

"I DO WHAT I WRITE ABOUT AND I WRITE ABOUT WHAT I DO": A NARRATIVE INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD A. CLOWARD

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Interviewer's Introduction

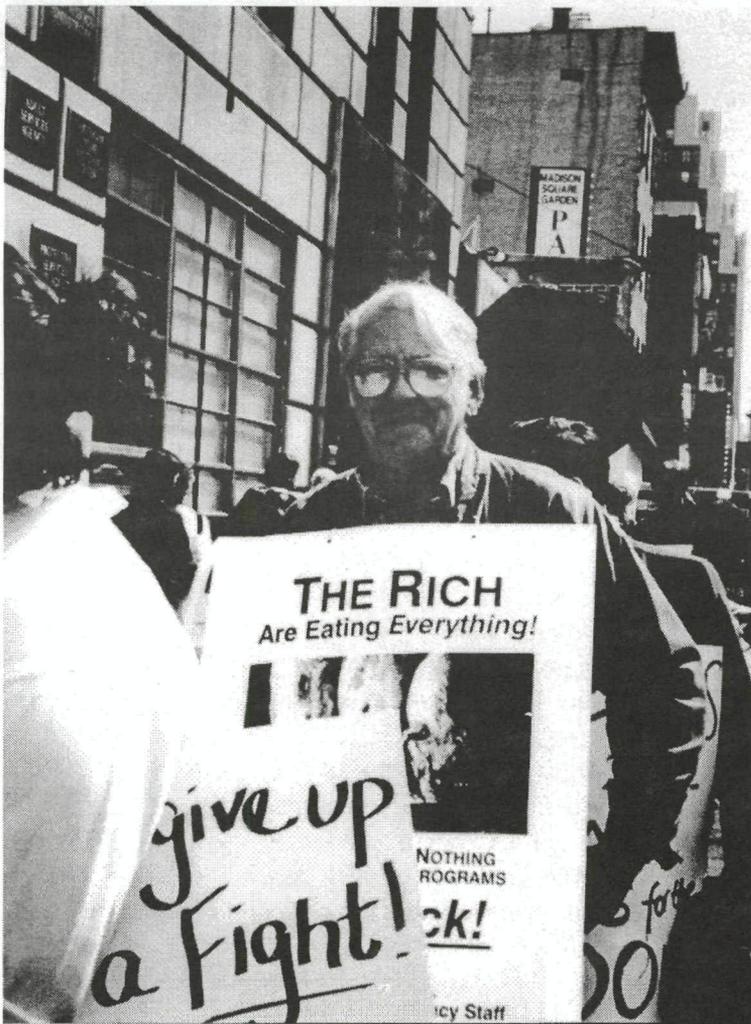
I interviewed Richard at his summer home in upstate New York on three separate occasions during the summer of 2000. He was already weak from lung cancer but was lucid and loquacious. The interviews were taped, transcribed, and edited over the next year. He reviewed the transcripts and made editorial suggestions.

Although the content of the interviews does not always follow chronological contours, I resisted my impulse to cut and paste in order to maintain the integrity of the narrative. Sometimes the telling of one story provides a context for understanding other stories, even if they are not in linear sequence. The overall focus of this project was to facilitate a narrative process where Richard could, in his own words, relate the history of his career, discuss his seminal ideas, describe his partnership with Frances Fox Piven, and reflect on the meaning of his professional experience. Although I had questions before the first interview and generated many more as the interviews progressed, the sessions were really conversations between us. Richard was a very articulate and colorful storyteller and did not need a lot of prompting or shaping from me. When editing the transcripts, I tried to eliminate redundancies and prune what appeared to me (and Richard) to be digressions from the central focus. Ellipses indicate the splicing of sentences that were not directly contiguous. Brackets indicate words that I have inserted to try to clarify meaning.

I have divided this interview into four sections. The first, *The Accidental Criminologist*, relates Richard's fortuitous

placement at a prison during the Korean War and the genesis of his ideas about inmate culture and social structure that led to his consideration of how illegitimate opportunity shaped gang behavior. He also describes how Mobilization For Youth evolved from a gang project to an anti-poverty initiative. The second section, *Roots and Career Choices*, explores his family and community influences and how he ended up studying both Sociology and Social Work. Cloward and Merton, the next section, is a detailed description of the intense and complex relationship between the two sociologists. The last section, *The Tenure Wars*, warrants a few clarifying comments.

Being a radical thinker and activist can lead to threats to one's career, particularly for academics. Tenure can be a protection against political retaliation; however, achieving it can be a bitter struggle, as both Cloward and Piven found. In the 1970's both were engaged in major tenure battles that lasted for nearly 10 years. The first struggle was Piven's successful attempt to gain tenure at Columbia University School for Social Work in 1971-72. She then left to teach at Boston University in Political Science but found herself locked in another bitter tenure struggle at Columbia, this time unsuccessful, when Peter Marcuse attempted to recruit her to join the Urban Planning Department. She taught at Brooklyn College for one year during 1975-76 while still on the faculty of B.U. Upon her return to B.U., Cloward tried to get a teaching job in the Boston area but lost tenure battles at Boston University (while Piven was fighting to have the President of the University, John Silber, removed) and Brandeis. The latter sparked a



storm of protest that received major media attention and letters of protest from organizations such as NASW, ACLU, the American Association of University Professors, and from scores of Deans and Professors of Social Work, Sociology, History, and Social Welfare, including Mitchell Ginsberg, Herbert Gans, Michael Harrington, Lee Rainwater, Howard Becker, Edwin Schur, Herbert Gutman, and Walter Trattner.

This is the first of three narrative interviews with Richard Cloward. The remaining two will be published in *The Journal of Community Practice* (at Richard's request) and *The Journal of Progressive Human Services* (which, according to Cohen, he encouraged and supported). His working relationship with Frances Fox Piven is a major focus in the third interview of this series. Frances was present in the house during all three of the interviews and would occasionally

join in the discussion.

In these interviews, I hope that readers who did not know Richard personally will have a sense of the person who wrote so eloquently and fought so courageously for the rights of those most disadvantaged by the structure of social oppression. To paraphrase him, Richard wrote about what he did and did what he wrote about.

The Accidental Criminologist

JM: One of the things that I was thinking about while reviewing your writings and preparing for this interview is that your career has so many different angles to it. You had your sociology career, your involvement with social work, and your activist work. When you think of yourself, how do you even define yourself professionally?

RC: Well, I think of myself as a social scientist. And I think of myself as a social work community organizer. Those would really be the two. Of course, they're integrated. I do what I write about and I write about what I do.

JM: Has it always been that way, or has it evolved in that direction?

RC: I think it has always been basically that way. When I go back to the beginnings of my career...I was, for purely accidental reasons, a criminologist.

JM: How did you get to that point?

RC: I was in the Navy during World War II and discharged. Then the Korean War began and I was recalled in 1950. After World War II, I had finished college, had attended what was then the New York School of Social Work, and received a degree in social work. If I had gone back into the Navy, I would have been an engineer with my training; I went to officer candidate school in the second world war and had been prepared to be a marine engineer officer. I didn't want to go back and do that, so I applied to change branches because the Navy did not commission social workers. They used social workers in shore bases. But the

Army did commission them, so I transferred to the Army and I was commissioned in the medical service as a social work officer and assigned to a prison in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. So I was assigned to this prison, which basically received prisoners from Europe. I was the Chief Psychiatric Social Work Officer in this prison. Earlier, I had also completed course work in sociology for a doctorate at Columbia.

