Interviewer: For a women's club there. (laughs)

Cheryl Wall: Right.

Interviewer: That's the women's club movement so we was like [crosstalk 00:00:03] here.

Cheryl Wall: Yeah, yeah. (laughing)

Interviewer: Okay Evelyn?

Crew: Okay here's camera marker one. And uh, last thing is, if you could just count to ten. I just want to hear the sound of your voice.

Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Crew: Your normal voice. [inaudible 00:00:23] here.

Cheryl Wall: All right. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Crew: Great, thank you.

Interviewer: So, welcome.

Cheryl Wall: Thanks.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Crew: We're speeding.

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so can you explain, explain how you ended up here at uh, at Rutgers.

Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Interviewer: Tell us the story.

Cheryl Wall: Um, I answered an ad in the New York Times. I was at graduate school at Harvard. I'd finished 2 years so I finished the coursework, but I hadn't taken my qualifying exams or even start to think about a dissertation project. Uh, but I was very um, unhappy there. I felt totally invisible there. I was doing well, in terms of uh, metrics um, but I was miserable and just really had to ask myself, "is this what you really wanna do with your life?"
Um, and so I decided well, maybe I needed to find out whether I wanted to be um, an academic. And so I started looking and, as I said, I found this ad in the New York Times. I knew nothing about Douglas College, I knew nothing about Rutgers, I just applied. 14 06 00 And um, it was not the regular season for hiring, but I didn't know there was a regular season for hiring. And I came out here, uh, and it was probably May. Um, and I was interviewed and then I was offered the job as an as-, an assistant instructor in the English department.

I then, um, (laughs) I then sent a note to my advisor at Harvard, to tell him that I was taking this job. And his response was, "Rutgers is a very good place," I had no clue.

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: Um, but I came here, I started teaching, first day I taught in Hickman Hall. I had never taught before, um, because there wasn't a kind of teaching assistant-ship, um, arrangement at Harvard. And, I knew that day that this is what I wanted to do with my life, and all these decades later, here I sit.

Interviewer: How was Douglas different than?

Cheryl Wall: ***14 07 05 Oh, Douglas was, uh, more or less, it felt like a autonomous institution. It had its own faculty. It had its own administration. Um, there were a few students from Rutgers who would occasionally take a class here. But, my courses were almost exclusively made up of Douglas students. Um, which meant they were all women. Um, the class is a big class, it was like 25 students. So, it really was a small liberal arts college.

Interviewer: And what were the course you were, what course were teaching?

Cheryl Wall: Um, first semester, I taught "the educated woman in literature," which was one of the first women's in gender studies courses invented on this campus. It was invented by Elaine Showalter. Elaine was on leave, so it was a couple of years before I met her. Um, she was writing her book of literature of her own in London. Um, and I taught this course. I had not thought about um, feminism in literature, although, I already had an interest in black women writers, but it was very, um, undefined interest.
And here I was, teaching this course, along with black music and literature. Of course, that had been invented by A.B. Spellman. I was not, by any means, the first black, um, professor, or uh, instructor in that department. And, a course that was really ... Um, it's called English 098, which was developmental English. Of all three of them, that's the one I was least prepared to teach, because I did not know how to teach people how to write, or let alone, people who had really serious deficiencies.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Um, but I taught all three of those courses, for that semester. And at the end of that semester, I went back to Harvard to take my orals.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: And so, it was real ... When I think about it now, that, you know, I was teaching three brand-new preparations, I was studying constantly for the qualifying exam, and I didn't know that that was not really the normal um, load of, um, an academic's life. But, I knew, by the time I went to take that exam, that I really did have to pass it because I wanted that degree, because I wanted to be able to continue doing what I was doing here.

Interviewer: Mmm, what did you end up writing your dissertation on [inaudible 00:05:26], what [inaudible 00:05:27]?

Crew: [inaudible 00:05:31] move right [inaudible 00:05:30] I see exactly-

Cheryl Wall: Oh, okay.

Crew: If you can just, right here.

Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Crew: Uh, you see the-

Cheryl Wall: Oh, you're going all the way down there, okay?

Crew: A little bit, yeah.

Cheryl Wall: Okay, all right.

Crew: But if you, wuh, how you were sitting was fantastic.
Cheryl Wall: Okay, okay.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Interviewer: What did you write your dissertation on?

Cheryl Wall: I ended up writing my dissertation on uh, three women of the Harlem Renaissance. Jessie Fauset, Nella Larson and Zora Neale Hurston. Uh, one of the wonderful things about coming here, there were so many people on the faculty at Douglas who were really part of the movement to invent women's studies.

