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**Oral history interview with Rosalind Fox  
Solomon, 2016 October 29 and 31**

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Rosalind Solomon on October 29 and 31, 2016. The interview took place in New York, New York, and was conducted by Linda Yablonsky for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Visual Arts and the AIDS Epidemic: An Oral History Project.

Rosalind Solomon and Linda Yablonsky have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Rosalind Solomon has provided an addendum to this interview which appears here below the transcript.

## Interview

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is Linda Yablonsky, interviewing Rosalind Fox Solomon at her home and studio loft on Broadway in Greenwich Village in New York City on October 29, 2016 for the archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is card number one. Hi Rosalind.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Hi Linda.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Tell me your age at this moment.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm 86. I'll be 87 in April, next year.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Amazing. And you're still—I don't want to make it seem like you're over the hill, but you're still very active in your work.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I am. Yeah, I am.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which we're going to talk about in great depth, I hope. You were born and grew up where?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was born and I grew up in Highland Park, Illinois. It's a suburb of Chicago.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And your family life? How would you describe it?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You mean in emotional terms?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I felt rejected as a child.

LINDA YABLONSKY: By your parents?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Basically, yes. They were very young. They were 20 and 21 when they

married.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then they had me one year later, and they liked to party a lot and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: As young people would, yes, I suppose.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —yeah. So anyway, you know, that's—my recent book deals a lot with my parents and my childhood.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And the book is called?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: *Got to Go*. I mean, it's fact and fiction, but it's based on—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see. And your parents, did they work?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My father. My mother didn't work. My mother, she was very good at flower arranging and she could've been a good flower arranging teacher, but she never allowed herself to—for some reason, she wasn't comfortable with being an achiever. She depended on my father for everything. Even when I went to college, she said to me, when I was trying to take care of my tickets, my airline tickets, she said, "You shouldn't be doing that. Daddy does that."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, she wanted me to be popular and kind of sociable—that's what she wanted, and so I really had to, at a certain point, I tried to make myself into what my mother wanted me to be, and I kind of got there in my teens, but I always felt like I was wearing a mask.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And did you have siblings?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: One sister, yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Older or younger?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Younger.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did she have similar feelings, do you think?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Truthfully, I don't think she did. I'm not positive, because we never discussed it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We're not—we haven't been close and I think, you know, that she probably had a different childhood than I did, for various reasons.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is she a lot younger?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, just two and a half years younger.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And your father did what?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My father worked in his family's wholesale tobacco and candy business in the warehouse district of Chicago. He commuted.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, it was a supply business, not a shop?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, it was a supply business.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And you worked there as a kid?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I worked there a little bit in my teens, on an assembly line—a small assembly line, putting pennies into cigarette packages for sale in vending machines. That was the change that you—they actually, physically placed the pennies in the cigarette packages, on the side, so that when they came out of the vending machines, people got three cents in change, or something like that.

[My father left the wholesale business and established a cigarette vending machine business. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: I can't quite—what did they cost?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [They cost 22 cents. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: They cost a nickel, so you had to get 50, I mean—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —or two cents.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —remember what they cost. [I did remember. They cost 22 cents and people put a quarter in the vending machine and got 3 cents back under the cellophane around the package. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: That's funny—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It'd be 20—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —what a funny idea.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —20 cents or 25.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did your mother think of you working in the warehouse?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know what she thought. I don't remember, you know, anything about that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She didn't give you a hard time about that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, well my father wanted me to work. He thought that was very important. So,—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And do you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —my friends didn't work. Well, in retrospect, I think that the fact that I worked—in one summer, I worked typing addresses on envelopes at Sears Roebuck's in Highland Park for a dollar an hour—[they laugh]—because my father wanted me to work. He just felt that was very important. And all my friends were doing other things [like sitting around pools and swimming. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: How old were you when you did that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Probably 14. And I must say that I, you know, I think I got some of my drive and some of my stick-to-itive-ness from that, possibly.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you went into Chicago?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: A lot?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —my mother, she loved the symphony and she took my sister and me to musicals and to the Art Institute in Chicago, and to ballet. So I developed an interest in culture from that, early on.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did you study in college?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, that's a strange story too. Because, I had a good English teacher in high school, and toward the time I was about to graduate, I said to her, "You know, I want to be a writer." And she looked at me and she said, "That's a very hard thing to do." And I was just so insecure that I thought well, I shouldn't really try to do that, and instead I majored in political science. I always got A's in English, but I thought I should do something that would be harder for me. So I majored in Political Science.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And this was at which college?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Goucher College.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Women's college in Baltimore. [Now co-ed. —RS]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. And I was most interested in international relations.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But this was when, what years?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I graduated from high school in 1947.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think that's right.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —it was after the war?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I could imagine at that moment why you might be interested in

