



**Lesbian Elders Oral Herstory
of
Shatzi Weisberger**

An Interview
Conducted by
Kelly Roberts
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Kelly Roberts 00:03

Hi, I'm Kelly Roberts and I'm speaking with Shatzi Weisberger as part of the Lesbian Elders Oral Herstory Project through the Lesbian Herstory Archives. Today is Thursday, January 6 2022. I'm Zooming in from my friend's apartment in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Before we get started, could you also introduce yourself and let us know where you are today?

Shatzi Weisberger 00:26

Hi everybody. I'm Shatzi. Shatzi Weisberger. I live on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. That's where I am. In my apartment.

Kelly Roberts 00:40

Thank you so much for joining me for this conversation today Shatzi. Could you tell me about your early life? When and where were you born?

Shatzi Weisberger 00:50

I was born in Brooklyn. I've lived off and on over the years in Brooklyn, although not currently. And what—I suspect the most significant thing about my early childhood is that when I was five years old, my mother fell in love with her best friend. My father was so upset because of that, that his wife was a lesbian and so he kidnapped me and my baby sister and I grew up in foster homes for a few years.

Kelly Roberts 01:36

When were you able to reconnect with your mother?

Shatzi Weisberger 01:40

After a few years, my mother finally did get custody and my father was able to see us on Saturdays. He was able to come and take us out on Saturdays. Interestingly enough, when I was kidnapped by my father, I actually was angry with my mother. I felt abandoned by her. And although my father did that dastardly thing, he was kind of an easygoing guy in general and I had an easier relationship with him. I had a very conflicted relationship with my mother.

Kelly Roberts 02:24

Was she still living with her partner, her best friend?

Shatzi Weisberger 02:27

No, no. Actually, when she finally got custody, she moved in with her parents who were not very supportive at all so she was miserable there. And her being so miserable, I was also miserable thinking that I had caused a problem. But I actually was in school there in Brooklyn. I enjoyed being in school. That worked out well for me. That was a safer place for me.

Kelly Roberts 03:05

Did she ever have any partners after she fell in love with her best friend?

Shatzi Weisberger 03:09

Yes.

Kelly Roberts 03:09

Were you kind of in— did you know about her romantic life?

Shatzi Weisberger 03:14

[Note: Oh no] and I was very much very, very fond of her best friend. And after— they never lived together and her best friend never left her husband. She remained married, had a son, who actually became psychotic and had to be institutionalized. So that family was a troubled family as well. So after that, my mother started a relationship with a younger woman and we moved out of my grandparents house. We lived in an apartment. Now during that time, I was not aware of my mother being a lesbian actually. I was not— I sometimes questioned it. But then I rejected it because I never ever once saw them lovingly look at each other, lovingly touch each other. So no indication that they were in love with each other, that's how careful they were. So I decided, you know, many, many, many years later, I confronted my mother and said, "tell me the truth of why I was kidnapped," and she told me. It wasn't a full surprise. So on some level, I really knew what happened.

Kelly Roberts 04:57

When did you first start to identify as a lesbian and did your mother play any role in that process for you?

Shatzi Weisberger 05:04

Well, interestingly enough, I introduced my best friend to marijuana and we smoked, shared a joint. And that was— we both very clearly got turned on to each other. But she was terrified and she ran out of the room. And I made a vow to myself that I would never do anything to destroy her marriage. That would be awful. So we remained friends off and on for years. [Unclear]— and it was a very conflicted relationship— [unclear]—

Kelly Roberts 06:00

How old were you at that time?

Shatzi Weisberger 06:03

You know, it's hard for me to recollect years. It's something I always had trouble with. Now in my 91st year, it's impossible. It was a long time is all I can say [laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 06:21

So after that first conflicted romantic interest, when did you sort of begin to just continue to understand yourself as a lesbian? Like, how did you move on from that experience?

Shatzi Weisberger 06:34

Well, the woman that I was referring to, my friend, did become a lesbian. And I became what I considered a political lesbian. Because I knew that I wanted to hang out with lesbians but I didn't have a relationship. So for years, I considered myself a political lesbian and it wasn't until many years later that I finally did have an attempt or I had a few attempts. I had a few attempts at relationships that never worked out. My mom was in a relationship with a third person for 45 years [laughs]. They actually were rather well known, May and Marion. They were in— what was it called? The lesbian— I'm blocking on the name of the organization. They were pretty well known. During the Gay Pride March one year, May and Marion along with two fellas who were together for many years, so the [unclear]— the two couples. The two guys and the two women [note: were the Grand Marshalls.]

Kelly Roberts 07:58

Did you march with your mother? Like was this ever an open conversation?