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: And even though I had a very, um, generous, um, advisor at Harvard, who then became my dissertation advisor, he knew nothing about women, and eh, he just hadn't thought about it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Um, and I remember asking him for books to read, and he suggested a book by Louis Auchincloss, entitled "Pioneers and Caretakers." And that was his understanding of if you want to write a book on women in literature, this is where you should go.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Instead, I come here, and Elaine Showalter's here, a few that, a few years later, Catharine Stimpson was here. At one point, Adrienne Rich was here. So, all of the sudden, I really am being trained to do what, um, it is that, that I want to do. That would never have happened for me, had I stayed in the graduate program I was in.
Interviewer: Hmm, what were the students here like? And what was the atmosphere like?

Cheryl Wall: It was, it's always, it's still very much the same, in that, um, 14 11 30 the students here are largely first-generation college students. Um, so they are eager to learn. There's no sense of entitlement. Um, they haven't really understood where there's the, the best, the smartest ones. Um, the most academically ambitious ones, let me put it that way. Um, haven't really thought about how wonderful it is to kind of explore ideas and live, um, in one's mind. 14 11 59 Um, and so, they, they come with that kind of eagerness, that is, um, I've, I find it a very gratifying way to teach.

[00:08:00] And what's different, in those days, 14 12 11 most of those students had never been outside of New Jersey. I once took a group to see a play. Uh, I said "we're gonna go to New York, we're gonna see this play." And they were really concerned, like "how are we gonna do that?" Was I gonna charter a bus? Because how would they keep up with each other in the city? Okay, fast forward four decades, and my students now come from all over the world, uh, they, they travel back to uh, Russia or Japan or the Caribbean, um, over the summer. I mean, they really have a sense of uh, of a global um, society who just totuh, that is totally different from the students I first encountered.14 12 55

Interviewer: Mmm, I get the sense that Douglas was a very nurturing place, at that time.

Cheryl Wall: Absolutely, because it was so small, because um, now, my life is organized around my department. Um, at Douglas the faculty really came from all departments, we met regularly at faculty meetings. Um, I knew a lot of people in this, I knew people in the sciences, I knew historians, I knew people in classics and sociology, and so that was very important, in terms of intellectual conversations and growth.

[00:09:00] But it's, was also true that I knew staff. I knew the people who were counselors. Uh, so, if I had a student who had a problem, I would just pick up the phone and call so and so, to say "I have a student who's having difficulty, um, is there a place that I can send her to get help," and that's academic tutori, academic tutoring, or um, counseling, emotional, uh, counseling. I knew all the people and this was a campus that was really organized to support, uh, student needs. And the support system at Douglas was, I later found out, much superior to the support system at the other undergraduate colleges at Rutgers. 14 13 52

[00:10:00] Interviewer: Mmm, so where did that begin to change? Where did the conversation about merging the faculties begin?

14 14 20
Cheryl Wall: It actually started in the late 1970s. Um, and there was a sense that Rutgers was anomalous. Um, that most, um, other universities, that they wanted to, um, become peer institutions; whether it was Michigan or Wisconsin or any of the big 10, um, of which, of course, Rutgers is now a part. Um, that those institutions weren’t organized this way. That they had one undergraduate, um, faculty. And um, that was the move, and it was strongly resisted by students and faculty at, at Douglas. Um, but-

Interviewer: Including you?

Cheryl Wall: Including me. Um, because I thought that something was really gonna be lost, and I think, for undergraduates, something was lost. Um, now, on the other hand, there were gains in terms of graduate education at Rutgers, and since rankings are very much dependent on graduate rankings, uh, or graduate education on the, the quality and quantity of research. Um, the reorganization really did bring the benefits that I think the central administrators at that time desired. Um, and for a long time, the students were still, you still fff, had Douglas students in your classes and Rutgers students in your class, and Livingston students in your classes.

But, over time, that really began to change, and with the most recent reorganization, uh, I think it was 2007, 2008, that really has changed-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Because students no longer come with that sensibility, and after all, they, they now graduate, graduate from the school of arts and sciences, and that, that has really, it, it's change, it took about three decades, but it is now, finally, complete.

Interviewer: And so what, what, describe what the change has been from [inaudible 00:12:20]?

Cheryl Wall: Well, initially, it meant that one's classes were much larger. So, a large class for me went from 25 to 80. Um, and that's, they're no longer quite as large as that, but for a time, they were. Um, instead of being in, in a department with 20 colleagues, I was in a department that, at one point, had 80 tenured and tenure track faculty.