international relations.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Was it as hard as you thought it was going to be?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I didn't get all A's. [They laugh.] You know, it wasn't like that, no. It was a little harder, for sure.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you go to museums in Baltimore?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went in Washington, I think. I don't remember really doing very much in Baltimore. But I did go to Washington to both museums and also to the Senate, you know, to committee hearings and that kind of thing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you meet your husband while you were still in school or afterward?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I met my husband after I graduated. I had a blind date with him. [They laugh.] That's what we did then! I had a blind date with him for the last night of the Democratic Convention in Chicago when Adlai Stevenson—Kefauver, Estes Kefauver from Tennessee, ran against Adlai Stevenson. So my husband was from Tennessee.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And his name was what?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: His name was Jay Solomon. It was very strange. He was really Joel W. Solomon, but he went by the name of Jay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Joel? Say that again?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: J-O-E-L. My mother's name, oddly enough, was Joel, J-O-E-L, at the time, Fanny Wellman. I adored my grandmother, but I never figured out why she gave her such a name. What a name. So, my mother's name was Joel, my husband's name was Joel and my son's name was Joel.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But my mother changed her name late on to Joelle.

LINDA YABLONSKY: With an 'e' on the end?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah she added an 'l' and an 'e'.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So what happened on that blind date? A success, I guess?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I guess. I guess.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where did he take you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We went to the Democratic Convention.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, you were at the convention. I'm sorry.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We went to that. I don't remember about anything after that. And I don't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait, I'm sorry to interrupt, this was 1950—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I think it was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —something?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —1952, but I'm not—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —sure.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And so, where were you were living then? This was after you graduated from college?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, when I met him I was living at a girl's club in Chicago. A girl's club was—it was really a boarding house [called The Hunt Club. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was a boarding house and I paid \$22 a week, room and board or two meals a day, and I worked at the Toni company. I was working as—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Tony, T-O-N-Y?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —T-O-N-I. Which twin has the Toni?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, the hair perm?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I worked for two account executives—or maybe it was three, as a stenographer. Because I went to secretarial school after I graduated from college. How else was I gonna get a job?

LINDA YABLONSKY: You know, my mother was a stenographer. And when I was growing up, I don't want to talk about me, exactly, but she strenuously encouraged me to go to college and do whatever I wanted. Whatever that was, "You need a back-up. Learn how to type and take dictation". That was essentially the opportunities open to women, young women, at that time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I learned how to type, which—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's been always helpful.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —is very helpful

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But I never learned dictation.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did you have a job doing that?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, I also started—well, you know, when I was a teenager in college—I mean in high school. You know, I worked in an office, local business, doing clerk kind of things. My mother had been a secretary and was expert at stenography.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, my father wanted me to major [in education –RS]—to be a teacher, because he was very concerned about earning a living, but I didn't like it. I—actually, my junior year, I went to Northwestern—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I took education courses, which I did not like, and then I went back to Goucher and I graduated from Goucher. [After that, I took a secretarial course. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see. Because the other job open to women at that time was teaching.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Right. That's it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And you're supposed to really get married quickly.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes. So, you're working at the Toni company and how did you—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I had a blind date with my husband.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, but—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: How did I get there?

LINDA YABLONSKY: —yeah, you had a friend arrange it who thought—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't remember.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —you would be good for each other? What was he doing at the time? Was he—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My husband?

LINDA YABLONSKY: —involved in politics?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was on the housing authority in Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I thought that was very impressive and he was also a vice president of the Jaycees.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Jaycees?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Junior Chamber of Commerce. And he worked in his family's movie theatre



business in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So he was a southerner?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was born there. He was born in Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So he took you to the final night of the Democratic Convention in Chicago?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Were you dazzled?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he was nine years older than I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —yeah. And I don't know, yeah. I mean he was—he was charming. A very charming guy. I mean, it wasn't anything like love at first sight that I recall, but he was very interested in me, and he came back to see me again. And then he invited me to come to Chattanooga to meet his family.