Shatzi Weisberger 08:05

We did spend some time marching together. But interestingly enough, one year when she was interviewed, her main perspective was that she wanted people to know that we were just ordinary people who just happen to love someone [note: of the same sex.] [Redaction]— And when they interviewed me, I said, I'd rather people to know that we're special and we're not like other people [laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 08:58

Yeah, I was curious about on that topic of being special or how you identified, what language did you have as you were beginning to understand yourself? So for your gender and sexuality, how you understood yourself at that time?

Shatzi Weisberger 09:13

The key thing that comes to my mind in terms of that was currently, many lesbians object to being called queer. They say that, no, that doesn't identify us. We are lesbians. And then I often say, you know, when I was first coming out, my mom who was a lesbian, she and all of her

lesbian friends were horrified that we were calling ourselves dykes. Because to them that was such a negative term. But we loved it. "I'm not being called a dyke." And so, you know, when lesbians today object to being called queer, I say, I totally support young people today deciding to call themselves whatever they want to call themselves. I support it.

Kelly Roberts 10:18

Has your understanding changed over time? Like as the language has changed? Have you found that the ways you identify have shifted?

Shatzi Weisberger 10:33

I'm not quite sure how to answer that. What comes to my mind is that something that has shifted is that in the early days, there were a lot of organizations. There were a lot of lesbians bars and today, there aren't many organizations. There aren't very many lesbian bars here in New York City anyhow. And I don't think anywhere else really. So that's a big change. Yeah.

Kelly Roberts 11:07

So in terms of lesbian organizations, I would love to hear more about how you first got connected to the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

Shatzi Weisberger 11:21

I would go to some of their events. That basically was my connection. There were interesting events as they still are today. I was there from the beginning as well. So that was my connection.

Kelly Roberts 11:38

Thank you. And you were involved in a lot of political organizations; a lot of them were lesbian led. I'd be interested to hear more about your early political experiences. How did you get into organizing?

Shatzi Weisberger 11:53

Well, one of the things that I was concerned about was nuclear technology. So when I moved to New York City, I talked with a very prominent lesbian, Doris London, who ultimately changed her name to Blue London. And she and two other lesbians besides us, formed DONT which was "Dykes Opposed to Nuclear Technology."

Kelly Roberts 12:58

What did you do after your work with DONT? Where did you turn your political energies?

Shatzi Weisberger 13:08

Mostly it was working with the Independence Party. I was with that group for many, many years. That's not, particularly lesbian. But I did love going to women's music concerts. There were so

many in those days which was wonderful, including the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which I went to a number of times. Really— 1000's of lesbians in one space [laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 14:06

Was there any concert that really stood out to you? Any performance?

Shatzi Weisberger 14:11

Well, I loved so many of them. I didn't necessarily have favorites. I loved so many of them. [Note: Sweet Honey in the Rock was fabulous]. They were just wonderful.

Kelly Roberts 14:23

Could you tell me more about some of the groups you organized with that were Jewish lesbian led? Like The Yentas and Radical Jewish Lesbians Organizing?

Shatzi Weisberger 14:35

Yeah. So a group of us formed an organization called The Yentas. We met every Friday night. We're all Jewish. We observed Shabbos. We lit candles, we said prayers, we had challah, we drank wine. Initially, we talked about the week: what we were doing, and what we hoped to do, how we were feeling. I kept pushing for us to be political, I kept pushing. I had to push a lot. Because the attitude basically was, well we don't know enough. We're not really prepared to do that. I kept pushing that we learn more and become mad and eventually we did become more political. And also, what happened was that there was some internal emotional interactions amongst lesbians. Amongst a few of those beings. So the group broke up and there were two factions and I was in the middle. I absolutely did not want the group to break up. I wanted it to stay together. But I went to this group to encourage them to work it out and they didn't want to. They weren't even interested in what I was saying. The other group, they weren't particularly interested in working it out but they accepted me as part of the group. So I chose to be with them. But not because I preferred being with them. I really wanted the whole group to stay together. So the second group we formed an organization, we called ourselves Radical Jewishness Lesbians Organizing RJLO. And we became quite political.

Kelly Roberts 16:43

What was the focus of that group? What were some of the political actions that you took on?

Shatzi Weisberger 16:51

Well, Jesse Jackson was involved prominently in political activities at the time. And at one point, he was accused of being anti-Semitic And it was years before Black Lives Matter but we were doing work as if Black Lives Matter defending Jesse Jackson. He had said something somewhat innocuous, but he was accused of being an anti-Semite. So that was some of the work that we did at the time, and anti-nuclear work we continued to do as well. That basically was it.

Kelly Roberts 17:41

Was DONT still going on after you left, or did they disband since you're one of the founding members?

Shatzi Weisberger 17:49

No, the group disbanded. Yeah. The other few did not form a group.

Kelly Roberts 17:58

Were most of the political organizations that you were involved with, led by lesbians or kind of organized around that identity to take on other political issues?

