

Anne Fischel
Interviewed by Anthony Zaragoza
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FINAL

Begin Part 1 of 2 of Anne Fischel on 7-30-2019

Zaragoza: Anne, would you just start by saying your name and telling us where you're from? Where did you grow up?

Fischel: My name is Anne Fischel. I was born in New York City, and I grew up in Teaneck, New Jersey, which is a suburb of New York City. I graduated from high school there, and then went to college in Massachusetts. I went to Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, which is about 20 miles outside of Boston. After I graduated, I moved to Boston, and lived in the Boston area for another 10, 11 years. I moved to western Massachusetts to teach at Hampshire College in Amherst, and then decided to go to graduate school in the same community. I moved to Olympia when I got the job at Evergreen.

Zaragoza: Are there some early stories from your life, of your growing up, of your parents, of your siblings that you feel made some impact on you in terms of what you went on to do in your life?

Fischel: My grandparents were Eastern European Jewish immigrants. We were pretty close to my father's family growing up; my mother's parents had moved away and we didn't see them as often. We often spent Sundays at the home of my Grandfather Joe and my Grandmother Rhoda in Flushing, which was maybe an hour and a half away by car. We would go on a Sunday, and my father's siblings and my cousins would all be there. It was a second marriage for both Rhoda and Joe, so her children and grandchildren might also be visiting. That was the family orbit in which I grew up.

My grandfather spoke with an accent. His first language was Yiddish. He learned English in night school after he got here. He didn't often talk about his background, but when I was 13 or 14, he told me a story that had a huge impact on me. He would sit in his easy chair in the living room, and sometimes I would just sit next to him on the floor, because I loved him and always wanted to be close to him. I tried to stay out of reach of his fingers, though, because he would pinch my cheeks and call me "Mona Lisa," and the pinching really hurt [laughing]. Much as I loved the attention, I didn't love the pinching.

That day he decided to tell me a story about why he left the old country. He told me that he had been apprenticed to a shoemaker; but as he grew up, he became involved in the *Bund*, which was a Jewish labor organization that was organizing against the tsar and for workers' rights—a socialist organization. He was distributing leaflets outside a factory and he was seen, and reported to the tsar's police, so he went back home to hide. He lived in a Jewish community called *Slabotka*, on the outskirts of the city that's now called Vilnius—I think it used to be Vilna. Today it's in Lithuania, but it's an area that passed back and forth, in and out of Russian hands. His family was worried for his safety and they sent him across the street to the home of friends, the Utals, and he hid under a haystack. When the police came, they couldn't find him, but they said they would be back.

When he got out from under the haystack, his family said, "You need to leave. It's time to go." His older sister had already gone to the United States, fleeing state repression; it was a very political family. So he left immediately, in the night. He had the address of a safe house, but he had a long way to walk and he couldn't walk on the roads because he didn't want to be discovered. Instead, he walked across the fields. It was winter, the fields had been cleared, but there was frozen stubble everywhere. Because he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, he knew the value of a pair of shoes. So he took his shoes off and hung them around his neck, and walked barefoot. By the time he got to the safe house, his feet were cut to ribbons, but his shoes were fine.

That was the story he told me. That story made a huge impression on me. Later I learned that through an underground network, he was taken, I think, to Belgium, where he got on a ship for the United States. He entered at Ellis Island in New York City, and his sister picked him up. There're a few other stories that other family members know. But I remember going back and telling my parents that story, because all of a sudden, I felt like I had a lineage that I could connect with. I was already very influenced by the Civil Rights Movement; had been to the March on Washington in 1963; was singing folk songs and protest songs. But I had no roots of my own to connect me to those movements.

Zaragoza: How old were you at that point at the March on Washington?

Fischel: It was August '63, so I was 14. I think all those things happened around the same time, and helped to ground me: "I'm part of this, not just because I believe in it, but because there are things I can draw on in my own personal history that, in my mind, are connected to that. "

I thought about my grandfather's story a lot over the years. I think it was one of the most powerful learning experiences of my childhood and adolescence. What I learned was a strong identification with immigrant rights and a conviction that stories matter. Whatever history is supposed

to be, for people like me who've been displaced, whose histories are histories of displacement and diaspora, we're never going to have a fully accurate and linear account of where we come from and who we are. We're going to have stories, and those stories are anchor points around which to build a sense of identity, a sense of purpose, and a sense of meaning. Ultimately, it's possible my grandfather didn't remember his history absolutely accurately; on a certain level, it doesn't matter. Because it became his truth, and when he passed it on to me, it became my truth. It has shaped the way I think of myself and the way I think of my work in the world in really fundamental ways.

When I was the Evergreen graduation speaker in spring 2017, I told this story because it was clear to me that the students who were in rebellion also had stories to tell. They had important histories that were not in the classroom with them as they struggled to learn. The kinds of pedagogy that many of us absorbed doesn't encourage us to welcome student stories into the classroom and build on them. "This is what you know, this is who you are, and here's how we build on it, because this is what we value."

This is what bell hooks talks about, right? She talks about the need to invite those stories into the classroom, and she also said that to develop honest relationships between teachers and students, the faculty also should share their stories. She calls this part of the process of making education the practice of freedom. When I told my grandfather's story at graduation, I meant it as an invitation to both the students and my colleagues. I think I was fortunate. I don't know why my grandfather chose to tell me that story in that moment, except I was available and listening, and maybe he knew I needed it.

Zaragoza: He maybe needed to give it to you, needed it to live on through you.

Fischel: Possibly. For those early 20th century Jewish immigrants, assimilation was a huge value and goal. My father told me that in his family growing up, the adults spoke Yiddish to each other, but when he tried to enter the conversation as a little child with a few words of Yiddish, they would turn around and speak to him in English.

So there's a thing about assimilation, about what it means to become American. Nobody's going back. Everybody's staying here, and this is what it's going to take. Essentially, it's going to take adopting a new language, a new culture, leaving your history behind. So maybe later in his life, my grandfather regretted that, or maybe I said something that triggered a story. Maybe he had been told about some of the kinds of activism I was trying to participate in, and he thought I could relate to his experience of activism in the old country. Maybe I just happened to be listening at a moment when he

was willing to reminisce. I don't know. I never knew. He never told me another story, and as far as I know, he never told that story to anybody else.

Zaragoza: How old were when he told you that story?

Fischel: Thirteen or Fourteen.

Zaragoza: So, it was right around the time of the March on Washington?

Fischel: Yeah, it's all connected in my mind. Do I know exactly? No. But I think probably 14, and I remember going and telling my parents, and I remember writing it down, and feeling like I'd been given this incredible gift.

Zaragoza: That's basically when you're in middle school.

Fischel: Yeah, maybe seventh grade.

Zaragoza: Are there stories from high school, college, from your early education that also begin to shape the questions that you have been seeking to answer, or things that you've been wanting to do?

Fischel: Well, sure. I'm not sure how to answer, though. Maybe the easiest answer to give you has to do with an experience I had in college. I had a close friend who was from Colombia, and had come to Brandeis on what was called the Wien Fellowship. The Wien Fellowship would bring talented young people from all over the world. They were not privileged; without the fellowship they couldn't have come. There was someone from Eritrea who also became a good friend, there was someone from Panama. Orlando was from Colombia. Those are the three that I remember offhand.

Meeting those people was amazing, because the college was mostly—at least my first year—middle-class, white, Jewish kids. But from Orlando, I learned about his growing up in Medellin, Colombia, and I learned about work he had done in a shantytown on the outskirts of the city. He and his partner would go to Medellin in the summers, and they would work in the shantytowns, and they told me stories about them. It fired my imagination, and on some level, seemed connected to the ways in which I was trying to root myself in a history of struggle.

Because of Orlando, I got interested in learning Spanish and going to Colombia. I had never thought I might be good at languages; after 9 years of studying French in public school, I still couldn't speak it or read it, so the idea of actually learning a foreign language was intimidating, but also very exciting. And because I had images in my head of the communities Orlando described to me, documentary film began to seem like a powerful and important tool that I wanted to learn. The first

independent film I made—and it was several years before I could do it—was in one of the shantytowns where Orlando had worked.

So I'm skipping ahead a few years now. I've graduated from college and become an apprentice at a documentary film studio in the area. I'd developed some basic skills in documentary filmmaking, but I'd never made a film of my own. Then Orlando invited his mother, Doña Romelia, to come and stay with him for a while. When she was ready to go home, she asked me and my then-partner, Glenn McNatt, if we'd like to visit her in Medellin, and we agreed. We also asked if we could visit the communities where Orlando had worked. When it was time, we escorted her back to Colombia and stayed with her son, Jairo, and his wife, Berta, and their two kids. Medellin at the time was a large center for textile production, and Jairo worked in a local textile factory. The family considered themselves very fortunate to have this job. They were amazingly hospitable, and it was wonderful to stay with them.

Berta and Jairo lived in the suburb of Envigado, which I now know is where the narco-trafficker Pablo Escobar grew up, but I didn't know that at the time. One day, we got a phone call from someone who said, "Orlando told us you were coming, and I would like to come meet you and escort you to my community." And we said, "Please come." So Heroína Córdoba, 21 years old, showed up at the door, and took us to her community. It was located right on the edge of the municipal dump.

We met a lot of people. Heroína took us from house to house. We were ushered into these little shacks where there might be one narrow bed to sit on, and everybody would get off the bed and invite us to sit down. Someone would go and get a bottle of Coca-Cola, because there was no potable water, and often, no access to water at all. Then we would talk. We had some Spanish by that time. We were by no means fluent; I'm still not fluent. But I was blown away by the people I met that day, by the courtesy, their resilience, their courage in the face of so much deprivation.

In the next few days, Heroína took us from community to community, because it turned out there were communities like this all over the city. In a city of 100,000 people there were estimated to be as many as 10,000 living in these communities, often in shacks made of cardboard with a tar paper roof. In Colombia, homes like these are called "tugurios" and the people who live in them are the "tugurianos." In other parts of Latin America they are known as "barrios marginados" or "favelas" or "casas de carton," as Ali Primera says in his song.

We were taken to another tugurio community on the edge of the railroad tracks. You wouldn't do it, but if you were in a train and you reached out your hand, you could almost touch the shacks that lined the tracks.

But people were going through an amazing process of community education and organization. What was fundamental to it was . . . how do I say this? . . . undoing a legacy of being taught that they were worthless; that their lives and the lives of their children did not matter; that they were poor because they were supposed to be; that things in Colombia, economically and politically, were the way they were because that's the way the world was. In other words, not being taught to question or challenge this really brutal hierarchy of inequality and exploitation.

What was changing that was the influence of priests who were participating in the theology of liberation in Colombia, which basically meant that they were challenging the traditional role of the church as a partner in political and economic hierarchies. They were telling people what it meant to be a good Christian, that the values of Christianity, if they really include human worth, have to be realized on Earth, not in heaven, so people had a right to struggle for their freedom. They had a right to fight for equality, they had a right to fight to have a part in this society in which they appeared to be so expendable. They were called the Golconda Group, and some of them suffered a lot because of the positions they took.

My understanding is that before the priests began to do that work, there was a lot of violence in the tugurios. Frantz Fanon talks about this, the ways in which people internalize the violence that's been done to them, and then manifest it in their relationships with one another—their nearest horizontal relationships. He talks about the need for the violence to be redirected at an oppressor as a kind of cleansing process. That's a little different from what happened in the tugurios, where the theology of liberation taught by the Golcond became the foundation of a political analysis. At the beginning it was just be an awareness of power and how it was manifesting in their lives and creating injustice and inequality. It's not the person next to you who's driving you crazy, but who lives in a shack just like yours. You have to actually look for where power is, and you have to direct your anger there. And if you do that in a strategic way, then it becomes political activism, even if initially it just looks like violence.

There was incredible violence in these communities. People would burn down each other's shacks, people would get badly hurt in fights. When the priests came in and began to preach the theology of liberation in the community, it was transformative. Folks began to turn all this incredible energy that was coming out in the destructive and self-destructive ways into community organizing.

When I arrived, one of the communities, which had been called "the Monkey's Bridge", had renamed itself "Barrio Fidel Castro." People had begun to rebuild their homes in adobe, replacing those

cardboard and tarpaper shacks. They were helping each other do that. The first building they built was a community center, which also doubled as a daycare center, a *guarderia* for the kids.

Since graduating from college, I had been learning to be documentary filmmaker; I wanted to document this. I asked them if I could, and they asked me why. I said, "People don't know much about Colombia in the United States." This is the late '70s. There was a commercial on TV about Juan Valdez, the happy coffee picker. I think it was for Chock Full of Nuts or something like that. So I told them about that commercial and said, "That's the extent of what people in the United States know about Colombia. They don't know about your struggles and everything that you've achieved in this community." There was this silence, and then an outbreak of "Yes! Yes! You need to come back. This is very important."

This is not coming out in a linear way at all, Anthony. [laughing] I just launched into this. Wow!

Zaragoza: But it's so clear to me how important this story is for you on so many levels.

Fischel: Yeah, it was really formative. It was totally formative.

Zaragoza: Your relationship to Latin America, your relationship with documentary film, the importance of story, the importance of getting people's stories and sharing those stories in order to correct narratives that are used to keep people in their place. I appreciate these stories so much.