LINDA YABLONSKY: After one date?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know whether it was one or two or three, but it wasn't much. [They laugh.] Frankly, I wanted more than anything else to get away from my parents, because—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you weren't living with them at that time?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I wasn't living with them, but I didn't want to be involved with them, because I got depressed when I was with them. Because I always felt rejected. I can't, you know—I don't even know the details at this moment, but so, anyway, when he wanted me to come to Chattanooga to meet his family—and I did—and I thought it was just, oh, this is a great big, happy family. All these different aunts and uncles and it all seemed so kind of sweet. Well, anyway, we did marry.

LINDA YABLONSKY: After—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And we did not know each other very well.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I met him in 1952 and we married in 1953, in June. Until I met him, whenever the convention was, maybe August or something. And he, you know—he knew I had this problem with my parents and he said, "All you need—" really, "All you need is somebody to love you." And—

LINDA YABLONSKY: True enough.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and that's what I thought too. And that he really did, you know, he liked me being his wife and so on. So, I moved to Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So what was that like in the 1950s?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Still segregated?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —it was segregated. It was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That must have been some kind of culture shock for you.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I have to tell you that before —that during my whole youth, I mean up to that time, I really lived a very narrow kind of— in the parameters of a very narrow social life. Before I went to college, I hardly even knew anybody who wasn't Jewish. Even though my mother hated the fact that she was Jewish, all of her friends were Jewish.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they weren't observant Jews?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, they weren't observant Jews. My father would've liked to have been. He came from a different kind of family. But we had Christmas at home, and it was a very confusing kind of thing. The whole thing was confusing, because we had Christmas, which my father didn't like. And we—I went out caroling with my school friends.

[They laugh.]

But my mother hated her Jewishness, and so I really didn't—who was I? I really didn't know who I was and—now how did I get off on that? Why did we get talking about that?

LINDA YABLONSKY: We were talking about the south in the '50s.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: About the south. So what I want to say is that I really didn't know— I think I can remember one Christian friend that I had in high school. Of course, those were different times, too. I mean, it was a time when I was very well aware, when I was a teenager, that there were quotas in colleges for Jews, and that there were covenants, real estate covenants, and so it wasn't just—so anyway, that's the way it was. Socially, I only knew Jewish people.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who did you go caroling with?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, with the caroling—oh, that's not totally true, there were, in grammar school—that was in grammar school—and then my sister and I were the only ones in this country school that we went to who were Jewish.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Public school?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, but it was a country school, small country school, and it was during that time that I had stones thrown at me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was during, you know, when Hitler was on the rise, and the big boys in the neighborhood—I mean they didn't mutilate me, but they called me "dirty Jew" when I was walking home. So, I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —had all this kind of stuff going on and then it turned out that the principal of the school was talking, saying anti-Semitic things about my sister and me, if we weren't there. And so my mother—took me out of school and sent me to another school where I couldn't walk to