So, I needed a dissertation topic. I kept my eyes peeled as I went about my duties in this prison for a possible topic, and I did subsequently do a study of inmate culture, the results of which had a profound influence on my thinking for the rest of my life. I got out of the service in 1954 and at that time schools of social work had been bitten by the social science bug. They had been very heavily psychoanalytic, and with the burgeoning of social sciences in the post World War II period, as part of the general burgeoning of the university – it was the golden age of the university – they were expanding. There was the GI bill of rights, and women in larger and larger numbers were going to college. The leading schools of social work were looking for Ph.D.s in the allied social sciences – economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology – who were also social workers. Of course, there were virtually none out there, but I happened to be one. I received two or three offers, including Columbia and Michigan, at that time. I was 27 years old. What the schools wanted to do was to tap into social science, sort of graft it on to their psychoanalytical core. It was not in my opinion ever a serious effort to incorporate social science, but they wanted to be able to say that they had it.

So that was how I got into academic life. It was purely fortuitous. It was a result of a shortage of a particular combination of academic training that I happened to have. I hadn't finished my dissertation and was still working on it trying to figure out what the data mean. That went on through the 1950s. I didn't finish the dissertation until 1959. But in the meanwhile, I thought of myself as a criminologist. I had gotten to know a criminologist at the University of Chicago

named Lloyd Ohlin. He was very well known and for whatever reasons, he showed an interest in coming to Columbia and was appointed to the social work faculty. He came, I guess, because he wanted to get out of Chicago and he wanted to work with me, and so we began to work together.

By this time I had begun to do a topography of inmate culture or inmate leadership forms and types, and I had related the inmate leadership types to features of the custodial structure. They didn't just exist in isolation; they existed because the custodial structure made them possible. For example, a man who worked in a clerical position in one of the custodial offices frequently came into possession of information. Information was power in the inmate culture. You could sometimes forecast when there was going to be contraband searches and things like that, which was a very important source of information. If you were assigned to certain kinds of committees, you could sometimes influence who got what custodial work. Committees would decide where inmates were going to be assigned, whether it was the laundry or somewhere else, and sometimes these guys worked as clerks on these committees. Their opinions were sometimes taken seriously by the custodians and they could influence who got what kinds of jobs other inmates received. These were positions of power and information. Or you could work in a situation where you have access to what would officially be defined as contraband – kitchens, and other kinds of shops – so that you are in a position to make off with materials and goods and sell them in the inmate network. That makes possible certain types of leadership positions. In other words, these leadership positions didn't just exist in a vacuum: they were structured by the features of the custodial structure.

When I got out of the service in 1954, the way these leadership types were articulated in the social structure of the prison impressed me enough so that I began to read the juvenile gang literature, which I did not know. It went all the way back to the early 20th century Chicago School criminologists – Sutherland, Thrasher, Shaw, McKay – and right up to the contemporary literature of the time. There was

quite a bit of literature at that time because in the post-World War II period, the gang phenomena had really flowered. It began with the Mexican "zoot-suiters" on the west coast and the big cities in the nation were really experiencing major gang violence. But when I read the literature, I noticed that there were other types of gangs. There weren't just fighting gangs. There were criminal gangs. That's what was typical in the Chicago School literature of the 1920's and 1930's: gangs of kids who rolled drunks and did stuff like that. They didn't fight with one another. They were much more income oriented, instrumental, and so I began to ask myself the question, "If in different parts of the custodial system there were different types of leadership types, maybe you get different types of juvenile gangs in different types of neighborhoods, and different kinds of social structures." I began looking at it this time from the neighborhood social structure, rather than custodial social structure, and it was clear to me that the answer was yes. There were criminally oriented gangs in the older adult crime- oriented neighborhoods, the neighborhoods that had organized crime racketeering and so forth. You didn't get gang violence or gangsters (we are talking now of the language of the early Chicago School). The local gangsters wouldn't tolerate it because it brought the cops; it brought heat, visibility, and publicity. The last thing in the world that they would allow in the neighborhoods was kids fighting with bicycle chains, baseball bats, and that sort of thing. But what these neighborhoods did provide was upward mobility and careers. Kids who excelled in thievery and other forms of theft were noticed by adults who, like in any organizational enterprise, had to recruit new personnel, and so the more talented were afforded an opportunity to rise in the class structure through racketeering or other forms of specialized crime, like professional thievery, confidence games, pickpocket mobs. The point is, it was organized and professional, and only certain people were selected.

I was always fascinated reading Sutherland and some of the other early criminologists because of their depiction of the personality characteristics that people had to have. They had to have talking ability in case

you got yourself in trouble. If you are "boosting" in a department store and the department store detective catches you, you have to have talking ability to get yourself out of those situations. That took nerve, wit, and all sorts of kinds of characteristics. These were the things that they looked for in their selection, and once they selected you, then they taught you: tutelage. That was one of Sutherland's key idea: selective tutelage. I was very impressed by that. There were more criminally oriented gangs. There were some reports in the literature about contemporary gangs like in the old Italian districts of East Harlem, for instance. I knew workers who were working for the New York City Youth Board who were in neighborhoods like that and who saw this sort of gang. But what got all the publicity in this period, the post-World War II period, and particularly in the 1950s when I was beginning to get interested in this, was the warrior cultures. In those cultures, prestige was associated with bravery. There were big gangs of 150 members, and they were age graded with senior and junior members. It was quite a phenomenon while it lasted. I got interested in that. What struck me about those gangs was that they came from neighborhoods that were altogether different than the ones that produced the criminal subcultures. There were disorganized neighborhoods, neighborhoods in transition, and neighborhoods in which minorities were moving. The old social structures were breaking down; people were moving out and newcomers were coming in. There was really no competent adult authority that could suppress the violence and that could offer career mobility. They were disorganized neighborhoods. That is what I wrote about in *Delinquency and Opportunity*. *Delinquency and Opportunity* is a misunderstood book.

JM: In what way?

RC: Well, when everybody talks about it, all they think about is conventional opportunity. I was not interested that. What I was interested in was the way that opportunities for different types of deviant careers were shaped. To finish the criminology part of the story, gangs kept boiling up in the post-World War II period; the

public was screaming bloody murder, and innocent civilians were being killed. You would be walking along the street and all the sudden there would be a gang war going on and some kids would have a wooden rubber band -22, a zip gun, and someone would get shot. An eight-year-old kid would get shot. So what happened was the settlement houses on the lower east side, led by Henry Street, which is a very famous settlement house, decided to take advantage of the situation to raise a lot of money. There had been some particularly high publicity gang fights on the lower east side and a couple of killings of innocent kids just walking home from school. The ministers and everybody organized marches through the lower east side. It was a big deal. Helen Hall of Henry Street Settlement decided that she and the other settlements, the churches, and other organizations—like Educational Alliance, which was the very famous Jewish Agency on the lower east side—to go out and as she put it “to raise the money so that the settlements could do everything they knew how to do at that same time in the same place.” Helen Hall was like second to Jane Addams. That was her theme: let us do everything we know how to do at the same time and in the same place. She called it a saturation approach.