Fischel: Thank you. I appreciate the feedback. And how education and community organizing are connected. That's the other one. Because this wasn't about someone coming in and saying, "Let's organize to make your community better, and this is how you're going to do it," and defining the objectives and goals, and lining people up to implement it--which could have been done. It was really about saying something much more basic through the meaningful forms of communication that people already had—for instance, the Catholic Mass. I'm Jewish. If anything, I had a pretty wary relationship with Catholicism. These were Catholic priests.

But in the first tour that Heroína conducted for us, guiding us through the communities, at the end of the day, she said, "Come over here, Anita." A youngish man showed up in blue jeans and a black t-shirt, and all of a sudden people started to gather. He was carrying a little bag, and he put the bag down, and took out a cassock and put it on. He took out a bottle of Coca-Cola and he took out communion wafers. Standing in this little area, as it was getting cold, he proceeded to give Mass. Because he didn't have wine, people had a sip of Coca-Cola, and the children had the communion wafers because all of them were hungry, and children get the food first.

It was getting cold, and Heroína put a shawl around my shoulders. I said, “But you’ll be cold.” And she said, “I’m used to it.” One of the things that I learned was you have to accept gifts from people. I learned that poor people feel rich when they give you something, and the worst thing you can do is turn it down because you see them as poor and not able to afford to give it to you. You have to accept it, you have to thank them; you have to think about how to reciprocate. It’s part of the process of building reciprocity. That was my first lesson in accepting a gift from someone who I knew was as cold as I was. [laughing] Not always easy to do.

The Mass brought people together in a way I hadn’t anticipated. It created community in a way that was new to me and affirmed people’s solidarity with one another. That’s what I learned from that experience. I could see how life-affirming it was, and how self-affirming, for people to create that space together, folks who had been so disrespected and despised.

In the community where I ended up living, people were organizing their own self-governance. They were planning out their community. They did some fundraising somehow to bring in bulldozers to actually put in streets—not to pave them, but to clear spaces for streets. They planned political actions together. I had never seen anything like that before, where people were so in touch with their capacity to envision better lives and were taking steps to implement their visions. I had never seen anything like that. I think, on some level, it became the foundation of what I think education and organizing should be. You show total respect for the people you’re working with. You honor what they already know. Whatever that looks like, you bring their experience into the room. You honor it. You build on it. You do it collectively. It’s not an individual experience, it’s a collective experience, even though people may experience it individually.

Zaragoza: At this point, you’ve graduated Brandeis and are now in graduate school?

Fischel: That’s the incoherent part of the way I am telling this. It’s not coming out in order. Let me backtrack. I had always thought that when I graduated from college, perhaps I would become a writer. I had actually already done some publishing as a high school and college student. I wasn’t sure how to build on what I’d done, but I knew I was a reasonably good writer and that writing was an important form of expression and communication for me.

I was also doing some community organizing at Brandeis with other students to educate and care for kids in the nearby community. We were trying to connect the campus to the community in ways that it hadn’t really been connected before. My friend, Orlando, who I told you about and who was

Colombian, had a big part in that. There were other people as well. So I thought I might do some kind of work in social services or community organizing. I really didn't know exactly what I wanted to do.

Then in my senior year, I ended up taking a photography class with Timothy Asch, who was an anthropologist, an ethnographic filmmaker and a photographer. I saw documentary films in that class that blew me away and got me excited about documentary film. It was not something I knew anything about. It was not something I'd ever envisioned as a possibility for myself.

After I graduated, I wrote to Tim and I asked him if he needed an apprentice. He ran a small center called the Center for Documentary Anthropology with another filmmaker, John Marshall. It's now Documentary Educational Resources. Both of them have passed on now. Tim accepted me as an apprentice, so I did my first film work in that studio—sitting in on editing meetings, looking over people's shoulders, assistant editing, which was basically logging and organizing the material. A lot of what it means to be an apprentice is that you observe people doing something, and then you try to do it yourself just the way they did. Then they look over *your* shoulder and say, "Yeah, that's great. You're doing that right." Or, "Here's a way to do it better." So my first learning about film was through an apprenticeship, and seeing these amazing pieces that were being produced out of this center.

Tim was working on a body of film about the Yanomami people who live in Amazonia. He was doing this in partnership with an anthropologist named Napoleon Chagnon. They were pioneering a form of filmmaking they called sequences-- rather than making one long, authoritative film about a people, they were making a series of short films that each showed a specific aspect of life in the community. After I'd been there a couple of months, they gave me the opportunity to edit some sequences. They were fairly easy to edit because you'd pull out all the footage that was related to a particular incident or theme. For instance, there was a leader in the village named Dedeheiwa who decided to take all of his children and grandchildren down to the waterhole to bathe.

Tim asked me, "Can you cut a sequence out of that?" It was a very contained project and an easy way to learn. So, I edited some sequences like that, and they seemed to me to speak for themselves about the lives of these people. As I got more experienced, Tim invited me to go through the footage and find my own theme and create a sequence of my own. I found footage, over time, of people ornamenting themselves with flowers that they picked in the jungle. So I made an edited sequence out of it and Tim called it "Morning Flowers." He said it showed my sensibility as a female filmmaker, which I guess was good, because I was the only woman working there.

There was something about being in this editing room, and constantly hearing the sounds of the jungle all around, and the sounds of people in the village, talking, laughing, cooking, kids playing—and our job was to putting these sequences together in a way that showed viewers what daily life looked like. I was really excited about what we were doing.

Then the anthropologist, Chagnon, came to visit from the University of Michigan where he was teaching, and I began to realize that there were other agendas going on in this project. I read Chagnon's book, *The Fierce People*, and realized that I was associated with someone who characterized the Yanomami in as implicitly violent, aggressive, and committed to warfare. Chagnon was a socio-biologist. He had a theory about human development that ranked people on an evolutionary scale. He argued that the Yanomami were emblematic of an evolutionary scheme in which violent masculinity was prioritized, in a survival-of-the-fittest paradigm. The foundation of Chagnon's argument was that the Yanomami had had very little contact with the outside world before he started to work with them, so the aggressive traits he described were "natural" to them and gave clear indication of the bedrock of human nature. They were being offered as an exemplar of that.

Chagnon came to look at the work we had done and compose narrations for all the sequences. In other words, these lovely sequences that we were cutting weren't going to stand by themselves [laughing]. They were going to be narrated and interpreted by this guy. So I started doing research, and found the Anthropological Research Center, directed by Sandy Davis. I read some of their publications and realized that Chagnon was at the center of a huge controversy within the discipline of anthropology. Davis and others were pointing out that the Yanomami were not an uncontacted people. They were taking the brunt of Brazilian government policies that were encouraging mining and settlement in the Amazon. They were being pressured by missionaries in both Venezuela and Brazil. They were being pushed further and further into the jungle; they had been exposed to diseases which they had no protections against. There was an epidemic of measles; there were also questions being raised about whether Chagnon's expeditions had been responsible in inoculating or treating people.

Amazonia had become a new frontier which the Brazilian government was using to entice mining companies because the Amazon is full of minerals. They were also offering land to poor people in much the same way that frontier land was offered to poor people as an outlet for social discontent and lack of opportunity in the United States. Just as in the U.S., the indigenous people were being pushed out. None of those stories would be in the films.

So, it was time to move on, and I did. Still, the kind of work that I saw and participated in at the Center for Documentary Anthropology was extremely formative to me as a documentary filmmaker. Tim Asch was incredibly generous in giving me my start, and very supportive of my learning. But his associate, John Marshall, was the filmmaker from whom I learned the most. He was a brilliant cinematographer. He had filmed extensively with the !Kung San people in Southern Africa, in Namibia and parts of Botswana. John's work began in the early 1950's, when he was quite young, and the early films tend to portray what appears to be a culturally pristine existence. By the 1970's the !Kung San were living on reservations. And John's later filmmaking was shaped by that political process of repression that was taking place as he documented the testimony of people whom he had known for 20 years.

Now, many years later, I'm well aware of the colonial and neocolonial history that shaped the lives of the !Kung San and the Yanomami. It's important for those of us who do documentary work, not just ethnographic work, to learn those histories and critique the ways in which they have shaped our own practices today. At the same time I guess I would say that when I was working with Tim and John, and I was struggling with the implications of the Yanomami project, I was also falling in love with a certain kind of filmmaking, which is observational, which stands back and looks at people, and which constructs texts which audiences can have an experience of learning to read for themselves. I've learned to be more skeptical of this kind of filmmaking, or a bit more critical of it. But at the time, it seemed to me to be very beautiful. In some ways, I still think it's beautiful because it requires the filmmaker to do a lot of looking.

Zaragoza: As opposed to a lot of narrating over, which is what you were seeing probably.

Fischel: Yes, and I think the value of observation has stayed with me as a value that I want students to learn in the work they do. Obviously, observation can be skewed by our cultural perspectives, our biases, our own experiences, the agendas that we bring to things, the hierarchies we participate in and often benefit from. That's an intense and important thing to grapple with. I wouldn't say that documentary filmmakers have always grappled with it well, but that ability to look, and learn from looking, and allow audiences to learn from looking is still a pretty extraordinary thing, I think.

So on some level, one of my earliest lessons about film was that you can use a camera in that way; that you could turn on the camera and leave it on for a long time; that you weren't looking for short little clips or sound bites. You might not have a whole story together when you started. You learned the story from the process of interacting with what was there. You committed yourself to a

process of ongoing revelation, as reality unspools in front of you. To some extent, that's impacted by your presence, but actually less than you would think because people get used to your being there, and get comfortable with it.

I've done filming like that. In Colombia, I had moments like that, when I honestly had very little awareness of my own body in space, because all my awareness was going into the lens. And the camera seemed to become an extension of the reality that was taking place in front of it. But in those early days of my learning, the first place I saw filmmaking like that was in John Marshall's work; his early films of the !Kung San were like that. I thought they were beautiful. I thought the people he was filming were beautiful. There's a kind of a transparency about that work that in retrospect, I've learned to be more cautious of. It's still a frame. What creates the frame? What's outside the frame? [laughing] You have to ask those questions. But I would say it was my earliest lesson in cinematography, and it's fundamental to the way I approach cinematography today.

I graduated from Brandeis in 1971 and went to work for the Center for Documentary Anthropology a few months later. When I left in 1973, I started freelancing in the Boston area. By that time, I was committed to being a documentary filmmaker. That's what I knew, that's what I was going to do.

I did some freelancing. I worked with a group called Blackside, which later made *Eyes on the Prize*. I got to work with some other folks doing documentary work, and some commercial work. I focused on expanding my skills. Women in film generally became sound recordists or editors, but Blackside also trained me to produce films for them. Then in 1976 I went to Colombia to make what turned out to be my first independent film, working in the shantytowns I told you about that I'd been introduced to through my friend, Orlando.

I think where we left off was that I presented this project to people in the community, and they said, yes, they wanted me to do it. So I went home and talked to my mentor, John Marshall, about it. He gave me some out-of-date black and white film stock, but he said, "It's still good. You should take it."

My grandpa, Joe, had recently passed away and left me some AT&T stock, which I cashed in to buy my first 16-mm film camera for \$350 [laughing] from somebody who became a friend, Herb Fuller. We also bought a portable tape recorder, and a friend gave me a device he had made to hand-hold the camera. Another friend made me an electric motor, because the camera was a wind-up camera that could only film about 23 seconds at a time. But with the motor, you could film continuously. It seemed as if the whole independent documentary cohort in Boston was trying to help!

I went back to Colombia in 1976 with the man who was then my partner, Glenn McNatt. Glenn was a journalist and graduate student in sociology. When we arrived in Colombia, the people were ready to receive us. They said, “We’ve been talking about how this is going to work. We propose that you live in the community with us. You need to understand what life is like here, *en carne propia*” which means, “in the flesh.” They said, “So, Anita, you’re going to stay in the community with us, you’re going to work where we work, you’re going to do what we do. And when you get sick—and you will get sick—we will take care of you.”

I was totally ecstatic. Wow, what an opportunity to be close to these amazing people. So Glenn and I moved into Barrio Fidel Castro, into the family compound of Dona Ana Tulia David and her husband, Rafael Rojas and their children. They actually built us a shack. By that time, their home had been rebuilt in adobe, but they built us a little shack, so I learned how it was done. They put up four wooden beams, filled in the walls with bamboo poles, and covered them with plastic shower curtains recycled out of the city dump for walls. They left an opening for the entrance but there was no door. There was a dirt floor, and these large beams across the top, to hold up the roof. The one thing we had to purchase was tarpaper for the roof. Don Rafael had a machete, and everything was cut with a machete, and notched together—no hammer or nails. This is what peoples’ first houses in the tugurio always looked like, before they gained the wherewithal to build more permanent homes. It was one room, and that was where we lived. It was an amazing experience.

Zaragoza: How long did you live in that shack?

Fischel: About six months, maybe seven. It wasn’t a lot of time in the scheme of things, but so impactful. I still have my journals from that time. Every morning, I would sit in the doorway and write about what had happened the day before. I’d had no training in how to do this, but I knew I wouldn’t retain it all, and I wanted to record it as it was happening.

It was a while before I turned on the camera. Again, it was that process of just being with people and learning, trying to understand what was going on around me. Even the fundamental rhythms of how people move and interact and operate in their space, I needed to learn those things through observation and familiarity. So I spent a lot of time sitting in Doña Tulia’s home and hanging out.