school. They had to drive me there. So I left that school—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in the seventh grade, when I left that school.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is your husband's family Jewish?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Tennessee!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Tennessee—Tennessee Jews. So, I didn't know people of other religions or of other ethnicity. I really didn't. I met a few in college, but it kind of continued pretty much like that until I graduated, and I went as a graduation present—I don't why they did this, because it was really the greatest thing they could've ever done for me—my parents gave me a trip with the Experiment in International Living when I graduated.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What was that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: An international exchange organization.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I went to Belgium and France, and that was my first immersion in another culture. And, you know, it was very exciting and intriguing to me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you think that had some—?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, I think—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —effect on how the rest of your professional life transpired?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, I think it definitely did. Definitely. Not only that, when I married, I founded the Experiment in Chattanooga. They had incoming groups coming, and so with a Chilean friend of mine who lived in Chattanooga.—I knew her because she was married to a Jewish man. Well no, in Chattanooga I started meeting other people. I was active in the League of Women Voters and I met some of my best friends there. And, you know [. . . –RS] I broke out into other groups and met all kinds of people, but that was the first time in my life Chattanooga came after that trip too. Because I never like being circumscribed like that. Once—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —you know, that's all.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Your husband was still working with the housing authority?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, my husband—his family had a movie theatre business.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, movie theatres.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They had—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —a chain of movie theatres. And that's another—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So did you go to the movies a lot?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was a chain. He would go around to them at night for many years. We had practically no social life, because he went out at night to go around to the theatres.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And just, you know, to pop corn, and they had a [2 drive-ins –RS] and to be sure they filled every space and sometimes I would go with him but when I got pregnant, I couldn't go with him as much, or I didn't go with him as much.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How long after you married did you get pregnant? Or did you have your—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Too soon.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —first child?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was told—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Too soon.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was really terrible. The first few years were so difficult. I had fibroid tumors, which I didn't know about, but—his cousin was a doctor—[a gynecologist and he insisted –RS] that I had to go to, his cousin, because all the women in the family went to his cousin. So I did, and he told me I had fibroid tumors and I needed to have an operation. If I didn't, I would have trouble getting pregnant. So I had the operation at six weeks after I was married, I had a total, you know, I mean I had this abdominal operation, and then it was like, a slice down the vertical of your stomach. And then after that I was told, you know, "You better get pregnant soon, because if not, [the tumors –RS] might come back." And so, a year and a half later, you know, I had my first child.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which was?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My son, Joel. I had Joel. See, I don't know what year it was. I forget. That I'd have to look up, whether it was 1954 or '55. But I think it was '54. [. . . –RS] And I had him by Caesarean, because I'd already had this operation, and if you did that, they didn't let you try to have a natural birth.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then two years later, I had my daughter.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Her name is?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Linda.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

[They laugh.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, Linda. And I had her by caesarean as well. And then a few years after that, well it was longer, it was in my 30s, I had a total hysterectomy, which was also really a difficult thing to have had.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So you were, in this period, a full-time mother?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I started the Experiment.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was in my 30s. I mean, for the first number of years I was a mother and I did volunteer work. My husband—I wanted to have a job, because I was used to having a job, and when I came to Tennessee I wanted to have a job and he said, "No—no wife of mine is ever going to work."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you have a camera?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. I mean, only, you know, to take pictures of the kids. And then I started the Experiment. By that time, I had met this Chilean woman, [Lillian Tagle –RS] who was a friend of mine, and a fairly sophisticated person. I mean, very sophisticated, very unusual person for me to know, and together we brought the first Experiment in International Living group to Chattanooga, which was a Chilean group, and we found families for these ten Chileans. And then subsequently, I became, after a couple of experiences in Chattanooga, I took on being the southern representative for the Experiment in International Living. It was a wonderful thing to do because it was possible to, you know, bring the world to Chattanooga. And that was great.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay. So here are these kids from Chile.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You're in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a segregated city in the south. This is also the beginning of the Civil Rights movement. I mean, which came later, but there were—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —incidents all the time—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —in the '50s. So, what was it like for these kids to be there?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm sure they didn't look like their white neighbors.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, the Chileans are very white.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They are?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Very. Yeah, they—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, they weren't indigenous?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, [in Chile –RS] they got rid of most of the indigenous.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, they were very—but at some point, and I can't remember exactly when, I had connections in the African American community, and I started making arrangements for the people from the Experiment to have some interaction with them. But I was concerned about being there, but I knew that the people in Chicago and the people that I knew in New York, they just had absolutely no connection in any way to African Americans.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And in Chattanooga there was more connection, or there was more possibility.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I understand.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And my husband was on the [Chattanooga Housing Authority –RS], which at that time was, you know, it was good. I went back there recently and they had totally demolished one of the housing projects to the ground.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait. So he had left the family business and was working for the government?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, the housing authority was like an extracurricular activity.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He had an appointment—it was a political appointment.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. So, I felt, you know, I felt guilty, I felt really guilty, because my husband [and his cousins –RS] had a segregated theater.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I felt really guilty about that. And as time went on—actually, during the beginning of the Civil Rights era, I said, you know, "You need to change this." And he was friendly with the mayor, so he said he would talk to the mayor. And the mayor said, "It's the law of Tennessee." And it was the law of Tennessee. All the segregation was the *law* of Tennessee. So, it was only when the Civil Rights Act, you know, when it happened, that law was gone.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Were you still in Tennessee at that point?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was in Tennessee until [my husband –RS] was appointed by Jimmy Carter to be part of the Carter administration, and then we went to Washington for two years.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, what happened after desegregation? I mean, it couldn't have been easy.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I just know we had a party. I don't even remember how I knew so many of the African Americans, but I did know them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So I had a party for people that I knew in the community, who were [leaders that I knew in the general community—and for the African American people that I knew, who were the principal of the big high school, and a couple of people who were active in politics. That's probably one of the ways that I knew them too. They were active in politics, and I also was active in politics for a while.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you involve your children in any way with any of these activities when they were kids?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, my children were involved with the Carter campaign.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, my son became quickly disillusioned. [They laugh.] And he went away, as far as he could get. He went to Canada and he's been in Canada ever since. He's a citizen and my daughter is too now. But—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That was before or after Vietnam? I mean, was there still a draft—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. [Way after Vietnam, in 1975. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at that point?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, it had nothing to do with that. [As far as I know, there was no draft in the '70s. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Nothing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was too young for that, I think. No, there was a place called Farallones, I think.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How do you spell that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not positive. I think it was [the] Farallones. It was like a farm to learn organic farming in California, and he went there, and then he went to Canada. But he was involved in the campaign for a while. But, as I say, he left it. One of his best friends became the assistant to the protocol director in the Carter administration, but he didn't want to be involved at all, and my husband was appointed to a big job.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which was?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Administrator of the General Administrations Service, which was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: General Service Administration.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: General Service, GSA—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that handles all the government real estate and it also had an art program.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It had an art program?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: At that time, there was a law that two percent or some percentage of every building had to have art—dedicated to art. So—