Shatzi Weisberger 18:10

I would say that most of the organizations that I've ever been involved in have always been lesbian led [laughs]. Lesbians— way, way back when I considered myself a political lesbian was because I recognized as lesbians as being more progressive, more intelligent [laughs]— and to this day, lesbians still provide so much leadership.

Kelly Roberts 18:47

Yeah, I think about so many movements that have queer leadership as well even if they don't have queer in the name. With your idea about lesbians being more progressive and political, I'm wondering if there were any key figures that helped to kind of come up with that orientation. Like you have a lesbian mother, which is a big figure, but I'm curious about whether there are other people in your life who helped you come into that identity as a lesbian and activist as well.

Shatzi Weisberger 19:19

Well, yes. I mentioned Doris London.

Kelly Roberts 19:24

How did you meet?

Shatzi Weisberger 19:27

Well, when I came to the city, I found out about her so I made sure that I was in someplace where she was and introduced myself and we hit it off. We connected. We bonded actually. Yeah. Yeah. So I learned a lot from her.

Kelly Roberts 19:50

What was your relationship like?

Shatzi Weisberger 19:53

Political friends [unclear]—

Kelly Roberts 20:03

I think we might be getting a little interference from your headphones. Do you want to switch to— I think the mic might be bouncing around a little if you want to switch.

Shatzi Weisberger 20:16

Take the headphones off? Is that what you're suggesting?

Kelly Roberts 20:19

We could try. It sounds okay now but a minute ago.

Shatzi Weisberger 20:29

Okay.

Kelly Roberts 20:29

I think they're okay now.

Shatzi Weisberger 20:31

Okay.

Kelly Roberts 20:32

So who gave you her name? How did you come across her name?

Shatzi Weisberger 20:37

Well, my maiden name was Schatzberg. Joyce, my mother gave me the name Joyce and my father was Schatzberg. So that's where the Shatzi came from.

Kelly Roberts 20:52

I'm sorry. I mean, how did you get Doris' name? Who introduced you or how did you know about her? But thank you very much for that [laughter]—

Shatzi Weisberger 21:00

You know, people often do ask me how I came up with Shatzi.

Kelly Roberts 21:03

Oh, yeah.

Shatzi Weisberger 21:06

So what was the question about Doris?

Kelly Roberts 21:09

So you said that you had gotten her name from someone? So I'm curious about how you got connected with her for the first time?

Shatzi Weisberger 21:15

She was prominent. So I read about her. I knew that I wanted to meet her and learn from her and that's what I was able to do.

Kelly Roberts 21:26

Once you became connected with Doris and DONT and some of the other political lesbian organizations that you're involved in, what was your social scene like?

Shatzi Weisberger 21:40

Well as I mentioned earlier, they were lots of lesbian clubs. So some of us would go to dance, just have fun. Meeting every Friday night, that was very important that we did that. At some point, I traveled with a group of lesbians. We were doing anti-nuke work internationally and I went to the southwest and to California. I was invited to be part of a spiritual circle and we did magic mushrooms. So when I came back to the city, I introduced this circle to my friends here and I was able to obtain the magic mushrooms, psilocybin. So we did that here. We met every Friday night and then four times a year, at the seasonal changes, we met all night. If it was outdoors, we would have a regular campfire. If it was indoors with lots of candles and we would clear the room. So it was basically— we sat in a circle and there were a lot of particular ways of conducting the circle. For instance, one [note: woman] was a drum woman. One of the women had to create a drum, a new drum each time for the circle. She would play the drum the whole night. Just drumming the whole night. Another role was a leader and then we had a medicine woman who had herbs if anyone wasn't feeling well. We had a rattle. I put the rattle out before but I put it away. I should have left it out. The one rattle went around the circle and whoever had the rattle was the one who spoke. Not in words but in song. So I wouldn't say, "Hi I'm Shatzi." I would say, [singing] "Hi, everybody. I'm Shatzi and I'm here tonight because I wanted to talk about that I went to a demonstration yesterday." So I'd have to sing what I had to say and then we passed it. And we did actual songs. We had some songs that some of the women had written. So that was a very significant part of my life.

Kelly Roberts 24:47

Were those friends you mostly had from organizing?

Shatzi Weisberger 24:53

Combination. I had a core group of friends that were very very close.

Kelly Roberts 25:09

I'd like to hear more about how your identity as a Jewish lesbian, in particular, played a role in your political development. So you're currently working with Jewish Voice for Peace an anti-Zionist organization that works in solidarity with Palestinians. When and how did you begin to understand yourself as an anti-Zionist?

Shatzi Weisberger 25:32

Well, going way back. I grew up in a totally assimilated home. We did not— we never denied our Jewishness but it never was part of how we conducted our lives. We actually celebrated Christmas. We had a Christmas tree. But then when I was about 10 or 11, I said I wanted to go to Sunday school and I wanted to learn about what it was to be Jewish. So— and there was no objection. So I started Sunday school.