Um, undergraduates and [inaudible 00:12:47], I have an undergraduate now, or since then who has a problem. I'm not sure where to send that person. Um, and I look through a directory and try to find where to, to send him or her. But, it's no longer a thing that I can pick up the phone-
Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: And say um, you know, "I need," "can you see this person today?"

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: So is there, so, ef, we, talk about Douglas, uh, Douglas then and now-

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: What's the difference between the Douglas woman now, versus what a Douglas woman would've been then?

Cheryl Wall: All right-

Interviewer: In [inaudible 00:13:24]

Cheryl Wall: Well, we did manage, a lot of people worked very hard to um, retain the core of the Douglas experience. And so, although it is now called Douglas Residential College, um, they have now begun to attract students who have chosen, very deliberately chosen the Douglas experience. In that way, it's like it was uh, four decades ago.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: That these are young women who've thought about it, who have decided that there is a value to living in a, um, women's community. Um, they don't all want to do women's and gender studies as a field, for sure. Um, but they want some grounding in that. They want to have an education in which women and women's experiences are central, rather than, um, marginal. Um, and I think that they have a sense of community that's quite different. Well there are tens of thousands of undergraduates in New Brunswick. And so, their experience is much more focused. I think they have a stronger sense of identification, um, with, um, their undergraduate institution. So, that even though they are officially students in the school of arts and sciences, um, they, there is still some pride and identity that makes them Douglas women.
Interviewer: All right, that's great, mmm-kay. What about the, you know, one of the things that occurs at Douglas is a more diverse place, tends to be more-

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: Diverse, is, are the fact, is that reflected in the faculty as well?

Cheryl Wall: Faculty is very different. I think, um, 14 19 30 Rutgers has done an amazing jobs, in terms of student diversity, and Douglas has done the best job of all. Um, that was and is an unanticipated result. I don’t think when any of us were thinking about Douglas Residential College, that we were really thinking that it would become the most diverse community of undergraduates. But, it has. Um, and that is just an amazing thing.

And, as I've said, the diverse-

Interviewer: What [inaudible 00:15:46] that, though, do you know?

Cheryl Wall: I'm really not sure.

Interviewer: Okay.

Cheryl Wall: I'm really not sure. 14 20 05 Um, the whole university, um, in New Brunswick, uh, as elsewhere, is just part of it is a reflection of the changing demographics of New Jersey. Um, that this is an incredibly heterogeneous state. Um, the students coming to the university come from a far broader range of backgrounds than has even been true before.14 20 27 I think that there is, there is evidently something that's going on at, at Douglas, and I would attribute it both to the students and their lee, students and their leaders, and to the administration of the college that has made this a very welcoming place for women of color, in particular. Um, yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of focus on STEM, now. Science, technology, engineering, math-

Cheryl Wall: What-

Interviewer: Where does that leave those of you that want to study women writers of the Harlem Renaissance?

Cheryl Wall: All right, I mean, I think STEM is wonderful, STEM is obviously helping, um, everybody, um, have a better, um, life in the future, in terms, in material terms. Um, and I don't just mean material terms in, um, in the sense that better economic lives. I mean, better health, um, outputs, better, just uh, eh a better way of living.14 21 32 But, in order to understand what it means to be human, in order
to, um, even enter STEM disciplines with the sense that there is always a human component to the work that we do, um, it seems to me that the humanities really remain, um, central to any liberal arts education. I am a believer in liberal arts education. I think that that whole idea of, you know, the etymology of liberal and the liberty and liberation and all of those important values that they can't really be disentangled, and that it is crucial that people; students, young people have a sense of who they are and how they are related to other people in the world.

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: I think that's what the humanities offers, whether it's literature or history or philosophy or art history, that all of those, um, disciplines remain critical. Now, they are not the disciplines that, um, are perhaps best for career-minded people in the short-run, but in the long-run, it seems to me that the ability to think analytically, to speak well, to write well, that these are skills that are always gonna be important.

Interviewer: Yeah, right. You're a graduate of a historically black university, and a long-time member of a faculty in a women's college.

Cheryl Wall: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there a similar case to be made for the importance of HBCUs and women's colleges, even in 2016, when we have a woman running for president in a post, alleged, post-racial world.

Cheryl Wall: Well, we're not gonna talk about the post-racial world because-

Interviewer: Okay, we won't get into it-

Cheryl Wall: That does not exist.