LINDA YABLONSKY: One percent?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —whatever it was, I'm not sure.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, it's one percent now.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But they had to, yeah, they had to and there were a number of artists that we met, and my husband was interested in that program and I was too.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Was that your first exposure to working artists?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I knew a few in Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There was something I was going to say—that I worked for the Agency for International Development as a consultant at the end of the time that I was working for the Experiment, because they had a program to employ African Americans. And they got about eight to 10 part-time—they called us recruiter consultants, and I went around to black colleges—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in the south and to the Urban League meetings, and I would set up a luncheon there, or breakfast, and I spoke at some of the colleges. I went around to these colleges and I did that until it became clear, at a certain point—when I was doing it, they had positions in Africa. I remember positions in Africa. I don't remember what the other ones were, but it was supposed to be all over the world. But at a certain point, it became clear that the whole thing was really—really they were focusing on Vietnam.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then I just got out of it. You know, I just stopped doing it. But it was really a fascinating thing for me to do. [. . . –RS] I had some very interesting experiences during that time with African Americans.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What do you mean by interesting?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Just getting to know people. And yeah, I was invited to a party in Washington, where somebody came up to me and said, "Whose [cute –RS] white maid are you?" [They laugh.] You know, so, it was—oh well, when I was interviewed for the job, the day that I went up there to be interviewed, it was the March on Washington.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I marched with Roger Wilkins, who was Roy Wilkins' nephew. He worked for the agency for International Development at that time. So I marched with him and with a woman, Mildred Pitts, [an African American who was to be my supervisor. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Pitts?