She began going around to foundations but ran into a block. This was in the late 1950's. By this time the social sciences had also infiltrated the philanthropic world. People in the philanthropic world wanted some theory to back up what you are doing. What theoretical basis do you have for believing that these things that you are proposing to do will make any difference? They also wanted evaluative research. They wanted some measuring of results, and the settlements were not in a position to provide either of those. Somewhere along the line, Hall had heard of me and Lloyd and came to us at Columbia.

JM: So she sought you out?

RC: Yes, and she asked us to, in effect, develop a theory and to provide a research design, which Lloyd and I agreed to do. We were at that moment completing *Delinquency and Opportunity*, in 1959. It was published in

1960.

JM: So you were working on *Delinquency and Opportunity* when she approached you?

RC: Yes. It really grew out of the prison studies. It was about how gangs are differentiated by neighborhood social systems. To me that is what it was really about. That is the second half of the book. The first half of the book is about conventional opportunity. It distinguishes between circumstances that predispose people toward gang behavior and the circumstances that shape the gang behavior, in other words the types and the forms. Everyone, of course, was focused on the first. I was focused on the second, but that didn't matter. It was apple pie: delinquency and conventional opportunity. I mean the title of the book was *Delinquency and Opportunity*. If I had titled the book to fit what I thought was important about the book I would have called it *Delinquency and Illegitimate Opportunity*.

So we agreed to [work with Hall]. Once they had us, then we were all able to go to the National Institutes of Mental Health, which had a small anti-gang budget, and make this proposal. What they did was to give us a planning grant. I think we received it in about 1959. It was a couple hundred thousand dollars, and we were able to hire some staff and begin to plan out this mammoth project called Mobilization for Youth (MFY). That is when we hired George Brager as our program director and he, Lloyd, and I wrote the proposal. It is like a telephone book. We submitted it. And John F. Kennedy was elected. Bobby Kennedy had a big interest in children, and they also had a problem with trouble in cities. Kennedy couldn't have been elected without the big city black vote. You read William F. Whyte's *Making of a President* in 1960 and he was unambiguously clear on that point. I don't remember how certain connections got made back in that period, but we got connected to the Kennedy administration.

Bobby [Kennedy] was especially interested in children, so they seized on this idea of big anti-gang projects, and they pushed a bill. It was one of the first bills that the

Kennedy administration pushed through Congress called the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act. It appropriated something like twenty million dollars to set up ten projects in the MFY model in different big cities. MFY was the first to go and was announced from the lawn of the White House by Kennedy in 1961. The Mayor of New York, Wagner, was down there. Everybody was there. It was on the front page of the *Times* with a big picture. The gang stuff was a big deal and that is how MFY got started.

This is where that part of the story ends because within eighteen months it was clear that these anti-gang projects were not even a beginning for what the black communities were demanding from the federal government. Consequently, the gang projects, over night, were transmuted into anti-poverty projects. MFY became the flagship of the anti-poverty program. The anti-poverty program was actually passed in 1964, but MFY went into business in 1962. We set up and started the gang programs in 1962, so it had hardly gotten started when it was redefined as an anti-poverty project. So that was the end of criminology for me – I no longer defined myself as a criminologist. From that point on, I began to think of myself much more as studying the politics of social welfare because this was a period of political turmoil.

JM: Now, this sounds like a real crossroads here, and we could move forward, but if I don't interrupt your train of thinking, I'd like to go back and fill in a few blanks. One of the things I am interested in is your research. When you were doing research, particularly in prisons, how did you do it? Were you doing interviews, or were you doing observations?

RC: Yes, I was doing interviews. I interviewed prisoners about leadership and about how the system worked and what it was like.

JM: Were they semi-structured interviews, like having conversations with them?

RC: Yes. They weren't highly structured. I was feeling around. Some of them were

conversations, and I got to know some of the inmates. They were in and out of the section that I ran. Whenever they came up for parole, they had to come in and be officially processed. Then our section made recommendations on whether they would be given parole and be restored to the service, or be discharged. They were in and out and I got to know them. Then, when I began to see a little more clearly how things worked, I began to do more structured interviews.

JM: Did you just remember the conversations and write them down?

RC: Yes. I wrote them down and dictated them.

JM: Were people from different racial backgrounds or were they mostly white?

RC: It was half [white] and half [black].

JM: You said when you were working in prisons was when you had a major intellectual transformation or development, that the study of inmate culture really affected your thinking.

RC: Access to different forms of deviant behavior, whether it is gang types, inmate types, or any other form of aberrant behavior, is controlled by features of the social structure.

Roots and Career Choices

JM: Going back even further before you joined the Army, how did you end up going to social work school? What led you in that direction?

RC: Well, I didn't start in that direction. I started out in high school thinking that I was really oriented towards engineering, physics, or the hard sciences.

JM: Were you good at those subjects?

RC: Yes. I tended to neglect English, history, and related subjects.

JM: Where did you go to high school?

RC: I went to school in Auburn, New York, in the Finger Lakes region.

JM: Is that where your father had his ministry?

RC: Yes. So that is how I thought of myself, but then, of course, the war started and I graduated from high school when I turned seventeen, and the next day I went into the service. I went into Officer Candidate School.

JM: When did you do that?

RC: In 1943. I went to the University of Rochester Officer Candidate School. ROTC they called it. I was there for a year. I studied engineering, and then I went on a ship from the Brooklyn Navy Yard for six or eight months, but the war was really over by then. I came along at the end of the war, and then I was discharged.

JM: Was that an influential experience in any way?

RC: No, but I did decide somehow during that period that I didn't want to be an engineer.

JM: While you were at sea?

RC: Yes. I really wasn't into it. I didn't want to be an engineer. What I thought about was that I wanted to *do* something social.

JM: Why? Where did that come from?

RC: Well, you could blame that on my parents if you went back. My parents were very social. My father was a community-oriented [Baptist] minister. He had been a conscientious objector in World War I and volunteered to drive an ambulance in France. He came back and decided to go into the ministry. My father was a Norman Thomas Socialist and he was also trained in the Social Gospel Tradition at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. My mother was also very much oriented towards social justice concerns. She was one of the early feminists. She got an

award from NOW when she was 75 years old.

JM: What were some of the issues that she was working on when you were younger?

RC: Well, she was working on the ERA and that type of thing. She took a job when she graduated from college in 1919 in the ERA office in Washington, DC. She typed the first draft of the ERA. So there were those influences that were there. I had this vague sense that I wanted to do something social, and this was how I got into social work. The war ended, and I was discharged around May of 1945. I was in the army for 2 years, 2 months, and 2 days. Then I heard about a summer camp that was run by a black minister in Harlem named James Robinson. I got a job as a counselor that summer and then in the fall I went back to the University of Rochester for a year. Now you have to understand that I basically never went to college. I was in Officer Candidate Training. It was very much military oriented, but still they were college credits being given by a university. Then after the war, if you were still alive, you got three points and if you went overseas you got points, etc. I returned to school and I took sociology for one year at the University of Rochester, and then got my bachelor's.

JM: That is when you first had exposure to sociology?

RC: Yes. So I never really went to college.

JM: Did that one year turn on any light bulbs, or was that also not a major influence for you?