After a while, I started to do some audio recording with Dona Tulia. I had started to ask her questions about her life. At the time she was 53 and was considered one of the elders in Barrio Fidel Castro. She had come with her husband from the countryside where they worked as peasants on the

farm of landowner. After we had done several sessions together, I learned that the recording process was actually triggering new memories. If we had recorded one afternoon, the next morning, all of a sudden, she would walk in and say, "Anita, after we talked, I remembered something..." So I learned to keep the tape recorder under the bed at the ready, and just pull it out and hold out the mic, and she would talk. It was a self-generating process. Really beautiful.

I knew I wanted to film in the city dump, because the community had been built next to it, and people were gleaning out of the dump. It took a while for us to work up to that. Eventually, we arranged to do it. Dona Tulia went to glean in the dump and Glenn and Heroina went to stand next to me. As we walked in, Heroina held onto me--there were these huge trucks steaming in and then backing up and dumping all this stuff and then steaming out again. You had to stay out of their way if you didn't want to get hurt. And I'm looking through the camera, I'm not thinking about staying out of anybody's way, so Heroina is pulling me to the side, or pulling me back, and in some cases, pulling me forward. I'm probably up to my ankles in garbage, and I don't care, because all of my energy is in the lens. [laughing] That was the first time I'd ever experienced anything like that. It's almost like an out of body experience to film in that way. I knew the people I was filming wanted me there, wanted me to see. That's a powerful thing to experience; that you're kind of an extension of people's sense of self, at least in that moment.

Dona Tulia was gathering firewood that day. Afterwards, she hoisted the firewood on her head. It was a walk from the dump to the community, maybe a quarter of a mile across an open space. I said to her, "Please, would you wait and let me get ahead of you, so I can film you walking?" And she waited, so this was the one piece of manipulation that happened that day. She waited with that heavy load on her head while I raced ahead of her and picked a vantage point where I could see the whole space. And then she walked across and I filmed it, to show how strong and dignified she was.

We all got back to her home—her family was one of the few in the community that had running water. There was a municipal pipe they had tapped into, so she had a stone sink with a faucet. And she immediately went and washed her face, hands and arms, and I filmed that because it was so important to her to be clean, and she had been in a really dirty place.

The other reason the dump was important was because the priests had organized a recycling cooperative, so people were taking cardboard and metal that they cleaned out of the dump, and they were selling it. They were pooling their resources, and they were selling this stuff and shipping it to the coast. It was turning into a source of income, and that was a really brilliant thing to do, because there

were no other resources. This was the resource. So how do you turn that resource into something that enables people to build the lives they dream about? It was a really important thing to do.

When we got back to the U.S., I went to my mentor, John Marshall, and I told him that we'd finished filming. I had no idea what we were going to do next because we didn't have any money. He said, "Let's send the film to the lab. I'll pay to have it developed." When the lab sent back the processed film, we screened it together. I was blown away with what we'd filmed. I mean, this was my first real attempt at cinematography. I didn't know I could do it. He said to me, "I'm going to see a film made of this. We're going to make a work print"—which is what you had to do with film in those days, you had to make a copy—"You're going to work here. I'm going to give you an editing bench to work on, and you're going to work on it till it's done. I want to see it finished."

So that's how I made my first independent film. It taught me a lot about filmmaking, but the learning about community and community work was just as deep and formative.

In 1978—two years later—I got to go with John to the Kalahari and record sound for him. He'd been shut out of the region for several years, and when he returned, the people he had known were on a reservation. I saw him using some of the observational strategies that had been so extraordinary in the early work, but he was also directly interviewing people, incorporating their direct testimony into the film. This was considered somewhat transgressive at the time—somewhat like an avant-garde theater director who breaks the fourth wall. But it was powerful and necessary because the people were speaking about the experience of colonization. They talked about the loss of independence, the inability to hunt game, the tension it was creating in the community, the anger that was simmering because all of a sudden people were trying to figure out ways to enter into a moneyed economy, feeling scarcity, feeling helpless to change it. It was extraordinary to me that people I had seen in the early films from the '50's were being interviewed 20 years later, analyzing the changes in their lives.

That film, *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*, uses the old footage from the 1950's and the more contemporary footage from 1978 to try to address the conundrum which anthropology and ethnography and ethnographic film all wrestle with: that the desire to represent people as uncontacted, in a pristine environment, as it may have been before colonization, is really a colonial dream. It's a colonial dream, right? It's our nostalgia for a world we didn't get to experience ourselves and in fact, have had a hand in destroying. It's also a way of placing people in the past, in a kind of atemporal space, a kind of a permanent past. But to actually *be* with people in their present means you have to interact with them, not just observe them.

Zaragoza: That's right. It's resisting the cultural genocide that that colonial fantasy is.

Fischel: It completely disguises it, right? It's like Edward Curtis's photographs. So beautiful, but he's photographing people in full regalia in these pristine natural environments, at a time when folks are living on reservations and wearing blue jeans and working for capitalist industries. There's a value in that kind of preservation, but in and of itself, it's not the whole story that needs to be told. That brought my experience of ethnographic filmmaking full circle, I think.

Zaragoza: Do you go on to graduate school after this? So, late '70s, early '80s, what's your next set of moves?

Fischel: I did some more freelance work in Boston for a couple of years. A little bit in New York City, but mostly in the Boston area. Then I got a grant to make a film about women with eating disorders from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy. I finished that film in 1982, so that was my second independent film.

Zaragoza: I think I probably saw that film in middle school.

Fischel: Did you? [laughing]

Zaragoza: It's likely. I definitely remember a couple of eating disorder films in middle school. I was in middle school in the mid-'80s, so it probably got to us by '86.

Fischel: Maybe. Then I got invited to apply for a visiting teaching position at Hampshire College. I was living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, right outside Boston. Hampshire is in Amherst, so it's about two hours away by car. On a whim, I applied, and I got the job.

I was ready for a change. Freelance filmmaking is very challenging, and it was disillusioning in terms of what I thought the field of documentary was like, and kind of chaotic. I wanted more structure in my life, and I felt ready to try something new. I also wanted to grapple with and reflect more on what documentary really was politically and theoretically. To reflect on my own experience, to have a chance to read and study, and think more about it.

So I accepted the job, and I taught at Hampshire full-time for two years. I never imagined myself becoming a teacher. It's not what I had ever thought about when I speculated about what my future or what kind of profession I would have. Maybe that's because my mom was an educator and I never wanted to follow in her footsteps. [laughing]

But I liked teaching at Hampshire. One of the things I liked most about it was the respect shown to undergraduates, the dialogues I was able to have with undergraduates, and the level of interaction

with them around their work. There was a very vibrant group of students and faculty making photography and film at Hampshire, and it was wonderful to participate in that.

The senior member of my program, Jerome Liebling, was a very fine photographer, and Abraham Ravett also taught there, who's done some interesting experimental autobiographical work. Film and photography were very connected; we taught them together, and students generally explored both media. In fact, I got sent to a photography school in Maine to polish my photography skills, because it had been a while since I'd worked in photography, and I had never had the opportunity to do it systematically and seriously. I was there to teach, but it was also an opportunity to learn more about documentary film history and theory, because as a practitioner, you don't necessarily get to learn these things. I also began to appreciate teaching more.

At the end of those two full years, I applied to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, right across town, and ended up in the School of Communication. I started without a very clear sense of how far I wanted to pursue graduate education, but I ended up getting a doctorate. My mentor at the University of Massachusetts in the Department of Communications was Ian Angus, who just retired from teaching at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. We were the same age, and we were friends, but he was also a guide who introduced me to new ways of thinking, including Post-Structuralist thought. Ian challenged me to become a better reader, a better writer, and a better critical thinker. He always, always encouraged me to build on what I already knew and use it as a basis for reflection. That was really useful and helpful. And it kept me there, when I doubted whether graduate study was the right direction for me.

I didn't realize when I entered that the aim of graduate school is to professionalize you in a discipline. I have a certain resistance to that--I had it and continue to have it. I think I share it with some folks at Evergreen. But I did want to learn, and I did need tools to learn better. I needed ideas. I needed better reading strategies. I needed to discipline my writing. I needed to place it in deeper and broader contexts, and graduate school enabled me to do that.

Working with Ian, whose background was very interdisciplinary, in philosophy and political theory, encouraged me to work in a more interdisciplinary way and create my own intellectual synthesis. I took some classes in the department, but I also explored other disciplines. I had a lot of leeway to construct my own learning paths.

Zaragoza: Are you still working in documentary film at this point? Are you connecting these two? Personally, I think of good documentary films as educational at their heart.

Fischel: Sure. I still identify myself as a documentary filmmaker. I don't have an active project that I'm working on right now.

Zaragoza: No, I mean when you were at Amherst.

Fischel: Oh. Yes, but I wasn't making anything. I was being a student. I also continued to do some part-time teaching at Hampshire, and I taught the filmmaking class at U. Mass. My department didn't have anybody else to teach it and so it was offered to me in exchange for a tuition waiver and a fellowship. The class was for senior students and focused on 16mm film, using Bolex cameras, the same camera that I used in Colombia. The Bolex is a relatively small camera that takes 100-foot magazines, about two and a half minutes, so you have to be very intentional about what you're doing.

When I came, all the cameras were broken, and the students were using these broken cameras, and it was ruining their film, and it was awful. I threw a kind of a public fit [laughing] and they fixed the cameras.

Zaragoza: Yeah, you can't have a filmmaking class without cameras that work.

Fischel: I said, "You can't do this. You can't set people up this way. It's expensive. What are we talking about here?" So, they fixed the cameras, and then we could do some work together, and it was fun. It affirmed my sense that I was an adult, even though I was becoming a student again. I mean, I wasn't right out of college, I was 32, 33? I was 33 and starting graduate school for the first time. On the one hand, it was a fabulous adventure, and on the other hand, I had that need that I now assume our students have, which is to be fully visible in the program as someone who already knew some things, had already done some things. I had a lot more to learn, but I wasn't a tabula rasa. I wasn't an empty slate to be written on.

It was a great experience. I was there longer than I had expected. I entered in '84 and I left for Evergreen in 1989, having taken my comprehensive exams, but not having written the dissertation. I completed the dissertation out here. I actually received the doctorate in January 1992, so it took eight years.

Zaragoza: That was the year I graduated from high school, so we graduated together. Little did we know. [laughter]

Fischel: That's funny. When I came out here in '89, my son, Sasha was 16 months old. He was born in Massachusetts.

Zaragoza: While you're in graduate school?

Fischel: Yes, in '88.

Zaragoza: So you're not only a student, and teaching classes with broken cameras, but also becoming a mama.

Fischel: Yeah, I finished my coursework the month before he was born and studied for my comps while he was an infant. That was interesting.

Zaragoza: But you're also completing your coursework with him in your belly.

Fischel: That was actually kind of fun. U Mass is built on a hill. You park your car down at the bottom of the hill in the parking lot and walk up the hill. So I remember being maybe 7 months pregnant, walking up the hill for a department colloquium, and walking into a room where everybody was already sitting, and immediately, my mentor, Ian, standing up and giving me his seat. That had never happened. I never expected it to happen, just because I had this big belly. [laughing] They were very sweet and protective of me. It was fun. I enjoyed being pregnant.

Zaragoza: Now Sascha's in graduate school.

Fischel: Now he's in graduate school. But when you have a child, that puts some urgency on to get settled, and I wasn't settled. I'd been free to devote a lot of attention to my own process, and to be comfortable with turns in the road and that was okay. Now it was time to get serious about settling down.

Zaragoza: I can relate. We also had Gabby when we were in graduate school.

Fischel: So, that was the next step; that was the next phase.

Zaragoza: Then you come out here to Evergreen.

Fischel: I was doing graduate work, and I was teaching part-time at Hampshire. But it was time to apply for jobs. I didn't know anything about Evergreen, but I already knew, from the teaching experiences that I'd had, that the theory-to-practice connections were really important to me.

At least in media, it's fairly traditional that you either get a job teaching history and theory, or you get a job teaching production. You don't get to do both. I wrote about this when I applied to Evergreen. It looked to me like a place where I could do both; where I could keep that theory-to-practice cycle that I'd been trying to perpetuate through this movement from making a film to graduate study. I was trying to perpetuate that cycle in myself. I just did something; I need to reflect on it. What can I read that will help me reflect on it? How can I theorize my own experience differently, and what

does that say about the practice of documentary work more broadly? Evergreen looked like a place where I could continue to do that myself and support that process in students.

Zaragoza: So you applied. Do you remember the interview process?

Fischel: Vaguely. [laughing]

Zaragoza: Do you remember what that was like? What are your memories of that?

Fischel: I had to make a public presentation. They told me I didn't have to show work because the committee had already looked at it. They had me spend some time with students.

Zaragoza: The work that they looked at, is that the work that you talked about in Colombia? Is that the work that they're seeing?

Fischel: They saw the work I'd made in Colombia. They also saw a short experimental film that I made while I was at Hampshire called *Thanksgiving Day*, which was an experimental reworking of some footage that I'd shot of a Thanksgiving reunion that took place at my parents' house with my father's whole extended family there.

I shot it in Super 8, and then I worked on an optical printer. This was something I learned to do at Hampshire. Hampshire really opened and expanded my understanding of experimental work as a language that I could utilize, that I could draw on and utilize for my own work. So I re-photographed the Super 8 footage. If you work on an optical printer, you can slow it down, or speed it up, or change the rhythms of things, or zoom in on them, or zoom back, or put multiple images together in a grid. It's painstaking work, but it's quite beautiful.

I made that piece as a silent film. I didn't have any sound that seemed to fit. I sent those two pieces to Evergreen, and that's what they looked at.

