My oldest son graduated from high school there. He wound up marrying a girl who went to the same high school, and the youngest one... We went from there up to Maryland, but the youngest one, eventually, went back to New Orleans to live, and that's where he is now. So New Orleans was a big part of their lives. They just... It's just... Yeah. And when my oldest boy was in college, he would go back to New Orleans. Every vacation, every holiday, he would be running back to New Orleans.

Lynn:

We left... September. In September of '85 is when we moved to New Orleans. And then we moved, my youngest one and I... Well, we all went up to DC, up to Maryland, in '89, because my oldest child was going to Georgetown and he was acting like... This was the school he saw when he was in eighth grade, and nothing else existed after that. That was the school he was going to. And I had told him, when he was 12, "Go to the school you want to, but you remember mommy's broke, and you're going to have to attract money." And he did. And then after being given a full ride, he was acting like he didn't want to leave home. Now, he... The child had been traveling all over the place, so it's not like he was not used to... It occurred to me later on, he didn't want to leave me home alone with his brother.

Speaker 3:

Why not?

Lynn:

Because that child was too wild. He was concerned about me and my mental health. But by that time, Karam's father was in DC, and I just thought, "Well, I don't have to stay here. If I have to move so that this child, so that my oldest one would go on to the school he wants to go to, I'll do it." Karam could go see his father. I never had to see him again in life, if I didn't want to. And [Askiel 02:35:40] was going to be on campus, and I'll only see him when he comes to see us. I dropped that boy off at Georgetown, when we first got there, and I did not set foot on that campus until he graduated. The day of his graduation was the second time I was on that campus. He was fine, once he knew he could get to me if he had to. So he's very protective. He just is.

Lynn:

I was there five years. I moved back here in '95. I moved up there for a very specific reason. I didn't just move up there for the kids. I moved up there because I had a cousin in Baltimore, who was very ill. She... diabetes. Diabetes runs through our family like water, and she had already had one amputation. And then, all of a sudden, I couldn't find her. They wanted her to go on dialysis. She wouldn't do regular dialysis. She would say she'd do portable dialysis, and so they agreed because she was a nurse's aid and knew how to take care of... or she was an LP, knew how to take care of whatever had to be taken care of. And then we couldn't find her. So I rushed up there in August, as soon as the kids had finished school, and I had finished what I was doing, because I was working on a magazine and I had to get it to bed before I could leave town.

Lynn:

I wound up finding her in the hospital with her other leg taken off, and so it was best that I be there. This is one of the children my grandmother raised, but that was really the impetus for me choosing to go there. It's just that I took a look at the Baltimore school system and said, "I'm not putting my son in here," so we lived in Silver Spring, which is right outside of DC, but it was an easy drive up to Baltimore. But then her husband died, and five weeks later, she died. So after that, there was no reason for me to be there. Askiel was fine in school, and [Rami 00:30:10]... Well, that boy wasn't going to be fine anywhere. I decided to stay long enough so he could graduate from the school, and then, whatever. As it turns out, I snatched him out of school at the very last moment and just sent him to Atlanta by himself because he [inaudible 02:38:34] so rebellious.

Lynn:

But that's why I came back, then, in '95. I was tired of dragging my crap all over the United States. I wanted someplace permanent I could just settle my stuff. And Atlanta was the only place I knew I could afford to buy a house that had a piece of land attached to it. Man, no sense in me buying a house that hasn't got any land. And so that's why I came back. I was already working for the company I work for now. It was... Then, the company was teachable tech, and we wrote curriculum materials to accompany media. And I had one major contract. I edited news... four-page news thing, that was geared to CNN News. And it was sent to high schools every morning, or in the middle of the night is when I uploaded it.

Lynn:

I started that... We got up there in August, and by the following August, I was doing that every night, even though I was working full-time during the day. But I was having more fun at night than I was during the day. I worked on the Japanese Reparations Project for the Justice Department during the day, which was an eye opener. It was very interesting. I knew...

PART 5 OF 6 ENDS [02:40:04]

Lynn:

Which, was an eye opener, it was very interesting, I knew about the internment, but I didn't really know about the internment, that was a wonderful experience, I learned a few Japanese words, that was really cool.

Speaker 3:

Interesting given that you were at once surveilled by the FBI and eventually you went to work for the justice department.