RC: There were no light bulbs, but I did go on with friends of mine, Mark Battle and Bill Myers, to start a small settlement house. My parents had a ministerial family friendship with a family in Rochester, a close relationship with them. When this minister realized that I had come to Rochester, he asked me to come down to his office one day. It was an old, big Protestant church that had an associated building with a gym and a lot of other rooms. It

had been quite an operation at one time, but it was now surrounded by ghetto, and all the whites had departed. So the church was just hanging on. He took me around the building and showed me the gym and he said, "Why don't you try to do something to use this space for the neighborhood children to set up some kind of a program." I talked to Bill and Mark, and everyone agreed that we should have a go at it. So we began to hang around the neighborhood and talked to parents, and they liked the idea. So, they used to come down at night and clean the place up. They painted the rooms. So we started a little settlement house.

JM: This was after you graduated from college?

RC: No, this was during my senior year. It was during the one year that I was back at school. So we started a settlement house. We knew all the parents. They had pinochle clubs, and we were really able to make some very good friends among some of the men. So, we ran this settlement house and recruited kids from college to come down and run arts and crafts. I knew about this camp run by the YMCA in the Finger Lakes that I had attended as a child and had eventually worked at as a counselor. They only used it in July but not in August. It was a camp with big tents with eight bunks in them for seven kids and a counselor. There were about a hundred campers. I thought we should try and have a camp program in August with the kids we were working with. So we proposed the idea to some businessmen. They went for it, gave us some money, hired buses, and paid for the food. The parents took their vacation time to be counselors.

There were two ghettos in Rochester on opposite sides of town, and the one on the opposite side of town from us had a very famous settlement house called the Baden Street Settlement. They hired a graduate of the New York School of Social Work named Irving Kriegsfeld. Because I was messing around with this stuff, like the summer camp and running this sort of a settlement house on the other side of town, I got to know him. He told me about graduate schools of social work,

but at the same time, also as a result of this messing around, I got to know the head of the Rochester Community Chest and Council. One of the questions that I put to him was whether I should go to a school of social work or should I get a Ph.D. in sociology, like at Columbia. He suggested I get the Ph.D. and, for whatever reasons, that was the advice that I chose. I applied to Columbia for sociology and was accepted. I appeared down there in 1949.

JM: Why did you choose Columbia? Was it because it had so many eminent sociologists? Was there something about the school that attracted you?

RC: I really don't know. I guess it was just the name. So I went to Columbia and I was there for two years, 1949 and 1950, during which time I did all my course work. Then I got recalled to the Korean War. I must say I studied under some sterling people: Robert S. Lynd, who was teaching a course on business as a system of power, which I was very impressed by; C. Wright Mills was developing his new "Men of Power" and all those books; and Paul Lazarsfeld taught methodology. The Sociology department at Columbia at that time was a stellar department.

JM: You told me a story once about somebody's class that you went to.

RC: Yes, that was Lynd.

JM: Tell me about it again.

RC: Well this was the beginning of the McCarthy period, about 1949 and 1950. I had signed up for Lynd's course on business as a system of power. Lynd was a radical. He was an old-fashioned, indigenous, American Radical and populist. I was in his class, it was my first semester at Columbia, and I was a little shaky.

JM: Shaky in what way? Were you anxious?

RC: Well, I felt like the barefoot boy from the country who had come to the big city with all these high-powered academics. I was a little

on edge. Anyway, I decided to do a term paper on the American labor movement, specifically on the business unionism of American labor as distinct from the more political unionism of European labor. This was not an easy subject for me. I didn't know anything about it. I tended to sit in the back of the classroom. I had met a guy in the class and the two of us sat together, and I came into the last class with this term paper. I was really nervous about it. Well, Lynd came in that last class, and lo and behold, he decides to lecture on the same subject. I had a Bond's suit with two pairs of pants. You could buy a Bond suit for \$25. I had it on. It was like a pin stripe, and so I am sitting back there in my pin stripe gray business suit and he begins lecturing on the same subject, and he is making some of the same points that I made. I began nudging this guy, flipping pages, and pointing to the passages that were like what Lynd had just said. I was really living it up there in the back seat. My anxiety was so relieved, and all of a sudden Lynd runs up out of his chair – he was a short man and the room was a long rectangular room and I must have been thirty rows down – and he points down over all these heads and yells, "Get out of here!" Well, the class was transfixed. Nobody knew who he was pointing to. He was certainly pointing in my general direction, but there were other people in my general direction too, so when nobody moved – there was an aisle down the side – he ran half way down the aisle and then it was clear that he was pointing at me. "Get out of here!" he yelled. I staggered to my feet, I staggered down the aisle, and I staggered out the door. I couldn't imagine what the hell had happened. I waited until class broke up and I went back in. In the meanwhile, the guy that I knew, my friend, had gone up to him and told Lynd that he made a terrible mistake. So when he saw me walk back in he ran over to me and apologized. The mistake had been this: he had gotten a call that morning from a friend of his who was the labor editor at *Business Week*. *Business Week* had decided to do a big piece on Reds on Campus, and so Lynd came into class looking for somebody, and there I am in my \$25 Bond suit with two pairs of pants, giggling and shuffling papers around. The funny thing about that is – this

has to do with how I got into the School of Social Work – I walked around the campus and I had become a person of notoriety, and professors and others, who I guess I had been described to, would stop me and say, "How's Lynd?" I didn't know how the f___ he was! After I got out of social work school I spent one year working in a settlement house and as I was walking down the street in Pittsburgh one day, all of the sudden a guy on the other side of the street yells, "You were kicked out of Lynd's class!"

JM: So when everyone on campus asked you how Lynd was doing, were they just razzing you?

RC: Well, it was the McCarthy period and they were concerned. The red scare was really sweeping the country. Anyway, Lynd wrote me a nice note. I had decided that same year that I didn't really want a sociology career. I watched these guys who lectured, did research, and they wrote books. It is not that I wasn't interested in doing those things, but somehow it wasn't enough. I wanted to do something more social. It was still that vague.

JM: But you felt that strongly about it?

RC: Yes, I still felt that, and so in the course of that year I met a couple social workers, like Murray Ortof. He was at the New York School of Social Work, and of course I had known about these schools from Kriegsfeld, back on Baden Street, so I decided "What the hell. I will apply." I had had one year of graduate sociology classes at Rochester, and one graduate year at Columbia, and I just decided to go directly into a school of social work. At that time it was very hard to get in because all the guys were back from overseas and everybody was going to graduate school. I think they were accepting one in five applicants.

JM: Was it harder to get into social work school than into school for sociology?

RC: I don't remember. All I remember is that they were taking one in five, so I went back for an admissions interview with an

admissions woman. She was a middle-aged, white-haired matriarch who sat there behind her desk. Jesus, she was like a glacier! When she learned that I had been at Columbia doing sociology and things like that, she said, "I think you are an intellectualizer, you won't do well at this school." I think if it had been left to her, I wouldn't have gotten in because I hadn't had any psychotherapy, and that is what they were really looking for. They were looking for people who had a couple years of psychotherapy. They made that very plain.

JM: They were still very psychodynamic?

RC: They weren't still – this was the period when they were really developing it! It was the period of Gordon Hamilton, Florence Hollis, and Lucille Austin, and they were the leaders in the development of psychiatric casework. I wouldn't have gotten in, but I happened to notice when I was paging through the catalog, the board of trustees. Who was on the board of trustees? Robert S. Lynd! So I wrote Lynd and said I wanted to go to his school and could he help me. Well, I met his secretary a year later while I was at the school, and we had some confidential conversations about things. She looked at my file and she said that letter from Lynd was like no letter she had ever read. It clearly got me in. McCarthyism got me in!