What I remember is that when I came, another member of the Media faculty, Sally Cloninger, picked me up early in the morning. It was February and it was raining. She brought an umbrella, which I later learned nobody at Evergreen uses but she brought it for me. She took me to the campus. Everything was so lush and green. I was coming from Massachusetts where there was still snow on the ground and everything was white and brown and grey. That was amazing.

Sally had plans for me to attend a class to learn about coordinated studies, and Evergreen pedagogies. But it turned out the class was on a fieldtrip. Then I was supposed to meet with the Provost, but it turned out the Provost was occupied, so she really didn't know what to do with me. We were sitting somewhere in the deans' area—I'm really not sure where—and a young man walked in. It

turned out he was a student I'd worked with at Hampshire, who was now living in Washington State. For some reason he was on an Evergreen listserv and saw that I was coming and came to see me. His name was David Newhouse, but we always called him Zoom. Sally said, "Okay, now I know what you're going to do for the next two hours. You're going to spend them with him." And she walked out. [laughter] So far, I'd seen nothing of Evergreen.

Zaragoza: Or you've seen a lot. [laughter]

Fischel: Right. Chaotic. I vaguely remember the interview with the hiring committee. I remember that Gail Tremblay was on the hiring committee. I remember being asked a question about veterans, if you've had veterans in your class. I don't know why that question sticks out in my mind. It's the only one I remember.

I remember the public presentation because I talked about some new work that was coming out of England, made by post-colonial folks who'd moved from the periphery to the so-called center. Their families were from Jamaica and Nigeria and Hong Kong, places like that, and they had moved to England. So they were part of that "we are here because you were there" movement.

We would identify them as ethnically and racially different from one another, but they identified themselves as Black, and that was a political designation and a solidarity designation that referenced their origins in England's former colonies. They were doing film work together, and they were being mentored by a theorist I had met and read quite a lot of, and really learned to love and respect, named Stuart Hall.

Zaragoza: I know who you're talking about.

Fischel: It's an important movement. I remember talking about that movement, that it was influencing me a lot in terms of the way I thought about identity, and where documentary work came from, the languages of film, and the possibilities around film construction. Afterwards, I remember someone who was on the hiring committee coming up to me and saying, "We were hoping you would talk about this work. This is work that we're excited to learn more about."

The job was to teach Feminist and Third World media. I thought, if I get this job, it will be heaven, it was my ideal job! When I got back to Massachusetts, people asked me how it went, and I said, "Well, I think it's a really good fit. Maybe they found someone fabulous who they'll pick over me, but it's a really good fit." About two weeks later, they called and offered me the job. I didn't go to my other interviews. That was it. I was like, okay, yeah, this is what I want and I'm going.

I felt incredibly lucky, and I still feel incredibly lucky. For one thing, academia is such a narrow funnel for people to have to negotiate. It's hard to get a job, but to get a job in a place that allowed me to keep learning and growing, as a filmmaker and as a thinker and as a teacher--it was beyond my wildest expectations. I'll always be profoundly grateful that this is where I got to do my work. It's been great.

Zaragoza: Your first programs, who were you teaching with? What were you doing in the early years of your career at Evergreen?

Fischel: For the first two years my programs were assigned. The first year, I taught in a core program called *Ourselves Among Others*, with Ainara Wilder, who was Latvian-American and taught theater, and Meg Hunt, who taught ballet. Both of them had been at the college for many years. The other member of our team was Ratna Roy, who was hired the same year I was, and taught Orissi dance. That was the first year.

The second year, I was supposed to teach by myself in a program that was the precursor to *Mediaworks*. At that time it was called *Recording and Structuring with Light and Sound*, or RSLs. You know these names, right?

Zaragoza: That one's new to me. I know *Mediaworks* very well, but [not] the precursor to it.

Fischel: At the last minute, there was an arrangement made for me to teach with Gan Li, a filmmaker who was an exchange faculty from China. It was great to work with him.

The year I taught RSLs was the year I realized that even though I had learned a lot at Hampshire and in graduate school about my discipline, what I had *not* learned were the pedagogical skills to create learning communities. Hampshire didn't aspire to create that, at least, not in the classroom. The learning communities at Hampshire were created on the fly by students and faculty, because everybody was in the same space, working and making things. That's what created the community. The building was basically one open space with classrooms, darkrooms and editing rooms along the sides, and faculty offices on a balcony above. People were constantly in and out of the darkrooms, and in and out of the editing rooms, and the classrooms and the gallery space, and sitting on the floor, and showing each other their work, and talking about it. That was the basis of the learning community. It was very dynamic, and from an architectural standpoint, very conducive to building connections between people working in different sorts of media. I really missed that when I came to Evergreen and taught in the COM building, which has a lot of sealed off areas and winding corridors, so it's almost impossible to

know what people are doing behind all those closed doors. I liked what I had learned about community building at Hampshire. But to actually create it in a class?

Classes were not the center of Hampshire's education. The center of Hampshire's education was a system of *exams*, independent projects that students did, working with one faculty member or with a committee of faculty. The students completed exams at various levels: first, they did a series of Division 1 exams, which basically demonstrated their competence in different disciplinary areas, sort of like General Education, but they were created independently. Often, a student would propose a Division 1 exam that was the outgrowth of something they had studied in a class that interested them. And they would ask a faculty member to sponsor it and work with them.

Then in their sophomore or junior year students created their Division 2 exam, which is interdisciplinary. It can take up to two years, or even longer. The Division 2 consists of classes and independent projects, supervised by a faculty committee. It's basically how students create their portfolio. I had students, for instance, who were interested in urban planning and media, so they put together a Division 2, with a committee that reflected those interests. Or, urban planning and anthropology and media, or dance and media. The students were encouraged to be very independent and creative about the way they pursued different interests, and then work to integrate them both theoretically and practically through this exam.

The Division 3 is like our senior thesis. It can take a full year and involves working closely with a faculty committee. The Division Three is considered the culmination of each students' work, and the titles of their Division 3 exams are read off at graduation when they receive their diplomas. In general, the exams are the center of each student's work, and the written evaluations that faculty advisers produce are kept in the transcript. They are time-consuming to write, much like the evaluations we produce for our programs, and they are quite detailed. Hampshire faculty do teach classes, and they write evals for the students in their classes, but the evals are much less extensive, and the classes themselves are considered more peripheral to the students' work.

Zaragoza: How interesting. That's very different from what you'd come to here at Evergreen.

Fischel: Really different. There are some aspects of Hampshire's structure that I think we would benefit from. For instance, the Division Two is a great structure for helping students gather up the disparate threads of the programs they've taken and try to make sense of them by articulating the unique interdisciplinary focus of their work. I think it would be especially useful now, when so many students are clearly anxious about their futures and are trying to be more linear and specialized. The supervising

committees are also useful to faculty, because they create the opportunity for conversations and relationships that didn't necessarily exist before. The Division 3-- I think it would be useful for Evergreen because students are already trying to do it informally. It's also a great assessment structure, because you're looking at the quality of the work that students are able to produce, which can be quite extraordinary, as well as the places in which they clearly need more help.

Zaragoza: Almost mandatory capstone projects.

Fischel: Exactly. Frankly, I think it would make a huge difference, but I suspect it would require giving faculty release time to sit on the exam committees, rather than simply calling them independent contracts and assuming they are part of our regular workload. I always thought this would be useful, but Evergreen doesn't like to learn from the experiences of other colleges, from what I can see.

[laughing] We've always seen ourselves as pathbreaking, and in some ways, we are, but there are still things to learn from other colleges.

But what I didn't understand when I came to Evergreen was how to build learning community in the classroom—and it was immediately apparent that I needed to learn it. In that first RSLs class, there were white students and students of color; there were students who were fairly privileged economically and there were working-class students, there were students who loved more literal and “realistic” kinds of documentary work; and students in love with experimental work.

All these things were passionately enough felt that students needed a lot of help and support to learn how to talk to one another, to see each other as valued resources, to value each other's ideas and approaches to things, and to actually be able to be useful to one another's learning and creating. How do you create a viable atmosphere for critique, for instance, if students haven't learned to recognize and value the languages and structures that their classmates are exploring? Without that ongoing learning and engagement, you'd have silences in which only the faculty would be giving feedback. That's not conducive to building community. I didn't come in knowing how to do that. It's something I had to learn. Something would come up in a seminar, for instance, and I would have to respond to it in the moment, and later say to myself, I really need to think more deeply about this. Because I didn't feel ready for it.

Looking back at the early evaluations, I can see that students felt like I handled things mostly okay. They talk about tensions in seminar, and then they talk about interventions I made that took us through it. So maybe I got lucky, but it took a while before I knew how to create structures that encourage students to work together, to value collaboration, to be good listeners and observers, to be patient, to see education as a collective enterprise and not just be something about themselves

individually, or about themselves and those who look and think like them. It took a while before I felt confident leading a discussion about significant differences in the classroom, or guiding students to be more reflective about their own positionality and assumptions. I think probably the most profound learning I did at Evergreen, at least in those early days, was around developing the skills to do that work. But in the beginning, I was very aware that I didn't know how to do it, and it was hard.

Zaragoza: At that time, in these first two years, what is Evergreen like? What is this place that you're walking into? What's the atmosphere? What are some of the questions that you find yourself immersed into immediately as a new person? Because there are the levels of the classroom and those kinds of silos, but then there's this larger thing that you're immediately thrown into in terms of what Evergreen is, and how it, as an institution, is evolving, and the different debates and conversations and questions that are always present.

Fischel: I may want to edit this later, but I guess there are a couple of things. Initially, those first couple years, it was hard for me to get rooted here. There was a transition happening because the founding faculty were still here, most of them. The college had been small, and it was starting to get larger. Those founding faculty were really not available to newcomers like me.

I was finally able to create a context for understanding that at a retreat that took place, maybe my second year or third year. The retreat was entitled "Remembering Community." It was supposed to be a play on words, so remembering in the sense of memory, but also re-remembering in the sense of constituting or reconstituting membership. A member of the founding faculty got up in front of us and he was asked to talk about his experience at the college. What he ended up saying was that he had bonded so deeply with his colleagues that when new people came, he had no room for them. I thought, "Oh that's why you never say hello to me on Red Square." [laughing]

This was not a healthy way for a community to behave, because it meant there was no mentorship. Those of us who were new were mentoring each other. We were figuring things out together. We were developing a sense of identity and solidarity with one another, but in a way that was cut off from the early, very important work that went into constituting the college—work that might have been quite imperfect but was still significant. I think we would like to have been able to attach ourselves to it, because it was certainly what had attracted us to Evergreen in the first place. But there was no way to attach to it, so we had to pick it up as we went along. I understand a lot more now, but it took a long time.

What I remember about my first days at Hampshire was the openness to new ideas and new faculty. People would seek me out, ask me questions, invite me to lunch, try to figure out the points of contact between their interests and experiences and my own. Initially, I didn't see that at Evergreen. Instead, people asked me continually what I thought of the place. I didn't know what I thought. I was just learning. But they didn't ask me about my previous experiences, and they didn't have a lot of curiosity about those experiences. Again, I wondered about that. It didn't seem like the mark of a healthy community not to be curious. In fact, for a community that billed itself as innovative and experimental, it felt enclosed and self-defeating. You have to keep bringing in new ideas, right?

Zaragoza: Yes.

Fischel: Whatever the innovations were to begin with, it doesn't stop there. You have to keep innovating.

Zaragoza: Otherwise it's orthodoxy, quickly devolving.

Fischel: Exactly. There were other issues when I first arrived; the college was in an administrative crisis. The Provost had just been fired. Within a few months, the person who had been the President was discovered to have faked his resume and stepped down. That was a little disconcerting. [laughing]

But there were also some totally wonderful things that showed me that people had a passion for teaching. I had never had a passion for teaching; I liked teaching. I thought your passion was supposed to be about your discipline. The idea that a significant part of your work could be teaching was a new idea to me.

Initially, I wanted to hold it lightly, because I didn't want all my energies to go into the classroom. Evergreen felt very insular to me. My work as a filmmaker and increasingly, someone who thought and wrote about film, was what connected me to places outside Evergreen. I didn't want to lose that sense of connection, whether it was to the movement of documentary film, nationally or internationally, or to the communities where I had filmed, to Latin America, or to any of the things that I had learned and cared about and participated in over the years. So it was mixed in that way.

There were also political tensions. . . how do I say this? particularly about race and racism and about the role of women at the college. There were women faculty— this was an attempt at mentorship—who organized forums for the newly-arrived female faculty to talk to us about what their struggles had been like in the beginning to be on equal footing with the male faculty, with the men. People like Betsy Diffendal and Llyn de Danaan—it was important to hear about their experiences. I hope they've been interviewed—they have a lot to say. There was a certain amount of schooling that

came from those people and those sessions that was important, in terms of understanding that the history of this place had not always been utopian. It was a history of struggle. And it helped to frame and explain some of the things that happened to newer arrivals like me in our first years at the college.

I think it was the second year or maybe the third: a Sexual Harassment Disappearing Task Force was set up because there had been complaints made, and the college had a history of male faculty partnering with women who had been their students. Of course, many of those relationships were consensual. But there were power issues involved, lines had been crossed, and there were female staff who were former students who wanted to tell the women faculty what it had been like to be in a class when those relationships were heating up.