Interviewer: Okay. (laughs)

Cheryl Wall: Um, but I, I do think that there's, there's something special about it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Um, and I think, in both cases, it's the sense that there's a mission involved, um, with the institution, that it is not just a matter of educating individuals, but it really is um, the goal is really to advance the, um, rights of the group.
Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Or to advance the um, lives of the group, and whether that means focusing on a particular literature, a particular history, or in viewing students with a sense of a kind of social and political mission. I do think these institutions continue to have value. I think, for, um, women, and this one of the differences between teaching today and teaching at, at Douglas those years ago where the classrooms where, where just all the students were women.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Um, and the students sss, to my mind, were freer to participate. 14 24 30

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Um, they were-

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: Certainly, I think that there's just a sense that there's a difference that, uh, when they're in that space, that they didn't worry as much about, um, sounding ... Let me regroup. They didn't worry as much about the impression that they were gonna leave on the, the men in the room. 14 24 55

Interviewer: Okay.

Cheryl Wall: And I think, and co-ed classes, and I'm not the first to say this-

Interviewer: No, not-

Cheryl Wall: This is why they [crosstalk 00:20:45] observed.

Interviewer: One of the students we talked to-

Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Interviewer: Talked about this.

Cheryl Wall: I, I just think that it's just a freer space. Um, now, to be honest, in English classrooms, women are still, by far, um, the majority of the students. Um, though it's always interesting to see that in so many classrooms, the most vocal students will be the men. And sometimes, they have great things to say. But, even if they don't have great things to say, they are eager to speak. 14 25 32 Um, and it's just
really difficult to, um, give that sense of confidence and authority, uh, to some women.

There's some, obviously, there are lots of women who are born with a sense of confidence and authority, but there are many more who aren't. And I think, for them, the experience in women's college can be really important, in giving them a sense of their own power. And that's one of the things that it seems to me a women's college does. A women's college does or, or a HBCU can do.

Interviewer: When you first joined the faculty, when did you join the faculty at [inaudible 00:21:55]?

Cheryl Wall: 1972.

[00:22:00] Interviewer: Um, you were a teaching assistant then, I mean, when did you get tenured and [crosstalk 00:22:01]

Cheryl Wall: Oh, okay, well, I finished my degree in 1976, and so, that year, I became an assistant professor. 14 26 30

Interviewer: Okay. So, was there a different, were you per, looked down upon by the professors, or what, was there disparity between the Rutgers professors and the Douglas professors at that time?

Cheryl Wall: Well, uh, yes. Uh, for example, uh, it was many more of the Rutgers professors had been invited to join the graduate faculty. Um, and those who were strictly enforced lines then. Um, that hierarchy doesn't exist anymore, um, but it did at that time. Um, I never, I have to say, and, right, the, the Harvard degree, um, was really an important credential for me.14 27 03 Um, because although, in every other way, I did not fit the profile, uh, a lot of the, uh, senior professors in the Rutgers English department also had Harvard PHDs, and so, I got some sort of pass.

[00:23:00] Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: Um, as, as, as a result of that.

Interviewer: That's weird how that happens. (laughs)

Cheryl Wall: Yes. (laughing) okay, you could cut that facial expression.

Interviewer: Sorry.
Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Interviewer: I will. (laughing) I was just like yeah, you know-

Cheryl Wall: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's weird. Um, so, let me see, Mary Hartman was the dean in those [crosstalk 00:23:34]

Cheryl Wall: 14 27 47 No, when I first came here, the dean was a woman named Marjorie, um, Summers-Foster. And then, Mary Hartman. Um, no, then there was Jule Plummer-Cobb, who was an African American woman, a scientist. Um, who came, and she was the dean when that first reorganization occurred. And although she certainly fought the good fight, um, ultimately, uh, she lost.

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: Um, but, and after Mary Hartman, might have come after her; I think she was the next dean. And then 14 28 22 Mary Hartman is uh, someone for whom I have enormous respect. Um, understanding that there was no faculty, um, attached to the college anymore. It was really important to have an academic intellectual, um, center. And I think, what she did in pulling together the Institute for Women's Leadership, which brought, um, which is obviously the consortium for, of sss, several, um, research institutes here. 14 28 53 That that meant that even though there's no faculty per se, that there's still important scholarship going on at Douglas. There are reasons for, uh, faculty to come from the other campuses, um, in New Brunswick, to be part of seminars, and study groups at Douglas. Um, for graduate students. Um, one can say, uh, maybe you want to, uh, be, try to become a fellow, fellow of [inaudible 00:25:11] at the Institute for Research on Women.