ROSALIND SOLOMON: P-I-T-T-S. I've looked for her, but I haven't tracked her down. I mean, I didn't find her anywhere. So, you know, that was a breaking-out thing for me too, and then the whole thing with the Experiment, I mean I really began to know people in many different groups.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, having grown up feeling rejected by your parents, and stoned as a child for being a Jew, at this point in your life, you're in your 30s—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —or 40s?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I was, I guess, I was 38 when I started taking pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, I was in my 30s—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, so you're—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —before that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at this point, very comfortable with—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —other, you know, the Other—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was comfortable—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —other cultures?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —with embracing other cultures—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —because I found it absolutely fascinating.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, it was just wonderful to know all different kinds of people and their cultures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What led to the camera? Picking up a camera—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The camera came—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at 38?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —because I went [to Japan –RS] through the Experiment in International Living, by that time, I was the Southern Regional Director for them. They were going to bring in ten Japanese groups that needed to be placed, and I had never been to Asia, and I knew nothing about Japanese culture. So I asked them if they would place me for a home stay in Japan. And I went to Japan, and stayed with a family for a while.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was in 1968. And that's when—at that time, Japan, it seemed, it was very old, you know. It wasn't—Tokyo wasn't this modern place that it is today. And I just found everything to be utterly fascinating, from the food and the way that they advertised, things that we're all familiar with now.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Not then. And—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But they had cameras.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —so I had a camera. It was a Kodak Instamatic, and I started taking pictures with it. They placed me with a mother and son, that was the family, and she was a teacher of English but we couldn't communicate, and I didn't speak any Japanese and her English was not, you know, understandable. So the camera was a way that I just could communicate with myself. I was there alone and seeing so many incredible things and feeling so interested in the culture. [. . . –RS] Then I spent two weeks on my own. And then I met my husband. He came to Japan and met me, and we went to an inn. And by that time I was so immersed, and he was not—couldn't really get into the culture. He just wasn't constituted like that. That was really a moment, you know, in seeing that there was a tremendous difference in the way that we looked at things.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, that was early on. [It was 1968. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: How long was he there with you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, we were in Japan briefly [together for 2 weeks then we went home. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [In 1970, –RS] we went to Ceylon, and we went to India, and we went to Thailand. So that was all a big eye-opener.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So you were traveling for a while. I mean, these are enormous trips—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, maybe—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —to be taking in the '60s.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I might've been gone for six weeks— [Inaccurate. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —but he was gone for two weeks, you know, something like that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And you were taking pictures with your little Instamatic—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know how many—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —all this time?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I took after Japan. I don't remember that I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did that experience of taking pictures—?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I never—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you have some feelings about it, like, oh, this is—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —yeah I never stopped after that, because I felt something about being able to communicate, you know, this inner/outer communication, and I came back with my pictures from Japan and people there said, you know, people I respected, said, "Oh, these are just so great. You have to go on with this." And that's not why I went on with it. I mean, I just wanted to, and then I went through a time when I carried a camera all the time, and then I got a good 35mm camera, and I used it all the time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How old were your children at this point?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My children were—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Like when you went to Japan in 1968?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were in their teens [12 and 14 –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they stayed home when they weren't with you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they were still living at home?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Absolutely.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What were you photographing with your 35mm camera back in Chattanooga?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I photographed some landscape, but I photographed people. I photographed country people and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: For what reason? I mean, what—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: For no reason.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You had no thought about what you were going to do with these pictures?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I had no idea what I was going to do with them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And were they developed at the local drug store. I mean—or did you learn how to print?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't really know how to print but I tried. I remember I photographed a local potter. That was one of my first projects. He was a friend of mine.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he had a pottery workshop, and that was also very interesting, because there was complete silence when people were working at the wheel, and that also kind of gave me an insight into the creative process, or how you feel—how people feel when they're trying to create something. And actually, he showed some of those early pictures. And yes, I had developed them, and they were just—the negatives were terrible.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At home? I mean where did you do that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I had a little darkroom in part of a garden shed—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that I had at home, made into a little darkroom.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did your husband think of all this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In the beginning, I don't think he minded too much, and after a while, he wanted to—he was very proud of this, you know, he was proud of what I was doing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It got to a point where he, you know, he would always—then my darkroom got bigger, you know. At one point I had a really beautiful—we had a really nice house, woods behind, and so the garden shed was out there and then I expanded it, and it was really lovely. And the only instruction I had, at first, was from the man who was a photographer at the Chattanooga Times.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But you know, he came once and showed me how to do it. And I used to walk around barefoot in all the slop around and, you know, it was very bad to do that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I made these *terrible* negatives, but Charles Counts, the potter, was having a show in Oak Ridge.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Charles Counts?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Counts.