Lynn:

Fingerprinted, background check, the whole thing. I'll tell you this, given our relationship with the FBI, my son went to work for US Congressman. He started out volunteering before he graduated even, by the time he graduated, they offered him a part-time job in the mail, doing mail stuff or whatever. At any rate, he rose through the ranks. He is now a chief of staff for US Congressman, and as I said it tickles that given the relationship our family has had with the FBI and this child whose father was also [spared 00:01:17], in the years, in the seat of government, and I called Oak. The first time I asked him to give me a tour of the under parts of the place that tourists don't usually see are a nice, I ask him, where's that I go to? I don't know, Where's that door go? I don't know, why don't you know?, because it's on a need to know basis, and obviously I don't need to know.

Lynn:

I don't know how far he could go either, he's so tired of those people he doesn't know what to do. He's got on his wall a count down a map for when he's out of there, 21 more months and he's gone, he's retiring, he's going to retire before I do. 50 years old, and he'll be retiring at two thirds pay, I'd slap him, except that he's so generous with his mother, so I guess I shouldn't slap him.

Speaker 3:

That is a good thing.

Lynn:

Yeah, it is rather interesting, isn't it? That it comes around like that. Well, I have two that I gave birth to and then their was one who adopted me. [A salesman 00:02:43] in Northern Virginia, he has one daughter who has him wrapped around her little finger, she's a lot of fun, but spoiled as hell.

Speaker 3:

How old is she?

Lynn:

11, and my boy, my youngest son, is indoors, he's an artist. All of that craziness finally coaxed to something, but he really is very good, he has an impossible personality, he is, I don't blame his wife for not wanting to live with him anymore, of course, she was lazy and I don't blame him for not wanting to live with her, he was the wrong person to marry if you're going to be lazy.

Speaker 3:

What kind of art?

Lynn:

Painting, and the thing was, I could not get this child to paint a thing when he was in high school. He drew, but he wouldn't paint. The first time he painted, he fell in love with it and he's been painting ever since, he's doing wonderful work, can't afford it, but wonderful work. He started off with clothes painting, you see how your shoes are? That is a silk screen thing, but he would have done that by hand, he's done it to his own sneakers, and just really marvelous work. He came here last year just to enter a local contest. He came in second, he took his little \$500 prize and turned around. I mean, he was in town 24 hours, but he's not an easy person, he just is cranky.

Speaker 3:

Is it just that he sounds like, I don't know her, I'm only basing this on your interview, but he sounds like your mother.

Lynn:

Oh, he is so much more like my mother than he will ever know, yes he is, and my mother of course was an artisan and she hated it. I have heard this woman talk to people about her grandson, meaning one child. She does not act like I have more than one child, that used to hurt my feelings so much, but then again because he was so impossible. She didn't do that until he got to be a teenager, but then when you got to be a teenager is at the point when you wanted to [solve 02:45:26] them anyway. I remember one saying to her, that's a childhood you wished on me, and she's, oh he's so much worse than you ever were. He is a lot like my mother, I don't know who asked this, I think he looks more like his father.

Lynn:

The other child was a friend of my youngest, she was a Spelman student, she had been in a really bad car accident and moved back to DC to recuperate, because that's where her parents live, then came back to Atlanta so that she could get her life back together, go back to school, that sort of thing, and she moved back in with her ex fiance and he wouldn't give her a key. She was working as a waitress at a restaurant, which means she was coming home 10, 11 o'clock at night, and he wouldn't give her a key, and if he wasn't there, she had to sit out on the step and wait for him, I was horrified.

Lynn:

I didn't know the girl, but she came over to visit Ronnie one day, cause she lived in our neighborhood generally, and I had a bedroom that was about to be freed up, and I said, you move in here with me. I figured she'd be there a year, give her chance, girl was there for eight years, and one baby later, she called me mama and he called nana, he's my grand baby, I don't care if he isn't a blood relation. She's the one who does all the stuff, she's the one that comes and takes care of, she's the one that checks my refrigerator, make sure I'm eating right, and that I don't have food too old. How many mothers do I need, and will actually have the nerve to call up one of my sons if she feels that things aren't quite right, so she's my daughter, even though she has a mother and a father and a family.

Speaker 3:

What's her name?

Lynn:

[Collete 02:47:45] , her father is Ethiopian, give her do it, her name means give her do it and the little boy who I have to go pick up from school this afternoon, his name is Seyoum, I wonder if I got a picture, let me see if I have a picture, but it has been a surprise, I got a daughter. I didn't plan to have one but now I have. In fact, I [refilled 00:08:13] my house, to take money out to send her back to school, because she only has three more courses, and I know what it's like to have only three more courses to do, and so she's going back stomping in full. That's why I wasn't here yesterday, I was signing the papers, I've waited, I've been waiting for years, for one of her family members to step up, she got plenty of family on both sides and nobody was doing a thing. They did it for the younger daughter, they didn't do it for her, you don't treat children differently, even if you don't like them, say you don't treat them.