[00:25:00] 14 29 26 Um, and so that has, I think, um, guaranteed that Douglas continues to be a site for important feminist research and scholarship. 14 29 30

Interviewer: Oh, good, yeah, I was talking to somebody in the central administration who was saying that they have all these IW ... Uh, the Institute for Women's Leadership has-

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: All these little centers.

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)
Interviewer: And that somehow, they needed to become part of the larger Rutgers community. Um, and I think she feels the same way about Douglas itself, that-

Cheryl Wall: Mmm-mmm

Interviewer: Um, Douglas is sort of over here on Nichols Avenue, and there's, stuh, it's the burden is on Douglas to become part of Rutgers.

Cheryl Wall: Hmm

Interviewer: Um, how do you feel about that?

[00:26:00] 14 30 10

Cheryl Wall: I think that had the centers not maintained their um, autonomy-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: That they would no longer exist. Eh, I, I just, the, the focus is so clear, um, and some of the centers are, yeah, several of them are nationally, uh, recognized. Yeah, there are hundreds of centers at Rutgers University, now. And, some of them are very, yeah, been on committees, um, Envisioning Tomorrow's University, that's a committee I co-chair. And there was a group of people who were looking at centers. And of course, you know, sometimes the model for a center here, is the Center for Cancer Research. Which has, you know, billions of dollars of, uh, research money. And I have said "well, that can't be the model of a center for Rutgers, because there are these other centers that do really important work, but they don't have that kind of um, they don't have those kinds of resources." But the center for American Women in Politics, um, you know, is really cited in the New York Times as often as some of these, um, STEM centers-

[00:27:00] 14 31 25

Interviewer: Oh, okay. So, this committee you run, this Envisioning the University of-

Cheryl Wall: I was on, it's over.

Interviewer: Okay.
Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Interviewer: So, what did they come up with? What is the university of the future?

Cheryl Wall: Well, there was a lot of um, dissension there. Um, and there were a lot of people in there that, do, duh, medical school, we now have a Rutgers Medical School for the first time, in many, many years. So, the first time since I've been here. Um, and so, you now have a lot of people who have no interaction-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Whatsoever with undergraduates, so their sense of their work at the university, their sense of the university is very, very different. My sense of the university has always been, um, one that the, um, in which the most important population, our students, are undergraduate students. Um, and so, I still think that that should be, they should be at the center of a model going forward. Um, and I'm not persuaded, as some of my colleagues were, that, um, in, um, some short period of time, all undergraduate education would be a kind of distance learning. Um, that, that people will just, um, students will sit in their bedrooms and connect with the institution, um, via the internet.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: That's not going to happen. That's not the America, American model for undergraduate education-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: And so, I think that we have to figure out how to ... I mean, I'm not opposed to um, new technologies, and obviously, some of them have really been transformative, even in my own teaching.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: You know, just a little bit. My students now submit their papers electronically, and that was huge for me, and I have my graduate assistant to thank. Um, but, so, there are those kinds of changes that are gonna be important. But, I don't think they're ever gonna replace, but maybe, I hope they do not replace the give and take in the classroom, where students are not only learning from the professor, but they are learning, um, from each other.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)
Cheryl Wall: And one of the beautiful things about, uh, being on a campus where there is so much diversity, um, having those students learn from each other can, they bring perspectives that I could never bring. Um, talking about passing, and inter, intraracial discrimination, and so, we've read a novel by Nella Larsen, and we've talked about it. And a student comes up to me, at the end and says "my mother's from Taiwan, and she talks about the fact that darker-skinned people in Taiwan are looked down upon." I have a circle of students around my desk who are not African American, but they're Indian, they're Pakistani and they're having this conversation. You could, you could only have that if you had students from all of those backgrounds, in a conversation together.

Interviewer: Uh, right, yeah. It is an amazing thing, huh?

Cheryl Wall: It's-

Interviewer: Influence in the classroom. We have these same conversations at the [crosstalk 00:30:54]

Cheryl Wall: Oh, okay.

Interviewer: School of journalism there, [inaudible 00:30:55]. Half hour, I mean [inaudible 00:30:57]-

Crew: [inaudible 00:30:57] control.

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:31:00]

Interviewer: Did, I'm interested in how that affected the campus and-

Cheryl Wall: Okay, the first one I'm really not gonna be able to answer.

Interviewer: Okay.

Cheryl Wall: Because that's a student experience that-

Interviewer: Yeah.

Cheryl Wall: That I don't, that I didn't have, it, I can say something about-

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, and so yeah-
Cheryl Wall: [inaudible 00:31:14] outs.


Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: Most people think of the Black Panthers and all being happening in the late '60s, which it did, but I think it didn't really hit the campuses until '72-

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: What was the impact of the Black Power Movement here?