JM: What was Columbia like for you, going from a place where you studied serious sociology to the New York School that was so psychoanalytic? Did you take classes with Gordon Hamilton?

RC: Yes. As a matter of fact, I took courses with a very famous psychoanalyst named Marion Kenworthy, who taught there. The interesting thing about Marion Kenworthy was that my mother, back in the late 1930s, had gotten interested in psychoanalysis, too. She had a mental breakdown and was in a public mental hospital for a while in upper New York State. When she came out, she did some lay analysis and apparently was very successful at it. For several summers, she and my father came to New York, and my father went to Union Theological Seminary and took courses,

and my mother studied with Marion Kenworthy. So now I had reached Columbia, and here was Marion Kenworthy that I had heard about from my mother. The whole time I was there, this includes when I was there as a student and also when I came back three years later as a faculty member in 1954, neither of us ever said a word to each other.

JM: What do you make of that?

RC: I don't know. We would pass each other in the hall, were on committees together, and never said a word to each other. As far as the school experience was concerned, I took a year of group work and a year of casework. When I took the group work, I was assigned to a settlement house in East Harlem called Union Settlement House. Robert Vinter was the Assistant Director and he was my supervisor. It was just a couple of years later that he and I both took academic careers; he went to Michigan and I went to Columbia.

JM: Where was your other field placement?

RC: It was in a foster care and adoption public agency. It was a student unit, and it had eight students and a marvelous experienced supervisor. That was all she did was supervise this unit. I had my ups and downs, but I did all right. There were people in the school who thought I didn't do well. Leah Rich recommended that I be dropped.

JM: Why?

RC: Well, I don't know. I guess it was because my term papers and things like that were more academic than they wanted. The person that saved me from her was Nathan Cohen. He protected me, and otherwise I could have gotten dumped in my second year.

JM: Where did it leave you in the end when you finished social work school?

RC: I took a job in Pittsburgh as a group worker in a settlement house called Soho Settlement House. I was over there a year

and then I got recalled to the military. I didn't have much of an experience, and there wasn't anything notable about it. I don't think I did a particularly good job.

JM: Why do you say that?

RC: Well, I just don't. I was just too inexperienced. I didn't know what the hell I was doing.

JM: It sounds like getting recalled and then ending up at the prison was a major career twist for you.

RC: There is no question about that. And getting a teaching job at Columbia made me an academic. Within social work, I could think of myself as a criminologist. That led to *Delinquency and Opportunity* and *Mobilization for Youth* (MFY).

Cloward and Merton

JM: I am interested in your relationship with Merton: how that developed, what it was like, what influence he had on you.

RC: For some reason that I do not know, while I was studying that year in sociology at Columbia, I didn't take a course with him. I took a course with Lynd, Kingsley Davis, Lazarsfeld, and Seymour Martin Lipset. Why didn't I take a course with Merton? I don't know why. Nobody told me to. I didn't know who he was. I had never met Merton. I don't know what prompted me, but somewhere along the line I had read an article he wrote for which he was probably most famous called "Social Structure and Anomie." He had written it originally in 1937 or 1938 and published it in the ASR. Then after the war, he published a book of essays called *Social Theory and Social Structure* and included it as an upgraded version. That was some time in the late 1940s. A subsequent citation analyses in the 1970s showed that by the 1960s it had become the most cited article in the study of sociology of deviant behavior. Everyone cited it. Well anyway, I read it, and it basically stated the idea that American culture promotes a great

deal of deviant behavior because there are a sort of common or universal success goals that everybody is aspiring towards, but then there are class differentials and varied access to opportunity. This creates a strain toward deviant behavior. Then he had a classification – a very famous classification of deviant types – classified by whether the deviant behavior involved deviating from the goals or from the means. Conformity is the first classification: adherence to the goals and adherence to the means; if at first you don't succeed, try and try again. The second was innovation: still adhering to the goals, but you depart from the means, or you use illegitimate means like economic crime and white collar. The third was retreatism: people give up the fight for conformity and withdraw from society; they are of it but no longer in it, as he put it. They are tramps, hobos, suicide victims, alcoholics, and rebellious people. Rebellion involved rejection of the goals and substitution with a different goal, and rejection of the means and the substitution of different means. It was a minus / plus adaptation. That was his classification. I looked at that classification and I kept saying to myself, "This is a classification, but this classification is independent of any kind of social context." What I had begun to realize from studying inmate culture is that what people can do depends on their concrete historical, social situation.

JM: He didn't put that part in?

RC: No, not at all. Let's take rebellion for example. Rebellion requires that people have some kind of collective capacity and that they are related to each other in some way. They can't be dispersed. Blacks in the plantation south couldn't really rebel because they were too dispersed. So whether you are dispersed or aggregated is a variable that affects whether or not you can be a rebel. It is not just a question of adopting this goal or rejecting this goal because it is not just a matter of individual motivation, but rather a matter of what the concrete social situation makes possible. You can't be a white collar criminal if you don't have a white-collar job. It is as simple as that. But it is also very subtle. Women are so

socialized not to be violent that they don't commit suicide using violent means, but men do. So there you have gender influences controlling access to different means of suicide. And then there are race norms, class norms, religious norms. So I said that Merton only had half the story, and the other half was to figure out what conditions were necessary for these different adaptations to come into being. So I wrote him a letter and I told him he only had the half the story. He just went totally apeshit.

JM: Did he get angry?

RC: No, just the opposite. I got a special delivery letter back asking me to take a three-day pass and to come up to New York. I was in the service then and in the prison.

JM: He didn't know you then?

RC: No, he didn't know me. He told me to come to New York, and so I went and met with him in his office. We talked about the idea. I was very primitive then in my thinking, but I knew that he only had half the story. He recognized instantly that was true. So he tutored me, mentored me, and helped me to think it through so that I could write it up.

JM: Did you have meetings?

RC: Yes, we had subsequent meetings. I thought it through and he spent a lot of time with me. I would write a draft of the article and he would send me back a four page single spaced commentary, line by line. He wanted it to be good because it would be an extension of his work. We had a terrible falling out years later.

JM: I want to hear about that if you feel comfortable telling me about it.

RC: Yes, that was much later. It had to do with academic freedom. Back then, I have to say, that he was generous, and he never even gave me the slightest hint that he was trying to steal the idea, which does happen. Like saying, let's do an article together, and then that is the

end of you. He never said anything like that. Then around 1958 he suggested that I send it to be published; it was the last chapter of my dissertation.

JM: It sounds like it was really coming together from your own research in prison.

RC: Yes, it was. It came out of the research in the prison. This article was called "Illegitimate Means, Anomie and Deviant Behavior." He called the editor of the ASR, Charles Rose, who was at Smith College. Merton also suggested to Rose that he be permitted to write a companion piece in the same issue. There was another article that another guy had written that bore on Merton's work that was being published at the same time. So the article that Merton wrote was about both. My article appeared, and there was Merton's commentary on it. Merton was the high flyer in those days – Merton and Parsons – so it put me on the map. There is no question about that.

JM: You both benefited from it.

RC: Yes, there's no question about that.

JM: Was he a major influence on you back then?

RC: Yes, probably *the* major influence. Frances always said he was too influential.