I had certainly learned in graduate school that there's a real potential for those kinds of relationships to happen, and I'd learned about the kind of care it takes to navigate that. I had seen male faculty in my graduate program pursuing female students, not just graduate students, but undergraduates. As a graduate student I had learned how close the relationship can become with a male mentor, and how it can blur boundaries in really confusing ways. For all those reasons, it's important for faculty to get clear about where the boundary should be. It's the faculty's responsibility to do that work—you can't expect students to do it. So this DTF—this Disappearing Task Force—was formed to look at some of those issues.

What I remember is the extraordinary atmosphere of tension in the faculty meetings when the DTF would come in to solicit comment, or share some of its own thinking, and how angry and upset some of the founding faculty would get at the idea that their conduct in the classroom should be scrutinized. There was a point when, in preparation for those meetings, the more senior female faculty called all of the women together to say, "Let's prepare for what we're going to say when we go in there. Do we want to propose a motion? What's our strategy?"

So we agreed that we would all go in together. I remember going into the faculty meeting, and one of the more senior female faculty made a motion that we had decided on collectively, and one of male faculty said, "I wish you would withdraw that!" And she withdrew it!

The tension was rising in the room. There were higher and higher levels of tension. I looked around and realized that almost all the women I'd come in with had left the room. They were gone! There were very few of us left in the room, but because Laurie Meeker was on the DTF, I couldn't leave. We were hired the same year and it was important to me to support her. I couldn't leave her there, so I stayed.

One of the male faculty got up and said, “This is how I always start seminar. I go around and I touch each student, and I say, ‘How’re you doing?’ And now, because of this microscope that’s being trained on all of us, I can’t do that anymore. I can’t touch my students. I can’t do that.”

I responded by saying something like, “I can see that you would miss that, but I think we’re learning something about power relationships in the classroom, and how women students experience touching and attention directed at them. And maybe in this case, it’s completely welcome, but it’s not always. And being more reflective about that is just something I think we’re all going to have to learn how to do.”

Someone else got up and said, “I’ve been here for years, and I’ve never had to second-guess myself in the classroom. And now, all of a sudden, I’m being asked to do that because *some woman* says so!” He’s screaming at me. He’s screaming. And I walked out. He was screaming my name as I walked out.

I’m embarrassed to say that I was thoroughly intimidated. But I was also incredulous. I had thought Evergreen was a progressive college. And here we were fighting about things that I knew other institutions were addressing head-on. It was a humbling experience, and frankly, it taught me to be scared of faculty meetings. It was a lot of years before I got over being scared of faculty meetings and felt strong enough to talk at faculty meetings.

End Part 1 of 2 of Anne Fischel on 7-30-2019

Begin Part 2 of 2 of Anne Fischel on 7-30-2019

Zaragoza: We’re here again with Anne Fischel in part two of her oral history interview. Anne, go ahead and start bringing us back into the context of what you were talking about at the end of the last interview.

Fischel: I think the question that spurred those stories was, what were some of my early experiences at Evergreen, and some of my earliest impressions, or some of the challenges that I confronted? We’re talking about 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, those first years that I was there.

The college at this point is approximately 20 years old. I guess the context in which I think about those stories I already told you is that the folks who founded Evergreen had some important visions of progressive education, and what pedagogy could look like, and what relationships between teachers and students could look like, and what knowledge could and should be. That came from their own questioning of more traditional forms of higher education that they’d been exposed to. But what I

don't think they'd had much experience doing—or at least I didn't see it—was questioning the ways in which gender, race, or class inequalities might play a part in their own positioning, or their relationships with students, or the ways they thought about useful forms of knowledge or useful forms of pedagogy. I think that's what we were running into when I came to the college.

Zaragoza: I would love for you to speak more to that, especially with regards to race and white supremacy at that point.

Fischel: There were efforts being made to diversify the faculty, both in terms of gender and race. About three years after I was hired, I joined a group which called itself the Racial Justice Group. We were looking at faculty's experiences of inequity at the college and doing some really good work to try to create relationships of solidarity, by teaching together, sharing our experiences, trying to analyze what we saw going on at the college.

Some of that came out of pressure from students who were frustrated with the college. There was a lot of turmoil at the time. Some of it came out of the distinct experiences of the faculty of color. I remember that in maybe my second or third year, Evergreen had an on-campus faculty retreat. We met in the Library lobby, and our colleagues of color weren't there. They had said that they wanted to meet separately at first. They might join up with us later, but they really needed some time by themselves.

I went to the meeting in the Library with the other white faculty and a few faculty of color. There was a lot of consternation expressed, and the word "separatist" was thrown around a lot. One of the deans got up and said, referring to our colleagues of color, "Well, they'll just have to catch up with the rest of us." I was shocked by that statement. It seemed really disrespectful to the work that not only our colleagues of color could be doing in their own created space, but that we as white faculty ought to be doing to prepare to enter into more equitable relationships.

Zaragoza: I can imagine someone saying, "Well, maybe it's the white faculty's turn to catch up."
[laughing]

Fischel: That exchange and that moment crystallized some things for me. I ended up being deeply connected to colleagues of color who, in many ways, were my primary mentors and friends at the beginning of my teaching at the college. I'm really grateful for that.

There were efforts before us and certainly, there have been efforts after us. In the student uprising of spring 2017, much reference was made to previous attempts to focus the attention of the college on racialized inequities. So we were just one of those moments, not a particularly significant one, except in the experiences of the folks who participated, and who began to realize that the

foundation was not there for our work. It had to be built. The foundation for understanding what an antiracist pedagogy could be and why we needed to learn it, so that inequities—among faculty, among students, between faculty and students, along racialized lines—which were being unconsciously reproduced over and over again could be called out and transformed. That wasn't really understood or acknowledged. It's an ongoing issue at the college.

In 1992 I was invited by Angela Gilliam, an African-American anthropologist and Gail Tremblay, a Native Onondaga artist and poet to teach a program we called *1492 to 1992: Image, Discourse, Decolonizing the Americas*. It was a really long title! This was a fantastic opportunity for me to work in an explicitly antiracist curricular context with two very brilliant and dynamic faculty, and a lot of students who shared a hunger and desire for that kind of learning. It was formative in terms of the ways I learned to think about teaching.

The other thing I want to say about this is that I was fortunate to be hired into what now might be called a pathway, the Moving Image area, or Media Arts/Moving Image area, which at the time was very small. I think there was one other faculty in the year that Laurie Meeker and I were hired. Now we're five. Because the mission of that area was explicitly to challenge the mainstream politics of representation, and how our ideas about narrative pleasure, entertainment, and commercial success are built on unexamined and often stereotypical images of people of color, women, gays, lesbians, working-class and trans folks, and to think about how those images shape peoples' consciousness and solidify identity. An important tenet of the Moving Image Group is to recognize the power these images have, and to explore with students a range of theories and practices to decolonize those images. It was wonderful to be hired into an area with that mission, and it continues.

Zaragoza: Are there examples of programs in the moving images area that did some of that that you would want to speak to?

Fischel: Our central program, which I told you about earlier was originally called Recording and Structuring Light and Sound. At some point we changed the name to Mediaworks. Sometimes it's been called Non-Fiction Media. It's essentially the same program. It's team-taught. It's all year. The focus is on non-fiction media, very broadly conceived, so not just documentary, but experimental work, community media, non-fiction animation. A very diverse and rich range of things.

We teach a range of media languages and modes of analysis that take us far from the Hollywood model, the commercial model. Students learned to question and challenge and analyze that model. More recently, because of students' exposure and involvement in social media, we're trying to learn

both about the rich potential of that media and develop a critical perspective on the challenges it creates. And that's an interesting dialogue with students. They have their own take on it, and they often bring their own examples to the table. That's a new learning for me.

But Mediaworks has always been about how we create new images based on people's capacity to imagine and envision, their growing understanding of their own experience, and the knowledge that they have of the world that they want to share. That process is very personal; it's a personal engagement with the multiple languages of media, as well as with the tools and technical possibilities and constraints. It's informed by a critique of Hollywood norms, the narrow range of images and ideas that Hollywood makes available to us. And it's a process that puts collective learning at the center, so that students learn to support and critique each others' work, and they learn to see the process of getting critique as useful to their growth as media makers.

When I came to the college, I felt that this was a unique media program in the country. Being able to teach Mediaworks felt like a deeply ethical thing to do and like a genuine invitation to students; they didn't have to subordinate themselves to a very restrictive model and set of rules about media, but they could explore, internally and externally. We could look at a far wider range of work. We could explore other languages and structures of media. They could experiment. They could dig deep within their own experience and see it as productive of stories that are worth telling. They could find ways to translate their experience into images that they could communicate to other people. And it's been gratifying to see the students respond to that invitation. A lot of compelling and beautiful work has come out of that program.

Zaragoza: In addition to Mediaworks, were there other memorable programs from throughout your time at Evergreen that you want to elaborate on?

Fischel: Oh, goodness. I've been fortunate to teach with Therese Saliba a number of times. Therese's areas of expertise are Middle East studies, feminist studies and Middle East literature. Therese is a really fine teacher, so I learned a lot from her about, for instance, how to support students in writing, or engage in difficult conversations with students. Middle East studies, and particularly the study of Israel and Palestine, are fraught with tensions. On a fundamental level it's an exercise in humanizing our understanding of Arabs and Palestinians, who have so often been demonized as violent, as terrorists, as anti-democratic, as haters in the mass news media and Hollywood, and also, to some extent, by mainstream politicians. It's also an exercise in helping students to think critically and clearly about colonialism, nationalism, and culture. As a Jewish faculty, it's been important to me to be able to model

for students how to approach the study of Israel in a non-defensive way. To care deeply about anti-Semitism, for instance, as a historical reality and present-day threat, while still being able to encompass a larger narrative, one that includes Palestinian reality as well. If you make a commitment to center both narratives, the Palestinian and the Jewish narrative—actually there's more than one of each--what would justice look like? It's an ethical question, but it's also a political, geographical, and strategic question, because the consequences of injustice and continuing the present political realities are huge. And Therese models this, not only in her analysis, but in her teaching: the dialogues she invites with her teaching partners and her students, the texts we read, our discussions. I learned a ton about the Middle East—and about good teaching—from Therese.

Zaragoza: I'm just really curious, as one faculty member to another, of some of your program highlights, and programs that really stand out to you.

Fischel: Okay. I think it might make sense to talk about Local Knowledge. I have taught Local Knowledge four times, twice with Lin Nelson before she retired, and twice with Grace Huerta. The first program began in September 2001. I had had one experience before that of teaching in a program which had a strong community studies thrust, in 1994 with Russ Fox, who was deeply connected to the work that was going on local communities. Teaching with him—since I was still relatively new to the region--was a way to learn about what was happening in this place that I wanted to become my place.

So in 2001, Lin and I agreed to teach together. The program was designed to be an orientation to community studies, to strategies for thinking about community collaboration, learning local history, exploring the perspectives of community based research and popular education, building relationships with community partners, and finding ways to integrate text-based learning with everything we were observing or participating in in community settings. It was a way to understand how local communities make sense of their experience, where their sense of identity and value come from, how they identify problems that concern them, and how we could together begin to envision solutions to those problems that we might respectfully enter into, support and learn from.

The first time that we did this, we had a strong relationship with the Labor Education and Research Center, which at the time was still based at Evergreen. I remember the field organizers for the Labor Center would just drop in on our class whenever they had time, and participate in discussions, so there was a strong labor component in the class because they were willing to actually learn with us, and participate in the learning and teaching cycle with us.

We visited a number of local communities—Shelton, Olympia, and parts of Lewis County, not just Centralia but also the eastern, rural part of the county. We had students who were interested in a variety of disciplines, really a broad range. There were students who were interested in agriculture—and it was relatively new to me to work with people who were interested in food systems and agriculture; students whose focus was on the environment; others who were focused on media, or got interested in foreign policy and local activism. The program started a few days before the Twin Towers went down in New York City, and about 10 days before the invasion of Afghanistan. We were utterly unprepared for that development, and it catapulted a program with a relatively defined local focus into one that needed necessarily to incorporate global contexts as well.

There was a lot of discussion in our class about what it meant not just to be at war, but how the entire rhetoric of the country had changed and polarized: “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.” I think students initially were frightened. As a faculty, I felt a huge responsibility. What preparation did any of us have for talking about this new era we had crashed into? How could we help students to feel safe and focused, while still being aware and responsive to the massive changes that were taking place? In the end, with support, the students found some great pathways for involvement. Some joined a group doing antiwar organizing in Olympia. A student who lived in Shelton helped organize a group called Peace Matters, an informal gathering of folks in Shelton who wanted to think about and process their concerns about the war and learn more about what was going on. We helped them organize teach-ins at local churches and link up with peace groups in Centralia that were maintaining a vigil outside the public library. Peace Matters got a lot of support from local people who were already leaders in the community. I was very proud of their efforts.

Lin and I certainly didn’t have expertise in all these areas, but we were really clear about building the community studies foundation so that people could be constantly processing and reflecting on what they were doing, and what they were learning, how those relationships were developing, and where they were confronting challenges. And we emphasized bringing those experience back to the classroom so they became part of the process of learning for everyone.

I also—because I always do—taught nonfiction video production in that class. Students did some really interesting video work. There was a group that worked for two quarters with members of the homeless community in Olympia, and made a film about that. There was some other work that was thoughtful and lovely, in terms of finding ways to document and share and express what the students were learning and how it was linked to community process.