Cheryl Wall: Okay, well, there, well, that's a student, there was a lot of student activism. I mean, student activism, um, it kind of intensifies, and then it ebbs in my, in my experience. Uh, the 70s were certainly a period when it was really intense. Um, that you had in, uh, obviously, many of the black students here were first-generation students. Um, they understood that the social movements, um, in their communities were the reason that they were, um, at Rutgers, that that's what opens the, the university up. And so, they come with that, um, social and political consciousness that they want to have the institution recognize that they want to transform the institution. Um, they just don't want the institution to transform them.

Then, so there, that was a period of heightened activism. The, um, uh, Anti-Apartheid Movement was another period of, um, intense activism, um, just now, Black Lives Matter is a period of intense activism on, on, on this campus.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Um, other, at other times, the students are much more quiescent, and certainly, the pressure of, um, tuition cost and student loan debt, I mean, that has really [inaudible 00:33:07] students, and Rutgers students are not, this, this ... Students here are not privileged. I remember teaching once, this is many years ago now. And I had this young woman, and she'd come to class, and she'd fall asleep in every class. And so, I asked her to come up afterward, and said "this is really not acceptable," and she explained, um, she's working full-time at night for UPS. So, she's come to my class after working eight hours overnight. (laughing) Okay?

It's like okay, just do the best you can. (laughing) Okay? Because, I am in awe, that this, that her desire for an education is that strong. Now, not everybody
here works that hard, but a lot of working students work, not the 15 hour work study job, but real jobs, outside the institution. Um, and, that just makes, you know, that this whole activism can seem like an unaffordable luxury.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Cheryl Wall: For students in that situation.

Interviewer: Yeah, but in the ’70s, you had, there were two student tay, well there were two student takeovers here, right? There was one at Newark.

Cheryl Wall: Right.

Interviewer: And then, as a result of Newark, was there a takeover here as well, [inaudible money?]

Cheryl Wall: I don't re, wuh- [crosstalk] The takeover in Newark was in ’68.

Interviewer: Okay.

Cheryl Wall: So, that's definitely before I got here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Cheryl Wall: Um, I don't remember a takeover, per se.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: But there certainly was a lot of activism here. Um, students wanted, um, black studies, or reh, here was named Africana studies. Our students wanted more, um, black and Latino faculty. Um, and at, really more black and Latino students, um, in, in the ’70s. So, so there were all of those efforts, um, that I did, I do think, over time paid dividends, especially in terms of the increasing, um, diversity of the student body.

I have worked hard for faculty diversity. Um, it is a much more difficult task, so there are some departments at, at Rutgers that really do have sizable, uh, percentages of um, faculty who are uh, from quote underrepresented groups, closed quote. But they're very few, they're very few. Now, I should say that one of the reasons I think, historically, Rutgers has a much higher, or somewhat higher percentage of female faculty is part of the legacy of Douglas college.
Interviewer: Mmm

[00:36:00]
Cheryl Wall: Um, because the faculty here, it was much more, um, gender-neutral than at other places at the university. Um, because, sometimes Douglas students went on and earned advanced degrees and came back, uh, to teach here.

Interviewer: So, what and Douglas college had a predominantly-

Cheryl Wall: Right, right. That's, yes, yes-

Interviewer: Still in there.

Cheryl Wall: Yes. And that, that the legacy of that, um, continued for quite some time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: And just once, you have, a, um, department that is, that has a significant number of women.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Or a significant number of people of color. It is really interesting how that, then, becomes the norm.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: And so, those departments continue to be more, um, balances. Um, whereas if the department has never had that legacy, than it, it's the fight to open it up is really, can be quite difficult.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative), you what, was it Mary Hartman who wrote, and that you worked with on the book about diversity in higher education and uh, can you talk a bit about that and how it came about?

Cheryl Wall: Um, Mary, oh (laughs) okay, who is uh, a very dynamic woman, uh, had somebody else call me first to ask "would I be interested," I'd been department chair, at, you know, so it was what, "what are you gonna do now that you don't have to do that anymore?" And "what about working on this project?" And I'd agreed and it was amazing, we went to 12 institutions of very different kinds. Uh, resource-rich, Ivy League institutions, resource-poor, historically black colleges. Uh, we went to liberal arts colleges, we went to universities, and we were looking at programs
that were intended to enhance diversity that were part of faculty initiatives. So, these weren't the top-down programs an administrator had decided "oh, this would be great." These were programs that had been designed, usually by individual faculty members.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: And we had one program here, um, that's now a very significant program, um, called the Office for Diversity in Academic Success in the Sciences. It was started by a black woman geneticist whose name was Francine Essien, who I met. We came here at the same time. And Francine wanted to, um, encourage students, black students and Latino students to pursue, um, degrees in the sciences. And she set up this program to give those students support.