FP: Merton? (sigh)

JM: Are you going to elaborate on that Frances?

FP: You're the one being interviewed.

JM: I would be interested to know why you felt Merton was too strong an influence on Dick?

FP: I think that Merton was a big booster of sociology as a science. Of course, Merton was at the forefront of the development of this science, and I think that this inflated view of what sociology claimed to do, especially given

the primitive structuralism that dominated sociological thought in the 1950s and 1960s, was blinding and limiting.

JM: He never totally broke free from that?

FP: No. Even to this day he sometimes refers to truths as sociological truths. Right Richard?

RC: Yeah.

JM: Thank you, Frances.

RC: Everything was all related. At the same time I was working with Lloyd Ohlin on juvenile gangs, and the same idea – how different kinds of neighborhood social structures shaped different types of gang formations – and writing *Delinquency and Opportunity*, and applying for money. It was all one big onion.

JM: It sounds very connected.

RC: Those years, from the time that the idea became really clear in my mind, which I would say was around 1957, I was feeling toward it in the prison. It wasn't really until 1955, 1956, and 1957 when I was out that I could really begin to write it and state it. It was partly with Merton's help. At the same time, I was working with Lloyd Ohlin. That was one very big important period, the late 1950s.

JM: How would you describe your relationship with Merton?

RC: Well, at the time it was a very close relationship. We later broke.

JM: It sounds like this was an important relationship for you.

RC: Oh, it was, no question.

JM: It is of interest certainly to me, and I would imagine it would be interesting to other people too, but I only want you to talk about it if you feel comfortable.

FP: Don't forget Merton is still alive, Richard. I think he can still read, too.

RC: Let him read. You were asking me about my relationship back in that period.

JM: Yes, and how it evolved after that.

RC: Well, I am going to talk a little bit more about that period.

FP: Oh, so I am excused?

RC: You can stay if you want. It is up to you. It is a little boring. Anyway, I have forgotten something. While I was back in the prison, from 1951 to 1954 I guess it was, and I was going up periodically to talk with him about the idea, he helped me to develop it. He at that time had gotten a big bowl of money to study the socialization of medical students. It was a very big, important project in sociology at that time, and he had the study going in hospitals and medical schools in different parts of the country. At the same time that I got the offer from Columbia, he offered me a job to go out to the medical school at Case Western Reserve and be his field person there to do interviews, questionnaires, and gather data of various kinds about students. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to go into the School of Social Work.

JM: Was he disappointed?

RC: I don't know, but I mention that only because that decision meant, for all practical purposes, that I wasn't going to follow a sociological career, because if I was going to follow a sociological career I should have taken that job. I was going to follow a career in which sociology was going to play large role, but I was not going to follow a sociological career. I continued to meet with Merton and finally published the dissertation. I think I took the exam in 1959 and published the last chapter, "Illegitimate Means, Anomie and Deviant Behavior." By that time I was involved with MFY. I really had virtually no contact with Merton in the subsequent years. I hardly ever saw him because I followed a different path, and the academic freedom trouble did not come

until around the late 1970s or early 1980s. Frances will help me recall all of that when we come to it. He, on the other hand, had kept a file on everything that transpired between us, and in 1995 he published a chapter on the evolution of his theory, where I played a significant role and sent it to me. This was after I really hadn't seen him for many years because I was involved in other things like the war on poverty, welfare rights, and every other God damned thing in the 1960s and 1970s.

JM: Had you lost touch with each other?

RC: Yes. We had had no contact. I would see him on the street once in while, and then we had this break in the late 1970s. Now we are moving way ahead in the story to 1995. In 1995, a couple of people, Adler and Laufer, decided to do a book of essays on the legacy of Merton and Anomie theory. The book is dedicated to him. He wrote the first article on "Opportunity Structure: The Emergence, Diffusion and Differentiation of a Sociological Concept, 1930s to the 1950s." He was writing about his diffusion of his basic ideas. It is about seventy-eight pages long. I would say one-third of it is about me. He kept everything.

JM: Really. This was unbeknownst to you?

RC: Yes. It is all about my dissertation and about his mentoring of me. He quotes from memoranda that he wrote and that I wrote. Here on page fifty-two he says [reading], "And if Cloward had not yet come upon the basic sociological idea of differential access to illegitimate means then illegitimate opportunities structures I surely had not. When Cloward did come to originate the concept in the final revision of his dissertation he did so by adopting the process of reconceptualization by making explicit the tacit and therefore undeveloped implications of my concept of opportunity structure," and so on. It goes on and on like that. He left nothing out.

JM: What was it like for you to read this?

RC: Well, I was amazed first of all that he kept all that stuff because when I read it I

realized it, was absolutely accurate, but it shows how much he was concerned with the idea, because it was an extension of his.

JM: The book even has hand-written notes from you.

RC: Yes. He reproduced the God damned things.

JM: So you obviously had a very major impact on him?

RC: I think it was a big deal for him. Yes

JM: More than you realized, it sounds like.

RC: Yes, more than I realized at the time. I realized it when I saw [this chapter]. That tells the story better than I can.

JM: [reading] "It is Cloward who takes a permanent place in this retrospective...with collegial regards, Bob Merton."

RC: We hadn't talked to each in twenty years because we had an academic freedom fight.

JM: What did this do for you? You had this break with him twenty years ago and then out of the blue you get this and you could see how significant your relationship and your work with him was.

RC: Well, when I tell the academic freedom story you will see [why I didn't respond].

The Tenure Wars

RC: Frances and I began collaborating in the 1960s. We had a series of problems with tenure beginning toward the end of the 1960s. The first episodes concerned Frances. She was on the faculty at the School of Social Work. It was the beginning of 1966 and we were collaborating. We were involved in the welfare rights movement and a great many people were deeply offended by it. We were generally moving more and more toward a theory of

disruptive protest as the key to understanding the evolution of social welfare policy in the United States. We were moving strongly in that direction and *Regulating The Poor* was published in 1971, which had that theme, and a lot of people were offended by that book [including people at the Columbia University School for Social Work].

JM: Did they feel it was irresponsible?

RC: Yes, they thought it was radical rhetoric. How would you describe what they thought, Frances?

FP: I think they did share a kind of theory of how social progress occurs, and they were at the center of their theory. Their good will and their analyses and their moral perspective and their lobbying were at the center of their theory of history, or at least social welfare history, and *Regulating The Poor* didn't give any attention to their theories at all. It didn't even dismiss them. It ignored them.

RC: The best way to summarize their point of view was Trattner and his textbook, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*. It is a top down, elite theory of social welfare. Anyway, we published [*Regulating the Poor*], and we had published other articles in the 1960s that was a prelude to all this, like "Rent Strike," "Welfare Rights," and "Analyses of the Civil Rights Movement," which put great emphasis on the importance of disruptive protest and civil disobedience.

FP: We published an article called "Disrupting City Services to Change National Priorities," about disruption as a strategy and about the Vietnam War.

RC: It was anti-war. Then in 1977 we published *Poor People's Movements*, which took these themes even further. When was the tenure fight at Columbia? In 1968 or 1969?

FP: No, it was in 1972 when I came up for tenure.

RC: Frances came up for tenure.

Regulating The Poor had been published. It may not have done well at the School for Social Work, but it did very well in the reviews. It made the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*. There was a hell of a fight over her tenure. The ladies...