Let me just [phone ringing]— [answer the phone]— [Susan I'm on a Zoom call. I'll call you when it's over]. I thought I turned it off but I didn't. I'm sorry. I mean, I did turn it off but obviously, I don't know how to turn it off all the way.

Okay so I was saying that, you know, I went to Sunday school and I was brainwashed about the wonderful Israel. I was so proud of Israel. I thought it was wonderful. Somewhere, a few years later, someone suggested I read a book. I was an avid reader and so I picked up the book. And it was about what was actually going on and how the Zionists were treating the Palestinians. So that really opened up my eyes to this isn't something I can't support. But it was a slow process. I didn't automatically become an anti-Zionist. For many years, I supported Jewish Voice for Peace financially. I would send them contributions but I was very involved with the Independence Party so I didn't have time to be involved with Jewish Voice for Peace. But then— that's six or seven years ago when I decided not to do the Independence Party— [note: I became active in JVP.] Also three days [note: after I stopped my work with IP,] I realized that I had to have a project. I was bored. So I had to think about what am I going do with the rest of my life now? [Laughs]— and I decided that I would focus on death and dying. Did I mention that I was a nurse for 47 years and I was always interested in both birth, coming into the world, and leaving, dying. Although I wasn't particularly comfortable with the idea of dying, I was interested in it. I decided at that point, about six or seven years ago, I would focus on it. So I started reading a lot about it and learning a lot about it. I took a five month 700 hour training program at the open center, "The Art of Dying" and I did a workshop with New York City hospice program, and I worked in hospice with hospice patients for a little bit. I decided that I preferred doing workshops rather than working with hospice patients directly. Because my experience in working with hospice patients is that they did not want to deal with the fact that they were dying. They didn't want to talk about it and I wanted to talk about it. And now are those sirens disturbing? Should we pause for a second?

Kelly Roberts 30:03

I don't hear the sirens so much but I think maybe it might be better to try without the headphones because it sounds like the microphone is giving a lot of feedback. Maybe—

Shatzi Weisberger 30:12

Actually I was fiddling around with the wires which I stopped. So it's okay? Yeah, I'll stop fiddling with the wires. So where was I? Where'd I leave off?

Kelly Roberts 30:29

With moving to the workshops. After hospice, moving to the workshops.

Shatzi Weisberger 30:34

So I was doing Art of Dying workshops. I am still doing one. One a month out of the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture. I was doing many more. I was doing them at my home. But then the pandemic happened and so then that really threw a wrench in everything. Yeah.

Kelly Roberts 30:56

Could I ask you, what you cover in the workshops, how you run them?

Shatzi Weisberger 31:02

Well, the once a month from Ethical Culture in general, somebody will do a very brief presentation. About 10 minutes. I did one on green burial. Somebody did one on grief. And so then we would open it up to talk about the topic and or anything else that anyone wanted to share. So people would often talk about their experiences, their losses. They lost a spouse or an animal that they loved dearly. People will talk about their anxieties, their concerns, their hopes. Some people focused a lot primarily on whether there was an afterlife, which as far as I'm concerned, I don't know. I'm not that concerned about it one way or the other. My interest is primarily in the process, the dying process. So for me, what I want is not to die suddenly. I'm hoping that I will have sufficient time to be home in my bed. Not in a hospital, for people to come and say their goodbyes. And I have a bequeath list. It's many pages long. So over the years, as people come to my house, as my friends come here, I tell them look around, see what you'd like, it'll be yours when I'm gone. Because I'm very fond, very attached to my things and I'm very happy they're going to go to happy homes. So I'm hoping that I will experience the dying process. I don't want to be given a lot of drugs. Right now, there's a big emphasis on palliative care. And palliative care is to reduce pain and suffering, which is very admirable. Who doesn't support reducing pain and suffering? But the problem I have with that is that's the goal. So in order to reach that goal, very often, it is with drugs. It's with morphine in particular and other drugs as well. And people who are at the end of life often are kind of out of it. They are semi-conscious, sometimes, even unconscious and that's considered a positive experience

because there's lack of pain and suffering. To me, I want to reduce the pain and suffering and I don't want to take drugs. So I have arranged for an acupuncturist if I'm in pain, to help me with the pain. They do major surgery, with acupuncture. She assures me that if I'm in pain at the end of life, she can help me. I'm hoping that I can even tolerate a little pain which at the moment is hard when I have, even if I don't have a horrible headache, which I don't get headaches often but if I do have a headache right away, I want to take some tylenol and I want to get rid of the headache. Little acupressure points here. But the thing is that I really want to experience the process. I suspect that I might go through a whole lot of different feelings of being scared, being upset, and hopefully recognizing as I do believe, that when our time comes, it's our time. I want to not only experience it, I want to share the experience. I want people to know that I hear from other people their experience. So that's kind of where I'm at these days.