I loved teaching that class, and I learned a ton from teaching it. It met a fundamental need that I had, to connect what was going on in the classroom to what was happening in the community, and connect the college more deeply to the lives of its neighbors. I think I told you, maybe in an earlier conversation, that one of the things I wondered about from the time I came was about the choice to build the Olympia campus out in the woods. It's pretty, and I like the woods, too, but what the environment mirrors back to us doesn't reflect most of the experiences of the urban or rural communities around us. So it's easy to forget about the importance of those communities. It's easy not to experience the need for connection with them—or their need for connection with us.

And yet, when I go into a local community—to Shelton, for instance--what I often hear is, "Evergreen is the closest place, but we don't know how to get in touch with people there. We need the resources that you have. We need help and support, from your students and from your faculty. You folks have expertise in some things. What would it take for you to be involved with us?" I hear that a lot, and I hear it not only in communities that we might think of as liberal or progressive, but in deeply conservative communities, where I think I was often told not to go because people might not like the college. Yet we've never been greeted with anything but affection and respect, and our students invariably are welcomed with appreciation for the resources they can offer.

Lin and I decided to teach Local Knowledge again in 2004-2005. There were some amazing projects that came out of that class. There was a student who had come to us from Seattle, where he'd been a waiter in a restaurant. He had a lot of thoughts about what it takes to raise food, or serve it, or throw it away. He decided to start a project, which he called The Gleaners Project. It was literally to organize students to go into the fields of local farmers when they had finished harvesting, with their permission and glean what was left. Then they would either bring it to the Food Bank, or at one point, he even thought about setting up a restaurant in town where you could pay by donation and low-income folks could be trained to prepare those foods. I don't think the restaurant ever really materialized, but the program eventually was taken over by the Olympia Food Bank. For a while there was actually a student gleaning organization that built on what he had done. It was just something he was excited about and wanted to do that we were glad to support.

There was a group that started working with homeless youth, and continued this work for almost two years, making a documentary film called *Downtowners*, about and with homeless youth. It's a remarkable film in which those young people actively participated, not only as subjects, but as co-makers. They saw all the footage, talked about what it showed and meant, and made suggestions for

new things to film. In the process, all the participants learned about strategies of representation, about ethics, about the possibilities for collaborative work—and of course, about cinematography, editing, producing—all the elements that go into making a documentary. For a while after the film was completed, the project continued at Thurston Community Television, where the same youth got to work with media equipment, together with my former students, and make public service spots that spoke about their own experiences. It was a beautiful project.

There were students in that class who were interested in alternative health care who organized an alternative health care fair downtown, with naturopaths, and herbalists, and massage therapists. In a way, it was a precursor to the Free Clinic. It was open to everybody. They organized that themselves, and publicized it with support from our program.

There was a group of students in that class who decided to do a Photovoice project to put still cameras in the hands of school children and support them to make their own images depicting their reality. Rather than the documentarian observing and documenting and interpreting what's there, in Photovoice projects the documentarian supports and facilitates the process of people learning to use the medium to make their own statements. This happened in the Centralia School System. We got permission for a student group to work with a group of young Spanish-speaking school children, maybe third graders. At the time the Latinx population in Centralia was growing rapidly, and an estimated 25% of the children in the schools were new immigrant arrivals whose first language was Spanish.

When that project was done and the photographs were printed, the kids wrote stories about their pictures, in either English or Spanish. We asked if we could put them up in their school library, and they were put up the very last week of school. I remember the teacher of that class coming in with her class and looking at the pictures, and then going away and bringing other teachers and other classes. Then the principal came, and then the principal called the superintendent's office and the superintendent came. This took most of a day.

Then they said, "When are you coming back?" Well, the class was over, and this is an issue at Evergreen. There's an issue about continuity. You establish a presence and relationships in a community, and then are you actually able to follow through? Are you able to come back the next year? Can you keep showing up? Is there anyone else who will take it on? In all my years at the college, I've never worked out that issue of continuity.

We didn't go back to Centralia. Still, it was exciting, and also instructive to see the responses of the school staff to the children's work. I don't think they had really imagined what the kids could do.

Those kids made compelling images, and they said important things about their family and their friends, their community and their hopes for the future. It was all there.

So that was exciting and gratifying. Photovoice is a powerful way of working that belongs in any community studies program with a media component. It was one of the experiences that confirmed for me that Local Knowledge was something I wanted to be the center of my teaching. It was a way of linking media and community studies—something I had always tried to do in my personal filmmaking. But as a teacher, this was the first time I felt that I was successful in integrating them.

Then, with Grace Huerta, I was able to teach Local Knowledge again, first in 2012-13, then again in 2015-16. We decided to focus on the community of Shelton. For one thing, I was hoping that the focus on one community would provide more wholistic learning. But also, a former student, who had become a friend, was writing to me and asking me to attend meetings of the Consortium for Student Success in Shelton. It's a meeting of social service providers who are attached to the school system.

So I went to that meeting, and they looked at me and said, "We're so glad you're here. It's always great when people from Evergreen come to Shelton, but it's not consistent. We want involvement from you, and we don't know how to get your attention." I thought, what an opportunity for us as a college to have an ongoing relationship with this community!. It's not a very large community. It's mostly rural. But it has a rich history of migrations from other parts of the country—people from the Midwest, people from the East Coast, from Germany, from Finland, from Sweden. There's also rich history of indigenous people in this region. There are two Native communities, now living on reservations, the Skokomish immediately to the north, and the Squaxin Island to the south. From the 1990s on, there were migrations of folks coming up from Mexico, and there are more recent migrations from Guatemala. So, it's a community with a very diverse history whose identity is changing as the demographics shift.

It's a beautiful area. At the same time there are all kinds of economic and resource management issues. It is right next to a National Forest. It has a working -class history of lumbering milling, and seafood harvesting, and there are people who still remember those histories, but the resource base is virtually gone. There are a few large timber companies that maintain tree farms in that area, and there are a few mills still in operation, although they are no longer unionized. All of that has contributed to high poverty levels and to an ongoing set of questions about what the future of the community will look like.

Shelton has a reputation of being very conservative, and it always votes Republican. But because the community is small, its electoral politics don't always determine its practices. For instance, in the 1990s, there were a series of immigration raids. People were pulled out of homes, stashed in the local stadium, and then put on buses and shipped out to the border and the response of the community-- Ellen Short Sanchez talks about this—she directs the Center for Community Based Learning and Action and also lives in Shelton—was “What happened to our neighbors, and how can we prevent it from ever happening again?”

One response of this community was to begin to work on what became a dual-language elementary school in Shelton. It's a school that from kindergarten through fifth grade is teaching some of its subject matter in English and some of its subject matter in Spanish. Everybody is learning in both languages, so it's not an ELL program, where native Spanish language students are learning English, or where English speakers are studying Spanish. It's a program in which everybody is learning math in English and science in Spanish. It's creating a common bilingual culture. That, to me, is really exciting. And to be able to support that effort by bringing our students to it, so they can volunteer in the classes, get to know the teaching staff and the children and their families, and participate in a creative, social justice initiative in a community where they might not expect it, seems to me well worth doing. It helps the community, but it also gives our students a sense of how change can take place, and it helps them have an in-depth experience of the work they might do in the world. Some of the students in the Local Knowledge that Grace and I taught aspired to work in education as teachers or counselors, others were interested in developing skills to work in the nonprofit sector. Still others used their new media skills to create documentaries that are now on the websites of the schools where they volunteered.

There are further complications in Shelton now because the new folks who are coming from Guatemala are indigenous, and they may or may not speak Spanish. They speak M'am or Q'anjob'al which are Mayan languages. So once again, the community is being challenged to expand its notion of what it's going to take for people to live together, what fundamental skills will be needed to do that, what resources are available. Who's included and who's not, and how newcomers can be invited in.

In addition to working in the schools, we visited a local shellfish harvesting plant. We visited the local mill. We talked to workers about union struggles. We talked to newly arrived immigrants who work in the woods harvesting salal, or what they call *la brocha* (brush). These are folks who came from parts of Mexico and Guatemala where they may have tilled the soil, but often did not own their own

land. So when they came here, they looked for rural spaces where they could glean a living, and they found natural resources in the woods that they could gather and sell.

Shelton is at the tail end of an international chain that goes all the way to the Flower Exchange in Amsterdam, because salal is used to ornament flower bouquets. It's long-lasting with glossy leaves that don't require a lot of water. It's very healthy, and it grows as a weed in the woods and on the mountains. So the folks we were meeting in Shelton were getting permits, either from the National Forest Service or sometimes from a lumber company like Weyerhaeuser, to harvest the salal. If they got the permit from Weyerhaeuser or another lumber company, they had to sell direct to them. If they had the permits from the Forest Service, they would find a subcontractor to sell to. There's a chain of subcontractors that goes all the way to Amsterdam. It's a flourishing international economy, and the beginning of the chain is right here locally.

Zaragoza: If I can shift to another set of programs that you've done. You've talked about Mediaworks, you've talked about Local Knowledge. Another that I know that has been very important for you has been your study abroad programs to Venezuela. I'm wondering if you could tell us a little bit about those, too, because I think not only did they have a huge impact on the students who were in them, but also on the people you visited in Venezuela. Could you tell us about those programs?

Fischel: I got interested in Venezuela sometime around 2005 or 2006 when Hugo Chavez was president of the country. We were beginning to hear about Venezuela's extraordinary efforts to chart its own course politically and economically in a way that didn't necessarily follow the model or the influence of the United States, or any other world power.

Chavez had been schooled in the thinking of Simon Bolivar, who fought against the Spanish colonizers, and who had dreamed not only of liberating Venezuela, but of creating what he called "Gran Colombia"-- basically a union of the nations of Latin America. His theory was that unless the nations of Latin America stood together, they would end up becoming appendages of the United States economy or the European economy, or, we might say later, the Soviet or the Chinese economy. Chavez had been deeply influenced by Bolivar's thinking. Venezuela's main resource was oil, and for many years, since the beginning of the 20th century, the oil and its profits had been controlled by transnational corporations. Chavez argued strongly that Venezuela had to recapture the profits from the oil in order to tackle its problems: poverty, illiteracy, crime, lack of health care, lack of infrastructure. Chavez was very much a teacher who appeared every Sunday in a television program called "Alo Presidente". I was reading

things he had written, but we were also hearing about how his thinking was percolating down to the local level and energizing local communities.

My husband, John, and I went on a kind of exploration. We had a friend who had worked with Global Exchange, and had spent time in Venezuela, and we asked her for some contacts. We talked to people in Caracas and Barquisimeto, which is one of the industrial centers of the country. We visited a school in Merida that offered classes in Spanish. We looked for resources and tried to understand as much as we could about how this could become a meaningful experience for students.

When we came back, I had a conversation with Pete Bohmer, who teaches in Political Economy, who was also following what was happening in Venezuela. We agreed that we would propose an international studies program to take students to Venezuela. Generally, when you teach international studies, you work up gradually to the travel component of the program, and students go at the end, during the third quarter if it's a year-long program, or the second half of the winter quarter if it's a two-quarter program.

What I really wanted to do was take the students to Venezuela in winter, and then spend the spring reflecting, processing, integrating, trying to deepen what we'd learned. I felt that the work of integrating what we had seen and experienced and making it into real learning was going to take a lot of time. Part of that might involve sharing it with other people, either at the college or in the local community. So that's how we set up the program. We spent the fall doing really intensive study. We spent most of winter quarter in Venezuela. In spring, we focused on processing what had happened, sifting through field notes and images students had made, doing further research, sharing and exchanging information, making presentations to other classes or to local community groups, and trying to make sense of a very powerful experience.

Venezuela, when we were there, was a tremendously hopeful place. I can't emphasize that enough. We'd be in a local community and one of the new initiatives coming down from the Chavez government had been to encourage people to create what they called *consejos comunales*—communal councils. There was already local government, much like we have in the U.S., but these were neighborhood governments, representing a certain number of households. If the people created a *consejo comunale* they would receive resources direct from the federal government. It wouldn't slide down the chain of command, from the feds to the states to the municipalities, and then to the neighborhoods. Frankly, there was a feeling that money got siphoned off along the way. There's a heritage of corruption there that I think everybody was trying to bypass.

So the money would come direct to the Communal Councils for projects they had collectively decided to do. Some of the projects we learned about were: putting in sewage systems; rebuilding dilapidated housing; building a school; providing women who were housebound with a small amount of funds that they could use to begin to make themselves financially independent, perhaps by starting a small business. This was exciting.

You'd go to a communal council meeting and people would say, "We weren't trained to govern because we've been governed by an elite. We're learning how to do this. We're accountable to our community, so we want people here at the meetings, observing us. We want it to be transparent. We have two of us who, at any one time, are looking at the way our money is being spent. We want people to go over these records. This is a responsibility we're taking on in trust for our community."

We learned about cooperatives. We formed a relationship with the CECOSOLA cooperative, which is now over 50 years old, which actually predates the Chavez administration. For a while the Chavez administration was strongly supporting cooperative development as an alternative to capitalist business practices. Cooperative development was encouraged and tied to community development generally, so, for instance, you could participate in a government program to learn business skills, form a cooperative group and submit a proposal to your local Consejo Comunal. The Consejo might accept it—for instance, a proposal to create a cooperative bakery. Or they might come back and say: "No, we already have two bakeries; what we really need is a brick-making factory; can you do that?" And what resources do you need to get started?