[00:39:00] Um, now the program has graduated to, over, between 200 and 300 physicians. It was started by one woman, okay? Now, of course, she worked so hard that she worked herself into ill health and early retirement. But, the program has outlasted her involvement, it is now run by one of the young people she mentored. And so, this, um, diversity, uh, the project was actually called Reaffirming Action-

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: Faculty Initiatives for Diversity. And, we found that story was repeated across all these institutions, that one person or two people decided that they wanted to do something.

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: And then, the challenge was always what happens when they run out of energy. Uh, what happens if they don't get the kind of, uh, support from the institution that would really make these programs permanent, and that was always the challenge. And so, that was what that project was. And we thought that by telling those stories, that we might, um, A, inspire a new generation of, um, professors who are rather less-inclined to do this kind of, um, unrewarded work. And we might encourage institutions to provide more support for these programs, because they could, in fact, turn out to be the kind of success story that this program at Rutgers is.

Interviewer: That's great. Um, uh, this, interact, I have uh, my editor is not part of the academy. (laughs) that he was sort of needling me a bit because I'm also a faculty member.

Cheryl Wall: Mmm
Interviewer: And he's like "you know, you understand institutions in your end of this whole life." Like, this whole idea that women in gender studies had, one of the earlier programs begins here-

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: Because it was well, the Berkshire Conference, do I have that right? Um-

Cheryl Wall: Mary Hartman was one of the people who established the Berkshire Conference-

Interviewer: Okay.

Cheryl Wall: Of women historians.

Interviewer: And how does that feed into what becomes one of the early ... Hartman some [crosstalk 00:41:03] 14 45 43

Cheryl Wall: You know, I theh, I, I suspect, though, I'm not sure, but I suspect those things that happened, are happening contemporaneously. Uh, yeah, the, that there are ... Women are in these disciplines, but writing by women or women's history or women in classics, that these are topics that are really marginal to those disciplines. And then you have this cohort of really creative, rigorous, imaginative scholars who decide, 'for me, those questions about, um, gender and central, okay? And so, they, I, yeah, it was really, I don't know that it was planned. I think that these were all women, and that certainly, this was my experience, who were interested in pursuing in certain topics. And were asking questions about these topics, and then recognized that "oh, my goodness, this person in history is asking some of these same questions." This person in classics is asking these same questions that maybe we, there are ways to create interdisciplinary conversations to address these questions on a, on a larger scale. And I think that's really good; the energy that brings forth womens and gender studies.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative), okay, um, you've done a lot of your own work on Zora Neale Hurston.

Cheryl Wall: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Cheryl Wall: When I first read Hurston, um, I just found things in her writing that I recognized from my own experience, but that I had never read about in books. And, I just
couldn't figure out how I had not heard more about her. After all, I did go to Howard University. I studied with Sterling Brown, who was one of the, um, participants in, what he insisted was the "New Negro Renaissance." He hated the term "Harlem Renaissance." And it, we did read a story, by Zora Neale Hurston in his class. But, I did not read "Their Eyes are Watching God," the novel, until I was in graduate school. I had not heard of "Mules and Men," or the other works by Zora Neale Hurston, and I was just, uh, why haven't, why haven't I heard of this writer before. And listening, or reading, and it's interesting that I list, spoke instead of listening, because when you read Hurston, you really do have to listen to her language. And it was language, a version of which, I had heard all my life.

But, again, that I had not seen it, um, on the page. And so, I just wanted to know more about her, and as I found out more, she just became a model of a kind of scholarship for me, because she was, obviously, a creative writer. But, she was also a scholar, I mean, she just was in the field, doing the kind of work that I can't even imagine doing, um, driving around, um, going from migrant worker camp to migrant worker camp, transcribing tales and stories, and superstitions and spiritual beliefs and courtship rituals, and songs and work songs and children's rhymes and so on, because she thought they were important.

And, this was at a time when most blacks, college and intellectuals did not want to focus on that, because after all, um, black Americans were now an urban population, and the focus should be on the future. And Hurson's saying "no, no, no, no, no, we need to understand who we've been, who we still are, and then all of these contributions that black people have given to the larger society." Not black people who are from an elite class, but ordinary, Drylongso Black folk. And I just, I, that's, she's just been an inspiration, as well as a model for me.