Kelly Roberts 35:29

Did your focus or your understanding of [sirens]— wait, hold on, I've got some sirens on my end. Okay. Did your understanding of this goal of being part of the dying process change once you began to attend these workshops and lead them yourself? Like did your thinking about death change over this period?

Shatzi Weisberger 35:56

I don't think it changed so much as it just was a process. It wasn't a change. It was a deepening, a deepening of recognition— well one of the big impacts that I had was I read a book called by Stephen Jenkinson— I gave the book away to somebody. What was it called? I can't think of the title, but Stephen S-t-e-p-h-e-n and Stephen Jenkinson, *Die Wise* was the name of the book and it had an enormous impact on me. That's where I really learned about the process of dying, about medications and all of that. Yeah. So it hasn't been changed so much as it's just a whole ongoing process of learning more. Deepening the understanding.

Kelly Roberts 36:59

Were there any experiences that led you to that? Was it— did this come out of your work in hospice care or did you sort of already have this interest before you got involved in that?

Shatzi Weisberger 37:08

No, I was interested in it. Yeah. I was interested in my early days of nursing when I was a young nurse.

Kelly Roberts 37:18

I would love to hear more about your experience as a nurse. How you got involved in [cat meows]— that profession and what kind of nursing you did? [Laughs]— I hear your kitty.

Shatzi Weisberger 37:28

Yeah, I have to give her some treats.

Kelly Roberts 37:31

What's her name?

Shatzi Weisberger 37:32

Rosa. I adopted Rosa. She's 11 years old. I adopted her two years ago and we are madly in love with each other [laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 37:45

I understand.

Shatzi Weisberger 37:47

Yeah. What was the question?

Kelly Roberts 37:53

How did you get involved in nursing and what kind of nursing did you do?

Shatzi Weisberger 37:59

Well, in my day a lot of women didn't work. They were stay at home moms, homemakers. I found that incredibly boring [laughs]. Actually, I was very lucky in many respects in terms of gratefulness. I have a long list of things that I'm grateful for and one of them is that I never had any student debt. Because my dad paid for my undergraduate work and the government paid for my graduate work. So that, you know, I have a long list of things that I'm grateful for. I have an affordable Manhattan, a lovely affordable Manhattan apartment. Very, very special. I've never been hungry. I've never been homeless. I've never had to deal with natural disasters, such as fires and floods and mudslides, and hurricanes— well, I've dealt with hurricanes but I live on the ninth floor now. They don't affect me in any way really directly. So I'm really very lucky. I've had a very, very easy life. Emotionally, not so easy, but in a physical way, very easy. I feel very grateful for that. There's so much suffering going on in the world. I've been very lucky.

Kelly Roberts 39:41

Yes, agreed. Every day is sort of like figuring out all the things that, you know, we take for granted at times. What were some of your experiences as a nurse that helped you develop this perspective as well?

Shatzi Weisberger 40:06

I don't know that anything about being a nurse in particular. It's just part of my life. I'm not going to say that there was something I learned from nursing that I could not have learned elsewhere. One of the things that I wanted to talk about also is International Women's Day but don't ask me

what year [laughs]— quite a long time ago. A group of friends and I, there was about maybe 10 of us, went to a program at P.S. 41 in Greenwich Village in Manhattan on International Women's Day. And the focus was on progressive women in different countries internationally. And there was a particular focus on Nicaraguan women. I forget the rest but I remember Nicaragua, in particular. And someone from the group that I was with, who wasn't Jewish actually, but at some point, she called out and said, "What about Jewish women?" So the organizers of the event agreed to meet with our group afterwards. So we met and we agreed that we would meet again. We talked a bit about what was going on and it was just a very general discussion. And we agreed to meet again. So it was gonna be in a few weeks and I realized that I really had to study more and educate myself. I was already beginning to question Zionism. As I mentioned earlier, it was a slow process. So I really got much more educated and recognized that it wasn't something that I could support. I find it just so incredibly heart breaking that Jews who have been so oppressed for so many centuries and now the oppressors. It just breaks my heart.

Kelly Roberts 42:28

Did that group continue meeting? The group that formed out of that International Women's Day?

Shatzi Weisberger 42:33

I have no idea. The ones that I was connected with?

Kelly Roberts 42:40

Yeah. You said there was a follow up.

Shatzi Weisberger 42:43

No, no.

Kelly Roberts 42:44

Okay. So you just did a follow up to sort of discuss the issues at hand?

Shatzi Weisberger 42:48

No, the group was together for quite a while but eventually people, you know, dispersed separately.

Kelly Roberts 42:56

Do you remember what group that was that you were a part of at that time?