FP: Oh, that is exactly why they didn't like you, Richard.

JM: What do you mean?

FP: He calls them "the ladies." He and George [Brager] and your father [Irving Miller]...The way they used to talk in those days about the women faculty at the School for Social Work...

JM: It was a different time then, wasn't it?

FP: It was a different time then, but they would just egg each other on, calling them a bunch of dogs, right? That was sort of the main thing.

RC: Well, anyway, [a number of women] got up and read typewritten statements opposing tenure.

FP: You have forgotten something Richard. Can I interject? One of the things that the faculty had against me was that I was associated with Richard. Another thing that they had against me was that they were persuaded that what I did when I taught students was to be critical of social work, which isn't true. Mostly I wanted to teach about the politics of social welfare, but still there was that kind of suspicion of me. But what they really had against me that they could use, in addition to those other things they couldn't really use against me, was my role in the students' strike in 1968. They just sort of saved that up.

RC: There was that famous *Life Magazine* series on the strike. They put out an issue on it. There was one page, in full color, and it shows Frances standing up on the top...

FP: I am climbing up the wall of the math building.

RC: She was climbing up the wall of the math building and Tom Hayden is leaning out of a second floor window. The caption said, "Tom Hayden, noted activist, helps coed into occupied building." Well, everyone knew who was being helped into the building. It was unmistakable. They were just totally pissed out of their minds about that. The students in the School of Social Work went on strike and they carried that picture on a poster.

A delegation of senior faculty went to see Sidney Berengarten, who was the acting Dean at the time, to argue that she should be brought up on charges of conduct unbecoming of a professor. Berengarten told me this. He said that what he did agree to do was to inquire of the President [of Columbia University] whether they were taking any action against any faculty anywhere in the university for anything associated with the student strike. The answer he got from the President was "we are not opening that can of worms." So no action was taken, but they tried to get her up on charges.

JM: So you think a lot of this was professional jealousy [because] you were writing a critical, revisionist version of the history of social policy?

FP: Yes. [The Chair of Social Policy] tried to persuade me to join the social policy group. Even though he tried to force me out of the school through the committee on academic appointments and he was bringing me up on charges, he also tried to persuade me that I really belonged in the social policy area of the school and not in social science area where I was teaching. In other words, I should leave Richard's area and come to his area. The two postures were contradictory.

JM: What do you make of that?

FP: It was professional jealousy.

JM: If you had gone to social policy he would have felt in a sense that you were in the fold?

FP: Yes, and that he would have had more influence on me.

RC: But the only reason that we could think, teach, and write what we did was because we were not in that area. They couldn't touch us. Well, they couldn't touch me because by that time I had tenure, but Frances did not. There was this big tenure battle. She finally got it.

FP: They voted against me in the first vote.

JM: The committee did?

FP: No, the full faculty assembled in all their grandeur and voted against me, and then Mitch Ginsberg [Dean of Columbia at that time] – as I was told the story, I was not there. Actually, you should tell the story Richard because you were there.

RC: Well, he basically said, "I don't agree with her and don't think that she hasn't caused me trouble ...but academic freedom..." He did support her.

JM: They were saying they couldn't justify not doing it.

RC: Yes, how will it look, in effect?

FP: I had a good record. I had been there six years. I had a lot more publications than most people on the faculty.

JM: So there were really no good grounds for denying you tenure?

FP: I don't think so. Well, listen, academics don't need good grounds, they just need good grounds when they are challenged, but otherwise they don't need good grounds.

RC: At that same time, Frances got an offer, a really good offer, from Boston University that doubled her salary and it was in political science.

FP: It was in political science so I didn't

have to contend with this "she is not even a social worker" stuff.

RC: [BU] brought in John Silber as president and along with bringing him in he got the right to appoint ten stars – what he would call stars. Frances was one of them. She would have a big salary, and so she went. That was in 1972?

FP: I got tenure at the School of Social Work and left.

RC: [Then] in 1973 and 1974, Columbia decided to rejuvenate its urban planning department and they brought in as the Director Peter Marcuse, Herbert's son. Peter Marcuse was the head of the Los Angeles Planning Board at that time, but he came under a condition. The condition was that he could appoint several people, and Frances was one of them. The reason for that was Frances had an urban planning degree from the University of Chicago.

JM: In addition to your political science degree?

FP: I don't have a political science degree. I have a master's degree in planning – not in urban planning – but in planning, and a Ph.D. in social science.

RC: For various reasons having mostly to do with children, I wanted to stay in the city. Frances agreed that she would go for the job even though she didn't want it. She wanted to stay in Boston. She wanted to stay in political science, but this was a way to get back to New York.

JM: How many years had you been at BU?

FP: I was there less than one year. It came up the summer after my first academic year.

RC: She went up there in 1972, and this came up in 1973, and in 1974 they convened the departmental committee to decide on tenure. Columbia has a system where the

departmental tenured faculty have to vote first and then it goes upstairs to a specially appointed, one-time committee of five faculty drawn from whatever departments the Provost deems appropriate, and they meet for the purpose of making that single decision and then they disband. They are collateral committees.

FP: Well, actually they took a year to appoint the ad hoc and nobody understood why. The school that had to vote on it was the school of architecture because urban planning was within the school of architecture. They voted for the appointment unanimously, and then the Dean of the school of architecture and Peter Marcuse kept badgering them to appoint the ad hoc committee and they stalled. Meanwhile, Richard went to see Merton.

RC: Well, wait, you have to explain what was going on behind the scenes. People in political science and so forth were just raising holy hell.

FP: They were raising hell about bringing me back, saying, "She believes in disruption and my classes were disrupted" in one letter.

JM: It sounds like a similar reaction that you got from the social work people at Columbia.

RC: Yes. They were pressuring the Provost not to act and not to appoint the committee, and the thing just stalled and stalled. Finally, the following March, they either had to act or be in violation of AAUP rules. McGill, who was the University President, said they had got to act, so they did.

RC: It was a five-person committee and the head of it was [close to Merton]. I went to Merton to ask him to write a letter. [Frances] had to submit names of people who would be solicited for letters. Merton said he would but he did not write a letter.

FP: That was made much of by the committee.

JM: He had told you that he would write a

letter?

RC: Yes. This was in the wake of the student stuff, and later on when I got into academic freedom trouble in Boston at Brandeis, he didn't help there either, even though he was asked. He was down on us at this point.

JM: Did that surprise you?

RC: Actually it did surprise me.

FP: It didn't surprise me.

RC: He gave me some horseshit about Max Weber and science as a vocation. He said politics stops at the university gate. He was the biggest academic politician that ever existed. He was the Mayor Daley of Columbia.

JM: But your kind of politics were not acceptable?

RC: The committee solicited letters, which they do as a routine. We have all those letters. They are amazing, really amazing. I realized at that point, in a way that I had never realized before, that political commissars are always watching. Academic freedom is pure horseshit.

JM: Is this the first time that you felt that you and Frances, in a sense, were almost being punished for your political views?

RC: Yes, without question. There is no question that we were.

JM: It sounds like up until then you believed, in a sense, in the mythology of the system.