A lot of the policies the Chavez administration enacted to support cooperatives came from observing CECOSOLA. And CECOSOLA was an extraordinary place for our students to volunteer and observe, because they could see that this was a way of creating a viable economy that didn't have bosses and workers, where everybody actually had equal membership, and shared decisions, and shared the profits equally.

But, even more than that, it was creating a new culture, a solidarity economy. It was creating a culture where people trusted one another, looked to one another for support and worked collectively to solve problems and implement things they decided on together. They were very attentive to how to support new learning in each one of their members. They had job rotation, so nobody got stuck in a job. It wasn't a place where some people always did the dirty jobs or the so-called unskilled jobs, and other people got the clean jobs. People worked in the office and then rotated into the kitchen crew or the cleaning crew. No work was more valuable than any other.

CECOSESOLA is a food distribution cooperative. They have three large warehouses, which they call *ferias* that are open four days a week, where they sell food. But they're also a network of cooperatives that includes cooperative farms and small businesses that produce value-added food products, like salsas and pastas and things like that. They do a significant amount of work supporting the development of new cooperatives, and helping people work out their interpersonal relations, which are both the strength and sometimes the challenge of cooperative development.

Being in Venezuela was really powerful. We observed and participated in literacy programs, which had taken hold across the country, including in rural areas where there had never been schools beyond the primary level. Venezuela basically eradicated illiteracy within a very short period of time. We visited universities where adults who had not been able to get a college education were now able to go to school at night in their own communities for free and receive a stipend for doing it. We heard about the choices that were being made by the federal government about which majors to prioritize. One was public management, another was medicine. I remember when our students were asked to give a presentation about Evergreen at a local teacher's college. They said some wonderful things about their education, but they also mentioned how difficult was to hold jobs which they needed to pay their tuition. The audience was shocked. "I thought your college was public! You have to pay? That's not public!"

We learned about the rapidly developing public health system, Barrio Adentro, which was completely free and accessible in local neighborhoods. We had students who got sick, and they were treated by the local clinic or hospital without having to answer any questions or pay anything for their care. We had students who didn't have access to dental care in the United States who had their teeth cleaned and fixed while they were there. We had a student who got his first pair of glasses in Venezuela.

So students were getting to see path-breaking community initiatives, the impact of a government that actually supported those initiatives and the optimism of people who were confident that they could make their dreams into reality. But coming back was huge culture shock because there wasn't that level of optimism here. So having the last quarter to process and work things through turned out to be necessary. Students could. . . how do I say this? . . . work together to articulate not only what had *been meaningful* about their experience, but what was *useful*; what they could actually take with them as their next steps, rather than simply looking and saying, "Oh, it was completely different there, and it's not possible here." What are strategies communities could actually use to take

stock of their own problems, to create what the Venezuelans call a *diagnostico* of their issues, and then organize themselves to solve the problems they'd identified? What resources would they need to do that? How could we be resources for each other in figuring out what this process could look like?

From a political-economic standpoint you could look at the structural changes happening in Venezuela, and the external and internal structural forces which created contests around development. It was important to do that. It was important to look at the colonial and neocolonial history of the country, and understand what had prevented its independent development, what Chavez called *endogenous development*. It was important to understand the place Venezuela occupied in an international capitalist system, and why Chavez argued that socialism was a better pathway.

At the same time the Venezuela programs complemented the community studies work I was trying to do through Local Knowledge. Because there was so much emphasis on local communities and on how those communities were experiencing change and participating in it. It wasn't just coming from the top. In every community we visited in Venezuela you could see how people were developing their capacity to analyze things, make decisions together, take effective action. I thought maybe we could find some parallels to that in the United States, even if the overall political climate was very different.

For the media component of the program, the first time we went to Venezuela, in 2009, we focused on photography and journalism. A group of our students produced an edited book of essays about Venezuela—every one of those pieces was later published on *Venezuela Analysis*, an on-line news venue. The second time, we focused on making short video pieces about community groups here that the students were excited about, which we showed to our community partners in Venezuela. Students made videos about the Flaming Eggplant, MECHA, GRuB, and the Olympia Food Co-op, among others. And then in Venezuela we made documentary pieces to bring back. Some of those pieces are still available. There's one about a cooperative bakery, for instance, called *La Misma Masa*, that's really wonderful.

Am I answering your question?

Zaragoza: Yes, it's good to hear about the experiences of these programs. I do want to shift a little bit now, and start thinking about one of the things that makes Evergreen, which is our team teaching and our learning communities. That means that faculty work with, learn from, learn with each other. I wondered if you wanted to talk some about those experiences, of learning and sharing and experimenting with different teaching practices, insights into various inquiries, friendships that get

developed. Just the pedagogical life at Evergreen, and how that's based in this faculty team-teaching model.

Fischel: Okay. [pause] I'm trying to think about how many faculty partners I've actually had. Certainly the experiences have been varied, but team teaching is one of the things that I love best about the college. Just the opportunity to learn from colleagues in a teaching and learning situation for me is really precious. I think I told you early on that one of the reasons why I wanted to be at Evergreen was because I'm not really comfortable with presenting myself 100 percent of the time as an expert and authority. There are certain things I know I have expertise in. There are times when I do have a sense of my own authority, but I also really value the opportunity to keep learning, and not just learning in my own discipline, and not just learning by myself.

So collaboration, for me, is a process of mutual learning. It's really attentive listening, and making space for each other, and a constant give and take around how to shape a curriculum that has space for all the faculty in the program, whether it's two or three or four. It often means giving up or letting go of whatever was my first instinct, for instance, I want to use this book. Instead, it's actually letting the curriculum develop out of the conversations. And it takes a lot of conversations! I like to start planning with a new teaching partner a year in advance. If we've decided to teach together, some of it is just getting to know each other, and some of it is sharing what our major influences have been. Long before we get to the actual, okay, this program has this title. What are we going to do with it now? That's been a huge source of learning for me, not just the specific learning from colleagues, but the learning *how* to do it; what collaboration looks like and what it takes. I can't say that I always feel I've done it as well as I'd like to, but I feel committed to that process.

I've been really lucky for the most part in my collaborators. There are always differences, but those differences can be instructive, and helpful for students. I don't think it's always so important to agree about everything, but it's very important to clearly demonstrate respect and affection for your teaching partner. That matters enormously to students. In the class I taught in winter 2019 *American Dreams*, with Jay Stansell, one of the things the students said over and over was that they valued the relationship Jay and I had, and they had been in programs where faculty clearly did not have that relationship. I felt sad when I heard that. Yeah, you have to be careful, I suppose, but there's also a certain kind of a flexibility, an openness to difference that all of us need to learn.

It's okay to say, "My colleague and I think differently about this. My colleague and I approach that differently. How would you approach it?" [laughing] It's okay to say those things. When I taught

with Angela and Gail, there were a few times when Gail would—I guess, call me out in front of the students—not to shame me, but to point out a fundamental difference in the way she, as a Native person, thought about the issue I was talking about. The first time it happened, I felt uncomfortable, but what I heard from students was that they learned from the exchange and appreciated both of us for participating in it.

What's not okay is to hold resentment, or absent yourself from the classroom, or ignore what your teaching partner says, or jockey for position, or dismiss their ideas out of hand. It's not okay to do that, and I hear that some of our colleagues do those things. I'm not sure how I learned team teaching except that I wanted to, and it always seemed to me infinitely more exciting to be part of a team than to teach by myself.

I don't know what the college needs to do to support that process better. Because it's at the heart of our teaching, and it's not a skill that people necessarily come in knowing how to practice. The fact that I know how to lecture in my discipline doesn't mean I necessarily know how to teach in a team that includes bodies of knowledge and ways of thinking that are very different from mine and that I know relatively little about. How do you get there? I think people need support for that. I know I still need support with that. As I said, I feel lucky in the teaching teams I've had—I really only had one experience that felt like a failure, in that I never achieved a relationship of trust and collegiality with my teaching partner. I didn't trust what she was doing in the classroom; I didn't like the way I saw students responding to it, and I wanted to fix it. I made some interventions that I thought might be OK, but definitely weren't—she felt disrespected. So I guess one of the limits I came up to was my concern that, but when I made public interventions, she saw them as disrespectful.

I will say that most of my collaborations have taught with colleagues who teach in cultural studies or the social sciences or the arts. Only twice have I taught with someone in the sciences, and those experiences were far more challenging. I don't mean challenging in terms of personalities, because my teaching partners were wonderful, but there was far less obvious overlap and cross-over in our disciplines—much more distance to bridge around very basic paradigmatic things that we sometimes didn't expect.

I do want to talk about one of my most important experiences of collaboration. When I taught Local Knowledge with Lin Nelson, in 2001-2 and 2005-6, we asked students to do a community-based research project, and we decided to do one together alongside the students. Lin's expertise is in Public Health Policy. We decided to focus our project on Ruston, WA., where there had been a smelter for 100

years. The smelter had been at the center of national controversies over arsenic contamination, and it finally closed in 1985. So this is 20 years later, and the entire community has become a Superfund site. Lin and I started visiting, talking to people, and doing research at the Tacoma Public Library's Northwest Room. After a while, we realized that ASARCO, the smelter's owner, was heading toward bankruptcy proceedings because of unmet obligations in over 90 sites in the U.S. alone. So we started to learn about some of those sites. Eventually, what had been a small, contained local project became a much larger project with a documentary film, a website, some writing... We've traveled together, made lots of presentations together...Lin is an amazing researcher, much more thorough and in-depth than I, and I learned such deep respect for her. We were friends before, but becoming project partners really deepened and intensified our relationship in ways I will always be grateful for. Now it's 14 years later, the film is done, but our collaboration continues!

Zaragoza: I have two more major topics that I'd like to cover, but then I want to give you space if there are things that you'd like to talk about. One is your own intellectual projects while at Evergreen, and the other is significant governance that you've done. We can start with either of those, whichever makes more sense to you.

Fischel: Let's start with the projects. I came having worked as a documentary filmmaker and with an intention to continue that work. It was important to me to get to know this area and root myself in this place, because for me, filmmaking is an outgrowth of that. But it wasn't a quick process.

So it was 1996—I'd already been here for six and a half years—before I actually started working on a film in this region. I was invited to participate with the Centralia Union Mural Project, a group that was meeting in Centralia to create a mural that would honor labor's experience of what is sometimes called the Centralia Tragedy or the Centralia Massacre of 1919. In 1919, members of the Industrial Workers of the World, or the IWW, which was a very significant union in that period—it still exists but not in the same force today—were organizing in Centralia. They established a union hall there.

Unlike other unions at that time, the IWW challenged the relationships between labor and capital, between workers and owners. Their main message was that workers were the ones who produced all wealth, and so that wealth should belong to them, not to a small owning class. Unlike other unions of the time, they were not only interested in so-called "skilled" workers, but in all workers. They were organizing loggers in the woods, they were organizing farmworkers, they were organizing miners. The IWW organized across lines of ethnicity, race and language, they organized in multiple languages.

The IWW was seen as a threat to the established economic order, so when the union hall was set up in Centralia, plans were made to attack it. It's clear from the records of that time that the political and economic elite of Centralia were involved in the planning, but the group that carried it out was the American Legion, a newly formed organization of veterans just returned from WWI. In 1919, during the first Armistice Day, there was a parade down the main street of Centralia, and the Legion attacked the union hall. Four of the attackers were killed, and a union organizer, Wesley Everest, who participated in the defense of the hall was lynched. Eight IWW members went to jail, but no one was ever tried or convicted of the lynching of Wesley Everest. Lynching at the time was a very public thing. It happened at night, but there were probably 100 residents of the town who participated.

That event in 1919 shut down union organizing almost completely. So now here it is, 1996, and we're talking about how to create a mural which will create public discussion of that event. We're doing it in order to bring labor's side of that story to light, but also to call attention to the conditions of labor in the community in the present. Because in 1994 when NAFTA went into effect, communities like Centralia lost key industries. A lot of the mills closed, and logs were shipped raw to Asia to be milled there. People were losing the jobs on which they'd been dependent for generations and which had helped to shape not only the economy but the identity of the region.

So the group that was organizing the mural wanted to be a spotlight on the workers who constituted the heart and the foundation of this community. They wanted to raise questions about what would be a just economy, and how it could be created. This was not an easy thing to do, in fact, some members of the group were afraid that they would be stirring up a hornet's nest—that the controversy would be more than the community could handle. But there was also a sense that the time was right. Some of the project members were very active in their unions and had worked closely with the Labor Education and Research Center here at Evergreen, and those members were especially excited to learn more about the IWW and create a community discussion about this history. I volunteered to make a film about their project, and that was the first documentary I made in Washington State. It's called *Lewis County: Hope and Struggle*.

It took me years. I don't work fast. I like to do a lot of research. I like to film, and then look at my film, and then think about the possibilities it opens up, and how to deepen what I've done. And of course, with full-time teaching and parenting, it was a challenge to make the time. Early on, I went to the mural project meetings and filmed them. I also drove down to Centralia several times a week while the muralist, Mike Alewitz, was painting. Each time I would film a little bit, to document the growth of

the mural. At first I was primarily interested in Centralia, because of the story we were commemorating, but later, I got interested in the eastern part of Lewis County. I had a lot of help from people who I was meeting to connect with dairy farmers, a lumber mill, and with former loggers and mill workers. I got permission to film in a school and talk to teachers about their hopes and concerns for their students. Later, after the project was done, I had the unique opportunity to keep returning to the area and connect with the people I'd collaborated with, to talk and reflect together on what we had done, and what it meant.