Shatzi Weisberger 42:59

It was probably RJ. No, it was the spiritual group, I believe. I believe that was the group, which was primarily Jewish, primarily lesbian, but not exclusively.

Kelly Roberts 43:21

This was the group of friends that would go to the different apartments? Did you host at different apartments or was there a particular place that you usually met?

Shatzi Weisberger 43:36

It changed.

Kelly Roberts 43:41

I'm curious also about some of your more recent activism. So you said you've been more involved in JVP. We've also been in the middle of a pandemic and you're still showing up to demos, even though you have vulnerabilities as a 91 year old.

Shatzi Weisberger 43:56

Exactly.

Kelly Roberts 43:56

So yeah. In particular, you are showing up and have been continuing to show up for the Black Lives Matter protests, even before we knew much about the virus. So I would like to hear more about how you think about risk and care and solidarity at a time like this when there are so many different crises that we're facing.

Shatzi Weisberger 44:21

It's a big question because let me start with that. Actually, the first Black Lives Matter was during the pandemic, the early days. The very, very, very early days. So I went to my first Black Lives Matter demonstration. I was the only old person there. The only one. And subsequently, in most cases, was pretty much the only person that— no one my age. There might have been one other, maybe 60 or 70 year old, perhaps. Not necessarily. So and the reason that I go to these demonstrations in spite of what we're told about isolating, you know, somebody my age with health issues. I have a heart condition. I decided that for years, I was questioning how come people aren't out in the streets screaming about racism and about homophobia? How come we're not, you know, we're not like in the sixties, not demonstrating day after day, week after week? Then it started to happen and I decided I can't sit home. I've been wanting this to happen for years and now it's happening. I gotta go out; I gotta be part of it. And I was able to do that, because initially when the pandemic started, we were told if we're old, older, as I am old, to isolate. I stayed home for a week and a half. My neighbors were buying food for me; they were going to the stores. After a week and a half I decided, I don't want to [note: live my life like this.] I decided I would go out. But I live in an area where there's indoor, an inside complex but not on the street. So I went outside but not on the street and I did that for a few days. Then I decided, I don't want to do this. I don't want to live my life like this. I'm going to the store. So I told my neighbors "thank you so much for helping me but I'm going to go do my own shopping." And as

far as masks— I do a tremendous amount of research— and there is nothing in the research that leads me to believe that the masks work. So I prefer not to wear a mask unless I absolutely have to. In which case I— is that whistling? Is that outdoor noise disturbing it? Should we wait?

Kelly Roberts 47:37

I think it's clear now.

Shatzi Weisberger 47:42

Still very noisy at this end. [Laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 47:56

You live by the firehouse, right?

Shatzi Weisberger 47:58

I have a firehouse on my corner and Columbus Ave. is a major thoroughfare. Lots of trucks. Obviously, that's an ambulance. It sounds like— go away— [laughs]— enough already! So I am— I have not been vaccinated. I do not intend to get vaccinated. And it's not because I don't think that any outsider should tell me what to put in my body. I think that that's true to a degree. But the reason I choose not to be vaccinated is because although they say that it's safe, they don't have a clue as to whether these vaccines are safe. There's a lot of evidence that they're not safe. I hope that it turns out that they are [note: safe.] I suspect they're not. I worry a great deal about you and all of my dear friends. All of them have been vaccinated with very few exceptions. I am 91 and I'm so healthy at 91 that it's amazing. I think it is unbelievable how healthy I am. It's not because I follow such a healthy lifestyle. It's a fairly healthy lifestyle. I've cut back on sugar. I haven't cut it out all together. I still have cookies. I have things with sugar but I don't put any sugar in my coffee or my tea. I use Stevia. I drink a lot of green tea. I take a lot of supplements. I have a major portion of my income is spent on supplements. I take D and K and magnesium and zinc etc, etc, etc. I take about 20 different supplements a day. I have no idea if they're helping but perhaps they are because I'm really quite healthy. And other than the fact that I'm so healthy, most people when they hear that I'm not vaccinated are terrified of getting sick from me. Actually, I'm the vulnerable one. Not them. So that's so twisted. All the information everyday. Biden is saying that this pandemic is because of the unvaccinated people. It's nonsense, such nonsense. But many of my friends don't want to spend time with me. Not many, a few. Because most of them— because one in particular has spoken to, she recognized that we're being manipulated to be fearful of the unvaccinated and she spoke to mutual friends. So most of my friends will come visit. We hug. They might wear their mask usually if they're here. You know, they're all into being vaccinated and getting the boosters and wearing masks. So when they come to the house, if they are wearing their mask, I say, "Do you want me to put a mask on? I can do that" and usually they say "no." So you know, we don't wear masks. But here in New York now, there's more and more mandates which we have to wear masks going into the stores now. Yeah.