Lynn:

I'm sending her back to school, and I told her don't tell anybody until it's done. I don't know if anything has really changed. I mean, things move, but they move so incrementally, you can't really even feel that, and the way things are it's like any random thing can throw us right back into 1950s. You know what I mean? It wouldn't take that much. I was particularly struck I remember, I'm sure you remember when Barack Obama went to Congress to give his first state of the union address and have some congressmen yell out liar, I remember thinking this, nobody's saying anything to him. This wouldn't have happened to any other president you know, people still feel entitled, so no, I don't think overall things have moved that much, but I think things have moved in the way in which things only move, and that is through individuals, not through institutions, and that's what I think has been the probably been concentrating on changing the institutions. You have to change the individual, and it's best to start when they're [look 00:10:35] .

Lynn:

I was what, nine, I was with my mother coming out of Hawaii, and to believe the police car came by, and the policemen made a sexualized comment to my mother, and I don't remember the comment. I don't even know if I knew what that was, all I remember was my mother's hand pushing me behind her, all I remember is feeling that somehow, there was something wrong.

Lynn:

I was driving near home, maybe 2015, I had my Obama bumper sticker on and the guy next to me is yelling out of his window. I didn't know what he was saying, I have a hearing loss, that's part of my childhood stuff, and I rolled down the window to hear what he said, cause his mouth looked like he was saying something about my mama, he was saying Obama's socks. I laughed so hard, which was not the reaction he was going for, but it was the same kind of entitlement to say anything to you. Why in the world would you even bother saying something like that because someone got a bumper. What was that supposed to do to me? You know, jump out the car and reap the bumper sticker off?

Lynn:

I don't think people have moved all that far, I was thinking it would take nothing for a conflagration. I think what's happening has happened in the past two and a half years is purposeful. I think there are forces that want to push a war, a race war while we still feel that black people are vulnerable, and I know some black people who feel that we missed our window for being able to resist that kind of.

Lynn:

I also believe because of the past few years, that consciousness has been raised enough among different kinds of people, that there is more likely now to see similarities between them instead of the difference, or what's different is superficial, as opposed to, that is kind of where I'm kind of banking my hopes here just because I am somebody's grandmother, cause we got little kids coming up, because they're asking questions now.

Lynn:

Zoe, my God-granddaughter is 11 and Seyoum will be 11 at the end of this month, you hear it both sides when she comes for her visit in June, she's taking her to the civil rights' center, taking her over to MLK museum, because she is a mixed child, she's a child of mixed parentage.

Lynn:

When you live in the Northern Virginia, DC area, there's so many different kinds of people, that you don't stand out as being different, I mean you look at her you don't know what nationality she is necessarily because of all the Asians in the area, and the Hispanics and the Hispanics marry Asians, but Seyoum is as a dark skinned child, and so I get concerned about him, where we carefully placing him to make sure that he's not running into any unnecessary obstacles, but she's a light-skinned child and she's a girl and it's going to be a little bit easier for her for a few more years, and then the camera's going to come down hard and I'm the only black female in her family, so I'm going to have to be the one that she's, I've got to be open to anything that is, all her other family is from Mississippi and Louisiana.

Lynn:

Some people are doing good work, how will the kid look on hill, excuse how I see things, because I get more inside information, and the thing that concerns me most is when you're looking at a leader, is this person dedicated to what they say they're going to do, regardless of the circumstances? Or is it only going to be tempered by how much money they're getting paid? Next step up in terms of job level, that sort of thing, you don't really have that many charismatic leaders, real leaders.

Lynn:

What I am happy about, no happy isn't the right word, what makes me feel hopeful is the number of women who have stepped forward, I love this, this is exciting to me, women across the board are just as excited native American women came forward. This is just really exciting, and because they're starting to see these connections as opposed to what we have in common as opposed to how we're different, and that to me is what's important, that's where true change occurs.

Lynn:

I have some concerns about whether America as a democracy is going to survive. I think we're going to have to take a look at how, when and where we really are to this idea that we are a nation of laws, because we're them breaking right and left. Now it's one thing to break them when you're running the street light, and it's another when it involves the lives of whole masses of people and not be held accountable because you're rich, or because you're white or because you're whatever, it wasn't that long ago when people would get outraged over things.