The film is 90 minutes long—the longest piece I've ever made, and the first piece I ever made in video, not film. That was a steep learning curve, especially because a lot of the time I was working by myself. The film has a lot of mistakes. I can see them, and sometimes they make me wince. I am not what you would call an elegant filmmaker, and my grasp of technique is not as strong as it could be. I think the film has other strengths, though—the depth of the interviews, for one. Except for the muralist, none of the people I interviewed had any experience of speaking to the media, so the fact that they agreed to talk to me really showed trust. That's humbling, because the media often betrays the trust of the people they represent. So it was important to me to honor their trust. People have incredible things to say, but they don't always come out in neat sound bites, so you have to work with them while you're filming, and then later you have to work with the footage, and make sure you've done justice to their efforts—that you show them as the thoughtful, knowledgeable deeply caring people that they are.

Shortly after the Lewis County film was finished, when I was teaching Local Knowledge for the second time with Lin Nelson, we decided to begin a small research and media project about the American Smelting and Refining Company, ASARCO. ASARCO had had a copper smelter in Ruston, Washington, which is sandwiched into North Tacoma, a tiny one-square-mile town. That smelter closed in 1985 because of tensions with the Environmental Protection Agency over its arsenic and sulphur dioxide emissions. The state and the EPA had demanded that they retrofit in order to mitigate those emissions. They weren't going to do it, so they closed the plant. But before that happened the EPA held meetings in the community where they presented information about ASARCO's toxic emissions and asked people what level of risk they were willing to assume to keep the smelter open. This has since become known as the Tacoma Process, and it put the community in a terrible bind. How do you choose between health, environment and jobs? Every community should be entitled to all three, but very often people are forced to prioritize one over the others. So there was a very intense community process to try to figure out what to do about ASARCO, because this was the main employer for the town. It was the economic giant around which the town revolved.

But it was also a major polluter. When it closed in 1985 the EPA declared the entire community of Ruston to be a Superfund Site. Now, 20 years later, the last of ASARCO's buildings were being demolished, the polluted earth surrounding the plant and the community were being placed in a huge on-site container, and the EPA was about to approve the sale of the land to a local developer. Our project, as we'd envisioned it, was to learn how people had experienced this history, what their relations with the plant had been like, and what they felt about the cleanup and about their community's future without ASARCO.

But a couple of months after we started that project, we read that ASARCO had declared bankruptcy. It was a very complex bankruptcy. Basically, they sold themselves to a Mexican subsidiary, so that allowed them to move their assets across the border. They had 99-plus sites around the U.S. that were polluted, and they had signed agreements to clean up the lead, arsenic, sulfur dioxide, cadmium and other contaminants on those sites--in some cases asbestos. But once their assets were on the Mexican side of the books, they could go to the bankruptcy court and claim that they no longer had the ability to do the clean-ups. So the bankruptcy was designed to shed most of the responsibilities, those liabilities, so that they could remain in operation. To become leaner and meaner, basically.

When Lin and I realized what was happening, we looked at each other and said, "This is not a local story. This is a national story." So we began to try to correspond with people in Arizona, where there was still a functioning smelter. There was a smelter that had very recently closed in El Paso, Texas, and there was a controversy going on there about whether it could reopen. In both places, we found coalitions of workers, residents, and some environmental activists who had come together out of concern for the health risks that ASARCO represented, and so we visited them and began to work with them.

That film is recently completed and it's called *Under the Stack*. It focuses on three communities. Hayden, Arizona still has an operating smelter. It's a 99 percent Latino/Latina community, where there's been significant contamination and health problems that go back many years, including kidney failure, lung problems, cancers and birth defects. At one point some of the residents drew a map of the community—it's very small, just under 1,000 people. They put pins in the map with different color heads that represented different illnesses. Almost every house had a pin. This was important research that they argued that there was a connection between ASARCO's emissions and the health issues they found. ASARCO was the only industry, with smokestacks that towered over the entire community, so it

seemed pretty obvious to us that they were right. They filed a court suit that basically went nowhere, but they did receive small settlements through the bankruptcy.

In El Paso, where there was a coalition called “Get the Lead Out,” we developed close relationships with ex-ASARCO employees—we continue to have those relationships with them—who were very eager to connect with people in other places who were experiencing similar kinds of struggle with smelting industries. And we also visited Corpus Christi, Texas, where ASARCO had a subsidiary, which ended up being found responsible for transmitting hazardous waste to and from its smelters.

So we focused on those three communities. I finished the film in 2016—so 10 years after we started? We also have a website called *Their Mines, Our Stories*, where we present the photographs we created and others we found in archives, histories we researched and wrote up, interviews, some video clips. We’ve published two articles, both in *Dollars & Sense*, one about ASARCO’s bankruptcy, and the other about the Cananea mine in Mexico where ASARCO’s new owner, Grupo Mexico, the third-largest copper-producing corporation in the world, took possession of what had been a publicly owned mine, dismantled the safety protections in the mine, closed the local free hospital, and basically tried to break the union. The union retaliated by calling a strike that went on for years. Lin and I had the chance to visit Cananea with a group of union workers from the United States—Steelworkers—to produce a report, documenting their struggle, and we wrote an article about that.

We hope that there will be a book coming out of this, which Lin has to take the lead on. I’m excited for that process. I look forward to helping her.

Zaragoza: Governance at Evergreen. Did you do any major governance assignments, any roles that you played that you want to talk some about?

Fischel: I helped to organize Evergreen’s faculty union, United Faculty, and that was a pretty extraordinary process of talking to colleagues, debating with colleagues—because there was opposition as well as support. We spent a lot of time thinking it through initially and coming to the conclusion that it was something we ought to do because we were concerned about whether faculty had the ability to make decisions that would stick. We wanted to build faculty power and increase our salaries, since nationally we were pretty low on the salary scale; we also wanted to support our adjunct colleagues. Because, like most colleges and universities in the country, we were looking at the expansion of a two-tiered system with tenure-track faculty on one tier and adjuncts on another. This isn’t new, exactly, but it’s clear that the number of adjuncts being hired is growing, while the number of available tenure track positions is shrinking. The adjunct system lends itself to exploitation, and we wanted our union to be

there for adjuncts as well, and to work for adjuncts to gain longer contracts and more benefits, and eventually to be considered for tenure-track jobs. We also wanted to even out the inequities in salaries between ourselves and our adjunct colleagues.

It's common in this country right now for faculty unions to be acquiescing in the growth of this two-tiered system so that even when they accept adjuncts as members, they don't actively oppose the system which denies adjuncts rights. During the organizing drive, some of our colleagues were concerned to maintain a sense of their own elite status as something earned. The problem I see is that you may think limiting tenure to an elite few is a way to guarantee your own security, but it's actually doing the opposite. You're weakening your own position, because it's cheaper to hire adjuncts. It's cheaper to hire part-time workers who don't have to receive benefits. And it's cheaper to hire temp workers who won't achieve seniority, because seniority costs more. So why keep full-time workers? Why keep tenure? We're at risk of colluding with a system which is likely to make us all expendable.

I felt really great that our union didn't want to do that, that we aspired to be a union that could represent both tenure-track and adjunct faculty. I also loved that our union went out and supported staff members in their attempts to organize. I think we learned a lot about union power when we saw our ability to get the administration to pay attention.

My hope for the union in the future is that the membership increases; that new folks eagerly participate in the governance of the union. But I also hope that the union figures out some other strategies for participating in what's essentially a triple governance system. Before the union we had a dual governance system, with the faculty as one element of governance and the administration the other. And even though we now have the union with its own clear sphere of authority, the faculty still has the Agenda Committee and the faculty meeting as governing arms. Although I felt good about participating in the organizing of the union and served for a while as a faculty steward, in the last few years before I retired, I joined the Agenda Committee, because I believed—and still believe-- that the faculty meeting and the Agenda Committee have to be revitalized as instruments and tools of faculty decision-making and power also.

The union says, "We're legal equals, because our contract can compel the administration to do things." That's true, and it's important. But there's also something about process, the process of discussion and debate and deliberation, and faculty making decisions as a body, and experiencing ourselves as a body with common interests and a common vision and standing strong in that. That is what I associate with the faculty meeting when it is working well, and when the Agenda Committee is

doing its job of facilitating the opportunities to have that decision-making process go forward and get better. Some of the curricular discussions and decisions are not part of the purview of the union. They should be the purview of the faculty as a whole. That is what democracy ought to look like, and I acknowledge that it's difficult. I think one thing that should be clear to all of us is that democracy is a lot of work! But I don't want it to get lost.

Zaragoza: Thank you for that, Anne. I really appreciate that. I'm just wondering if you have any other final thoughts, or topics that we haven't covered, or things that are on your mind that you'd like as part of your narrative.

Fischel: I feel like some parts of this interview are better than others, frankly,

But I do want to say something about what we're learning, or should be learning, from the student uprising of spring 2017, or really that whole 2016-2017 academic year when we saw some of our colleagues and students working really hard to get the college to focus on racial disparities. There was resistance to that, and there was some collaborative learning that happened afterwards. But not enough, and not quickly. In spring 2017, on the Olympia campus, there was an explosion because students had had it. The students of color and their allies had had it.

For me it was really important to support those students, and listen to them, and take seriously their incisive critique of the college. What I heard them saying is that the ways we structure our pedagogy and our curriculum are still essentially based in Eurocentric notions of knowledge, for the most part, and in white privilege; that we haven't moved very far in terms of decentering them, not nearly as far as we could.

Students were saying they felt like outsiders in their classrooms. They didn't feel included or cared about or respected or valued. They didn't have enough teachers who looked like them. They didn't have curriculum that empowered them to connect with their own histories and theorize their own identities in relationship to a broader culture and set of institutions. They were trying to put a spotlight on power and how it was affecting their college experience and ability to learn. For those of us who grew up with white skin privilege, we might not see this as an issue of power, or we might see that power as accessible to anyone who is willing to study and work hard. I think we learned that the education we practice is layered, that it includes subliminal messages that rationalize and normalize exclusion.

Those were legitimate and important critiques, and I don't think the college has done a very good job of addressing them. Because they were played out on a very public national stage, it looks to

me as if, for the most part, Evergreen has hoped we can simply put it all behind us and move on. If we are quiet about it, it will be over. And I don't think it's over.

Last year, I had the privilege of teaching *American Dreams*, which was an immigration studies class. A significant number of the students were immigrants, or students of color. What I learned from those students is that very often, they're coming with a history of having been disenfranchised in their lives and schooling—not valued, marginalized, disrespected. Maybe a better way to say that is that their schools reinforced what they were experiencing in other parts of their lives, rather than counteracting it, or offering alternatives. Maybe they went to schools that didn't have the rich resources an upper-middle-class school can provide. Or, maybe they experienced racism and racialized exclusion in the schools they went to. One student, for instance, told a story about what happened when he was identified early as an ELL student. He was isolated from his peers and made to wear special glasses as if he had a learning disability. This was a source of tremendous humiliation and pain for him. So to decide that you are not only capable of college learning, but that you are worthy it—that takes courage and persistence. Those students deserve our support, and in my experience, they blossom when they get it.

I also had an experience that was far more difficult, far less positive. In fall 2017 after the student uprising of the spring before, I stepped in to teach a Mediaworks program that Naima Lowe, an African-American colleague, had been slated to teach. A good 60% of the students in that program were of color, and many were Black. The students were traumatized by their experiences at the college, they were hyper-reactive, scared and angry. I don't think I was very successful with those students. I couldn't figure out how to get over the wall of their pain. For months, my teaching partner and I pleaded with the college to set up additional support systems for us—restorative justice groups, healing circles, whatever it would take to acknowledge the students' experience and help them process it. I thought that if those mechanisms were in play, that would give us some psychic space to engage with the curriculum, reflecting on it as we went, building in films and texts that undo the exclusion those students had experienced all their lives. I was pretty excited about the curriculum we developed, but at least half of our group could barely focus on it. And there was no support from our administration. After a quarter, many of those students left the program, and some left the college.

I think this is something Evergreen has to pay attention to. Really, really pay attention to. Do we have a sense of mission about teaching disenfranchised students? Whether it's because they come from low-income backgrounds, or because they come from communities of color, or immigrant communities? How do we acknowledge and respect the experiences of those students, and lift up what

they bring with them, honor it as knowledge, and build on it? How do we invite them into the teaching and learning cycle so they are teaching as well as learning, which is what we always say about students, but it may not be the way we're thinking about these students? How do we construct a curriculum and a pedagogy that mirrors back to them who they experience themselves to be and gives them frameworks and tools to keep theorizing their lives and making meaningful work that articulates what they know and are learning? How do we honestly address and critique our shared history? I may not be the perfect person to do it. I'm white and I'm 70, and my last experience of Mediaworks taught me that I have a lot to learn. But I think we all have to be willing to try.

To return to the community studies paradigm for a minute, if Evergreen was more connected to its neighbors, it would be more connected to exactly these kinds of students. Because Evergreen has a significant enrollment problem now. I think it could solve its enrollment problem if it focused on developing relationships with the communities around us. If it focused on developing relationships with immigrant constituencies, working-class constituencies, and communities of color. If that means that we change as a college, then we change. It seems to be what is needed now, and what our students and prospective students have the right to ask of us. That's the last thing I wanted to say.

Zaragoza: Thank you very much.

End Part 2 of 2 of Anne Fischel on 7-30-2019