When I go out and I see all the people wearing masks and I see toddlers wearing masks, I want to cry when I see the toddlers in masks. I think it's such a shame that kids are growing up fearful of other people. Fearful of there being something in them that is so dangerous that if they're with their grandparents, that grandparents might get sick and die because the kids have given them the virus. What a terrible thing to grow up believing about yourself— that there's something deadly about you. And we're— even with being told that there's very little transmission outdoors— although now with the Omicron, there are some differences. I actually would not be unhappy if I caught Omicron. Hopefully it would be a mild case. I don't want to get sick, I prefer not to get sick, really sick. I prefer not to die. But if it's my time, so be it. I have said to my friends, some of them are not afraid of getting sick from me but they are afraid of getting me sick from them. And they have said that if that happened, they couldn't live with themselves if they thought that they gave me the virus and I died from the virus. And I have said to them, “first of all, there's no way of proving we would get the virus; we don't have that information. And secondly, if I did get it, assuming I got it from them, so be it.” When my time comes, it comes and I want to thank them for helping me to transition. So that's where I'm at these days around the pandemic and around dying.

Kelly Roberts 54:23

Well, the pandemic is a huge issue that we're facing globally but I'm also wondering what you think some of the biggest political and social needs are right now?

Shatzi Weisberger 54:32

Well, I think that shutting down the economy was, is a mistake, was a mistake. I believe that there will be more death and more devastation from shutting the economy than there are from the virus. The death rate from the virus is .02, the general death rate. It is higher amongst older people and it's lower amongst younger people but to react this way to a virus that has a .02 death rate is nonsense. It doesn't make sense. I mean, there are things, there's so many, many things that are so much worse and we don't do anything about it. Like, I am more likely to get killed crossing the street than I am from a virus. And yet, we don't eliminate cars from our lives. A million babies, an additional million babies in Africa have died a year an additional and because there's so much poverty and food disparity. But an additional million babies have died because of the economic shutdown. That their families, that what they eat that night depends on what they earned that day. And if they don't have a job and don't earn anything, they're not eating then. So this, and then all of the tests that are being done. The scientist who developed the test has claimed that the test is not reliable for diagnosis. It should not be used for diagnosis and it continues to be used. And there are so many false positives and even some false negatives. And yet people are continuing to take the test. Then the next thing we know that 10 million people tested positive, you know, obviously, it's not 10 million or whatever the figure is. And it doesn't

mean anything, it doesn't mean— I actually if I do get Omicron and survive it, I'll be very glad. I'll have natural immunity.

Kelly Roberts 57:11

Have some of these issues like you're saying about economic disparities, disparities in access to care and to food, has this moment made you aware of some things that we might need to rethink more generally like about healthcare or about our economy? Or about our social structures?

Shatzi Weisberger 57:33

Yes, yes, yes. Indeed.

Kelly Roberts 57:36

What are some of the big lessons or the big, big things that stand out to you?

Shatzi Weisberger 57:48

Well, one of the big things is that our so-called Health Care System is really a reaction to illness. It's not a prevention whatsoever. And in terms of the pandemic, there are things that can be done. I have actually, I have purchased a nebulizer, you know, a little breathing machine and the ingredients that I need to nebulize hydrogen peroxide if I should get diagnosed. Not even diagnosed but if I should start to show any symptoms. That will prevent the pneumonia from developing in my lungs. And there are drugs which our officials claim are not helpful. But doctors that are using these drugs, their patients are not going to the ER to ICUs and they're not dying. For the most part zinc and some other drugs that are other than the recommended drugs, which are very expensive and actually not really helpful. We're being given so much misinformation. And yet the doctors who are questioning the safety of the vaccine are being, they are being called the misinformationists. And we're losing our privacy. We're losing our— science is supposed to question. That's what science is all about, is questioning and repeating tests to see if they really are, if they really work. And yet, that's not happening today with the virus. It's not clear. It's not— I mean, there's speculation of why it's happening and then and that there are elements— it's noisy outside here. I don't know if you could— okay, it's quieted down. There are elements of leadership that want to control our lives. Let's talk about passports, which we lose all control of our lives. We will be told where we can go and how we can do it and when we could do it and what we can't do. This is all very problematic to say the least. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And our health care system needs to focus more on preventing illness rather than on treating symptoms.

Kelly Roberts 1:00:54

Right. I was gonna say, in contrast to what seems to be your pessimism about the state of things, especially healthcare or political intervention, I'm wondering if there are things that you're

optimistic about or movements or structures in place that you see that are working? Or that you feel hopeful for for the future?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:01:19

Well, I'm online a lot and I follow a number of doctors and scientists and philosophers. And they do come up with some optimism. Dr. Zack Bush is one, Dr. Joseph Mercola. M-e-r-c-o-l-a and Dr. Peter McCullough, M-c capital C-u-l-l-o-o-u-g-h. [Note: Charles Eisenstein as well]. Those are the scientists, philosophers that I follow [note: and they express hope for the future.] So I'm hoping that this, that the concern that I have and that others have for the long term negative effects of the vaccine, I'm hoping that they're wrong. I'm hoping that years later, people will say Shatzi was so worried about us, about possibly long term effects and we're just fine. And so she was wrong. I'm hoping people say that. I want to be wrong.