Lynn:

I have lived through the Nixon era, I lived through the Contra, I don't understand where the break came, but it seems like it came real quick, and I understand that there are people who still can't quite get over the fact that this country elected not only a black president, but a black president who there was no scandal, nobody got pregnant, there were no gaps, and he did good work, he brought in the health cares. We know this is in reaction to him, but are you so willing to tear down everything you've ever known, cause you another black president did not fail, that was it. The expectation was he was going to fail and fail miserably, and he didn't, he's going to be, he's going to go down in history as one of the best presidents we've ever had, and then there's Donald Trump, it's an embarrassment.

Lynn:

Went to Cuba, not this past October, what is this? What month am I in May?

Speaker 3:

This is May of 2019.

Lynn:

Yeah, that's when I was in Cuba, this past October, and the Cuban people would come up and say, oh, you American, American, we like Americans, we don't like Donald Trump, but we like America. It was nice, but I also was aware of this, I went to Morocco also, that the general population to have a better sense of the politics of their country than Americans do, they just do, I mean, you got somebody from Morocco who is basically illiterate, but they knew their politics of the country. It was funny to walk through a Souk in here, when they realized I was American and didn't speak any Moroccan and it sums up, that was really cool. I have a friend who lives there, so I had a place to stay.

Lynn:

It concerns me that, that's how easily going to let this slip away, and how quickly people forget the lessons of world war II. I do not understand this, with what he is, what Trump is doing is classic strong man takeover stuff, and we have enough examples from history to see this, how come nobody is seeing, and when I say nobody, I think really it's my focus on the Senate. I do not understand how these people can sit there like lumps and do nothing. For the first time in my life, I've actually been in contact with my elected officials to complain about their lack of activity. What do you think we pay you for?

Speaker 3:

That's a good question. What gives you hope?

Lynn:

Kids, a friend's friend who had a 12 year old daughter, two years ago said when Trump was elected, her daughter burst into tears and said, Oh mama, they're not going to give him the coins are they? She's 12 years old, but aware enough to know, that this could affect her life. This is what gives me hope, these aware kids, Seyoum my grandson, he is an inquisitive, and he will talk and he will ask questions, yeah, this is what gives me hope, because I have none in the older generation. I'm sorry, and I'm part of the older generation. We tired, we are just tired.

Lynn:

When Trump first took office and had the women's marches on different parts of the country, and I participated in one here and I thought to myself, great haven't I done this before, when do I get to not have to do this anymore? But I also took with me someone who had never done that, never, she and I are the same age, three months apart in age, I'm older, she's always called me old, she's never been to a demonstration, her daughter was appalled. Mom, you did what? Then she's like, Oh, I went with Lynn, then she was like, no wonder. This is my job.

Speaker 3:

Is this at the children's school, are you still there?

Lynn:

No, no, I tutor at the local elementary school right up the street. Do what you want, just as long as you know that you have to pay for everything you do, but do what you want, and don't let anybody tell you, you can't.

Lynn:

I accept that, as I think about Zoe and Seyoum there ain't no sense in saying that to them, cause they going to do what they want, that's who they are. The way they are now, it's too late to turn that back, that's who they are, but that's because they got it from the time they were little, allowed to do whatever, move them as long as they observe certain kinds of rules and how you treat people. Seyoum basic rule with people is the same one that I had, cause I had to come up with something because I wasn't raised in a religion. I felt I had to come up with something that was a guidance for me, and that is just the golden rule. You just treat people the way you want them to treat you, when I heard him say that the other day I was like, oh, sometimes I listen.

Speaker 3:

Well I am done, but is there anything we didn't cover that you want to add?

Lynn:

I don't think so, I didn't have that much, unfortunately to say about IBW, which is the reason why I said, I didn't think we were going to be talking this long, because in so many ways I was isolated from a lot of things.

Speaker 3:

I thought we talked quite a bit.

Lynn:

Quite a bit, but it's just been very interesting to see how things have evolved, and I'm really happy that a lot of the papers have been preserved and I'm finding the things that I'm going to donate.

Speaker 3:

Excellent.

Lynn:

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They are, I think I've got four of the little books that we produced, a couple of other books, I couldn't find those, but I think it's cause I packed them in the trunk. Yeah, so I'm just going to donate them.

PART 6 OF 6 ENDS [03:06:26]