Interviewer: Sort of, uh, in the way you parallel to the importance of Douglass and-

Cheryl Wall: Well, there is a way that, right because, un, yeah, it wasn't that, you know, when I think about some of my colleagues who are in, who were in these, are people who are no longer here, but in American Literature, which is my field. And you know, they've, we'd talk about, they'd talk about nineteenth century American literature, and of course, it was, um, Hawthorne and Whitman, and Thoreau, and Emerson, and, uh, the, clearly, they were the important people. And when somebody said "well, you know, well, why, were there, were there any women?" Well, you know, they, they, they weren't important enough to be included. There was Emily Dickinson, and of course in nineteenth century American literature, maybe she could be added.

But, to look at it from a different perspective; to put Emily Dickinson at the center or Frederick Douglass at the center, or say there's this amazing woman, Harriett
Jacobs. Maybe, you know, we need to look at what she's writing about, too. I don't think that happens until people make it happen. 'Til people come in with different questions who are looking for different things in, in the literature. And they shift the conversation. Now, in certain fields, nobody would teach it. Nineteenth century American literature, for example, without including some of those other voices.

Interviewer: Mmm

Cheryl Wall: Um, I think that would be true in history, that would be true in art history, that there are now voices or scholars that insist on [inaudible 00:46:56] the conversation. But, had there not been places like Douglas-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: That really had a nucleus of scholars interested in certain writers and thinkers and, uh, historical actors who had before been invisible. I don't think that would've happened.

Interviewer: Mmm, you know what, when I look at this, this history, of this, of government college or women at Rutgers-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: It always seems like it's a parallel to the [inaudible 00:47:26] movement, and so, one of constant struggle and constantly having to prove your worth, and-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Interviewer: Constantly fighting for resources, is that a fight that is now, we, it needs to be let go, or is there still a need to keep fighting the good fight on it and-

Cheryl Wall: I think you need to keep fighting the good fight. Um, I just don't think, you know, that, that in order to make any progress is to fuh, struggle has to, has to, has to be part of it. Has to be part of the process. I mean, eh, you know, many, wonderful things have been achieved. Um, I think about my own students from Douglas I have, you know, a student who's a, who's a black woman who's a judge. Uh, in fact, I've taught two black women who are judges.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Cheryl Wall: Uh, I've taught doctors, I've taught ... And these are women who came here
without necessarily conceiving a future that included that level of attainment.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)
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Cheryl Wall: Um, but I think that one of the things that being here did was to give them a sense of their own possibilities. And that's true for students to, across any type of racial or ethnic or, or class, um, uh, divide. So, uh, I do think, though, that, that how to create these spaces where students can be nurtured and not kind of lost in this huge kind of anonymous and impersonal environment, um, Douglas continues to do that. And, that's one of the reasons that, I hope, and I, I believe that it will be sustained. 14 53 48

Interviewer: Okay, [inaudible 00:49:12] thank you, you [inaudible 00:49:14]. [inaudible 00:49:14] calling?

Cheryl Wall: Yeah.

Interviewer: Done.

Cheryl Wall: Okay. I just said "my gosh, okay, you have all these people." [crosstalk 00:49:17]

Interviewer: Have you any sports people in sports, athletes in your classes that you can think of?

Cheryl Wall: Not in my classes.

Interviewer: Okay, that's all right-

Cheryl Wall: As I think of it, the, the-

Interviewer: 'Cause I'm tryin' to, I keep-

Cheryl Wall: The great soccer star whose name I don't remember.

Interviewer: Oh, Carly Lloyd?

Cheryl Wall: Yeah. But she was in my class.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Cheryl Wall: Yeah, yeah.
Interviewer: All right, okay, I was gonna (laughs) [inaudible 00:49:34] "my god, you had Carly Lloyd in your class?"

Cheryl Wall: No, I didn't, I didn't.

Interviewer: (laughing) Okay.

Cheryl Wall: I didn't, I didn't.

Interviewer: All right.

Cheryl Wall: I didn't.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you.

Cheryl Wall: Sure.

Crew: [inaudible 00:49:48] We actually need to record the sound of the room, just for a second, well, actually for 15 seconds. There's one mic right here, one here, so, everyone needs to hold still.

Interviewer: Just the sound of us breathing, basically, nobody was-

Crew: Air conditioning and all that kind of stuff.

Cheryl Wall: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:50:00]
Crew: Okay, so here's uh room tone, starting now.

I think we got enough there.

Interviewer: Okay. (laughs)

Cheryl Wall: Okay.

Crew: All right.

How did we do?