Kelly Roberts 1:02:36

I hope so. I have a personal stake in it so I'm hoping. Yeah. So in addition to some of the scientists, what political movements are you following?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:02:45

I'm not following any political movements at the moment other than Jewish Voice for Peace. Justice for Palestinians. That's about my main passion these days. I do not trust the Democratic Party any more than I trust the Republican Party. Yang is starting a third party. So I'm interested in learning more about that but things are a mess right now. A real mess. I mean there's certainly a movement towards fascism. It's very frightening.

Kelly Roberts 1:03:43

Yeah, globally, there seems to be a global right emerging.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:03:48

Yeah. Yes, here and in England. Australia, which used to be such a progressive country and now they— actually people who are in contact with somebody with the virus, they are shipped to a like the concentration camp. Did you know that? About what's happening in Australia these days? That they don't have a choice. That they are forced to go into these camps to wait out whatever it is. I don't remember if it's 10 days or 14 days, whatever.

Kelly Roberts 1:04:36

So you said you've been working with JVP primarily and you also keep an active Twitter account as the People's Bubbie.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:04:43

Yes.

Kelly Roberts 1:04:45

And—

Shatzi Weisberger 1:04:45

I have a Twitter account with a youngster from Jewish Voice For Peace. She does all of the technical stuff. I do none of it. I will send her an email and say, "Let's post this" and she'll post it. Or she'll send me an email saying, "Do you want to post this?" And I'll say, "yes" and usually it's yes and she'll post it. So yeah, that's how that works. I have— I think it's an over 11,000 followers [laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 1:05:23

So how has your role as an activist changed so from when you first started organizing to now being more of a movement elder?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:05:32

Well, it has changed remarkably but I don't have the energy to do what I used to do. Yeah, I just don't have it. I have to actually not be hard on myself. That's life and I'm lucky that I can still get around. I get around with a walker. I can walk fine. It's just that my balance is totally gone. So the walker prevents me from falling. And I have Access-A-Ride, which works most of the time. I can still take the buses. I have two buses that stop at my corner. So if where I need to go, I can go by bus, I'll go by public transportation. I'm still doing fine. But to a much, much lesser degree, much less. Yeah, if it's, if there are wind gusts, I really need to stay home. Because they can because of lack of balance it can just throw me off.

Kelly Roberts 1:06:33

And in addition to Twitter posting, what kinds of things are you learning from the younger people that you're meeting through organizing?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:06:44

Oh, that's a good question. My young friends sent me an email last year saying, "Shall we post this?" and I said, "I don't know what you're talking about." And she said, "well, the young people will understand this" [laughs]— and I did not understand it. Even when it was explained to me, I did not understand. I couldn't repeat it to you whatsoever. So they're definitely, you know, all these abbreviations. I don't know what most of— LO(L), lots of love. I figured out that one. I assume it means lot's of love.

Kelly Roberts 1:07:21

I think lol is laugh out loud, maybe.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:07:26
Yeah, lots of love isn't it?

Kelly Roberts 1:07:27
[Unclear]—

Shatzi Weisberger 1:07:31
You're breaking up.

Kelly Roberts 1:07:36
Can you hear me?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:07:38
Okay, now I can hear.

Kelly Roberts 1:07:38
Is this better?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:07:40
Yes.

Kelly Roberts 1:07:40
I think it's for laughing. Laugh out loud or lots of laughs. Laugh out loud.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:07:47
Laugh out loud, okay [laughter]—

Kelly Roberts 1:07:51
No but I do— I have heard that older people think it mean lots of love. So they'll— I've seen someone— it'll be like, heart mom lol. And to younger people that means it's a joke. But to older people, it means lots of love [laughter]— so there could be translation problems. And then, finally, is there anything that you'd like to share that we haven't covered yet today?

Shatzi Weisberger 1:08:24
I think we've covered a lot. I feel very complete. I thank you so much for organizing all this technical stuff that I did not have to do [laughs]—

Kelly Roberts 1:08:43
I am learning it myself but I think I've got the technical stuff mostly under control.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:08:48
Good.

Kelly Roberts 1:08:50
And thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:08:54
It was lovely. I enjoyed it.

Kelly Roberts 1:08:57
Yes.

Shatzi Weisberger 1:08:59
Bye everybody.

Kelly Roberts 1:09:02
Bye.