RC: Yes, I certainly did. I knew if you were going to take deviant views you had to be good. That I knew; otherwise they would murder you. So in that sense I had a certain skepticism about the mythology of system; someone who was relatively mediocre in their academic work could do fine, but if you were a little off beat you had to be more than mediocre; otherwise they would kill you. I knew that much, but I still basically thought that academic freedom

was deeply embedded and would protect you. We had had several experiences where, in fact, it had. We had spoken at a socialist scholars conference some time in the early 1960s and had laid out these ideas of disruption and *Barron's Magazine* wrote a front-page editorial about what we said. "Teachers of Destruction" was the heading of the article. A big contributor to the business school called the Dean of the business school and said, "What is this? I am not giving you a contribution next year if you have people like this on the faculty of Columbia." The Dean of the business school called the president and the President said, "This is Columbia...academic freedom."

JM: So the President of the University did stand up for you?

RC: Yes. We had different kinds of experiences, but on the whole the experiences we had were negative. So anyway, this is 1974 and Frances was turned down. Frances was having a lot of trouble with the commuting, psychologically. We were living back in New York and she was commuting to Boston through this period, 1973 to 1975, and we decided that I would have less trouble with it. We bought this house in Chelsea and I started living there and commuting back to Columbia, but we also decided I should look for a job in Boston. So what happened was that Boston University Social of Social Work was experiencing some pressure to upgrade the doctoral program, and the sociology department was experiencing a problem of not being able to get its graduates into teaching jobs. You know, the University was beginning to contract; the golden age was over. The sociology department thought that one way to open up career opportunities for their students was through the broad social welfare institutional complex where there would be a need for researchers and policy analysts, etc. Somehow the two schools got together and decided they wanted to have a joint doctoral program. So they cast around and they came to ask me if I would direct it. I didn't want to direct it. I don't like administrative work, and I don't like all of this intense doctoral dissertation stuff. I like academic work but I like to do it on my own

and in my own way, but on the other hand it was a job in Boston, so I said yes. I went through the tenure process in social work and then I went through the tenure process in sociology. You had to go through the process in both places. Then I went up to John Silber; of course, the whole thing was ludicrous to begin with because at that time Frances was the chair of a committee called the "Save B.U. Committee," which was trying to get Silber unseated. The whole thing was ridiculous. So of course Silber turned me down.

FP: We are really master political tacticians.

RC: Then I got a call from David Gil at Brandeis. I had just previously seen him on an airplane some place. He called and said to me, "Would you be interested in coming to Brandeis – the Heller School?" Well, it turns out that they had had a two-year search to replace Roland Warren, their community sociologist. For two years they had interviewed candidates, and they had offered the job to some, but they were turned down, and others they didn't like, so ended up exhausted after two years with no candidate. I went over and I gave a colloquium. They didn't want me. They really didn't want me. There were people on that faculty that hated my guts.

JM: Was that because of what you had written?

RC: Yes. It was a very conservative ipsypopsy faculty. Their concepts of social policy were very traditional. You do the research, you write studies, and then you go talk to the important people and tell them what to do, and they do it. But under the circumstances Roland supported me, given that fact they had no choice or alternatives, and so they voted for me. It went up to the Provost. They had the same system that Columbia had except instead of appointing five members to an adhoc committee they appointed eight, two of whom are from outside of the university. I submitted all my stuff and I was turned down, four votes to four. Three sociologists voted for me and the Dean of the Heller School had to, despite his

misgivings. The other four members were from other fields and were described to me as the right wing of *Commentary Magazine*.

FP: They thought that Richard being a radical meant he was pro-Palestinian.

RC: Actually I am a Zionist.

FP: Richard is the biggest Zionist you ever ran into. It is embarrassing.

JM: They were really stacking it against you?

RC: They really did me in. Well, I got pissed, and I decided to make a public issue of it. I sent a letter all over the country to top academics – to those in political science, history, economics, and so on – and explained what happened. There was an avalanche of letters to the President, Marver Bernstein. The Harvard sociology department issued a letter, which everyone personally signed, except Nathan Glazer. The sociology department of Brandeis issued a letter, which everybody signed. Departmental letters were issued at Clark, UMASS; the board of directors of the NASW chapter in Massachusetts issued a condemnatory letter, as did NASW. So did The Society for the Study of Social Problems Board. Then it got in the press. The national ACLU issued a four-page letter. There was a half-page story in the *Boston Globe* about it: academic freedom. There was a big article in the *Washington Post* entitled, "Social Activist Denied Tenure at Brandeis," or something like that, and maybe 200 letters total. I have them all. But they would not reconsider. At about that time, Frances got an offer from the Graduate Center at City University; we went back to New York and we've been there ever since. It was a good thing for her because it got her out of the fight with Silber. She would have spent the rest of her career fighting Silber, and it got her into a much more congenial situation.

FP: It was great fighting Silber.

RC: Yes, it was great, but it wouldn't have

been great after another ten years. I was just as happy to stay at Columbia because they long since left me alone to teach what I wanted. They didn't bother me. I didn't go to committee meetings. Nothing. I was really independent. From my point of view it was good. We both like New York. Anyway, in connection with the Brandeis fight, a number of people in different departments at Columbia, including social work, wrote letters. The Dean, Mitch Ginsberg, and several others wrote letters protesting. Ginsberg at that time was also on a three-person university committee to pick a new president. Merton was also on the committee. I said to Mitch, "Mention my troubles at Brandeis to Merton and see if he will write a letter." Mitch later told me he said no.

JM: Did you ever talk to Merton about this?

RC: No, the only thing that I did was after Frances was turned down in the planning department in 1974, several years earlier, I wrote a letter and said, "I can't understand how Frances could have been turned down if you had written a letter supporting her. Did you or didn't you do that for her?" I knew he hadn't. He wrote back a letter and said, "I have checked with the Provost and confirmed that the rules of the adhoc committee procedure are governed by norms of secrecy, which I will not violate." I have that letter. Jesus Christ!

JM: It sounds like it still gets you worked up just thinking about it

RC: Academic commissars are everywhere. I was going to write an article, and Frances talked me out of it, called "Adventures in the Academic Skin Game."

JM: It sounds like you really did pay a price for your ideas.

RC: Yes, but in the end it turned out well. We ended up back in New York.

FP: Nah, we didn't pay any price Richard. A few distractions, that's it.

RC: That is what I am saying. It was like ten bad years of commuting and fights.

RC: They tried to hurt us but they didn't succeed because I had tenure at Columbia, and she got the job at City University, so it all ended up well. In that sense I would not say we were punished. They tried to, but failed. They would have if they could have, but they couldn't.

JM: I guess you had to expend more energy during that period than people do during their academic careers.

RC: Yeah, there was a five- or six-year period there where we were just engaged in these tenure fights all the time. So, it all ended up well. Actually it would have been a disaster if I had gone to Brandeis. I would have hated it – HATED IT! For one thing you are supposed to raise one-third of your salary. That means you have to pay the piper to get the grants. Well, I didn't want to pay the piper and so I wouldn't have raised the one-third. The other faculty would have resented the hell out of me because I wasn't carrying my weight.

JM: In the end it sounds like it was one of those things that worked out for the best.

RC: It worked out for the best. I would have been miserable at Brandeis, and Frances would have been consumed by the fight with Silber, because he never left. He tried to get out by looking for various jobs, including running for Governor. She would have spent the rest of her God dammed career fighting Silber. So all in all, we landed on our feet. This really tells the Merton story. It ended up as an academic freedom story. I always say academic politics is the highest form of civilized combat.

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