LINDA YABLONSKY: C-O-U-N-T-S?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: C-O-U-N-T-S. He was having a show in Oak Ridge and he wanted to show my pictures, and so he did. And I wish I had kept them because they were so horrible. At one point, you know, I have the negatives, but I got rid of them. That was a long time ago. I was so ashamed of those pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But he thought they were good enough to show.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, yeah, you know, so—and then I was friendly with the artists in Chattanooga. There's a sculptor that's still there, and a painter who's still there [. . . –RS] and they all encouraged me. They were the only people I had who could give me any kind of feedback on

what I was doing. [Until –RS]—it was in 1971 or so that I met Lisette.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Lisette Model?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, because I started working. I started photographing in 1968, so I met her in 1971 or '72.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How did that happen?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: When did Diane Arbus die?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, much later.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No—

LINDA YABLONSKY: She died in the '70s?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —because she had already died.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She had already committed suicide.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. [Arbus died in 1971. –LY]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I met Lisette after that, but it was [in January 1972 –RS] that I met Lisette. And I met Lisette in a very funny way. I met Lisette because I was going to have my pictures—I was having my prints made, because I couldn't do them right, at Modern Age and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Modern Age was—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I think it's still here.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —a gallery.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A photo lab.

LINDA YABLONSKY: A photo lab.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so I was doing that for two or three years and then this man who helped me there, there was a man, I'm sure he's no longer alive.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How did you end up in New York? I mean when did you come to New York?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because my husband came to New York on business.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. But you weren't living here?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Not at all.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So it was only when I got to New York. So there was a man who helped me, you know, who was my connection at Modern Age.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he wanted me to come for their Christmas party. And he asked me the first year, and he asked me the second year, and the third year we were going to be around [in NYC –RS]. And I went to the Christmas party, and there I met somebody who was an agent. By that time, I had been working for five years, I think. I thought I'd been working forever. [They laugh.] And I said, "Oh, you're the person I want to meet. I need an agent. I don't know what to do with my work." I always think it's funny now when people tell me after two years, you know, that they're having a show. What do they think they're doing? You can't do that! I mean it doesn't, you know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's different now, you know.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —you know. So anyway, she said, Well, she could introduce me to somebody who could help me. And that somebody was Henrietta Brackman.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, who was?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Henrietta Brackman was a photographer's agent. That's what she called herself.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so, I called her, and she said, "Come to see me and bring everything you've ever done." I said, "Everything I've ever done? I can't carry everything I've ever done." "Well, I have to see everything you've ever done." So, I went there. I got somebody to help with two suitcases.

[They laugh.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: By that time, you know, I had a lot of work.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, I guess I had photographed—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Before jpegs there were suitcases,

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I had photographed in India. I remember now the black and white prints that I had from India.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The 35mm black and white prints.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so she talked to me for a couple of hours, and then she said, "Well, you have talent, but there are a lot of things you don't know and I think that you should study with

Lisette Model." And I said, "Who's she?" And she said, "She was Diane Arbus's teacher." And I said, "Oh, do you think she would take me on?" And she said, "Well, I'll talk to her." So that's how I ended up studying with Lisette Model.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The best. You know?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know. It's kind of amazing, you know. If it hadn't been for my meeting Lisette, I doubt that I would've had the same trajectory, you know. She—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's a wonderful story.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —she really, she had a lot of confidence in me. Right from the beginning she thought that I worked very hard and she told me, "The only thing you're bourgeois about is money. Why are you like that? You can afford to buy another lens!" [They laugh.] "Doesn't your husband have enough money for you to buy another this or that or the other?"

LINDA YABLONSKY: Now, did you move to New York—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —to study with her?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. But—at a certain point, the movie business disappeared, because one of the drive-in theatres blew down in a typhoon or cyclone, or something.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Sorry for laughing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And they built a shopping center.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, yes. This is the story of the Americas isn't it?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know, I have a lot of things that I should hang my head in shame, so I hope I've redeemed myself.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm sure you have.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. So, you know, they've started the first shopping center and my husband—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The first shopping center in in Tennessee?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —or maybe in Tennessee.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But then it went on, and it went on, and it went on. So by that time, you know, he had reason for coming to New York. He had associates in New York and he just got, you

know, got bigger and bigger and bigger. And at one point—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Building shopping centers?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Building shopping centers all over the place. And—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —at one point—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So he only worked for the government during the Carter administration?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So at one point, well, anyway— I don't know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Are your children now living in Canada?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, both of them do and my—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, I mean now, meaning then, at that point?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, at that point—what year was it? You know, well, I started with Lisette, as I said, in '71 or '72.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. So they were still pretty young?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes. But she said to me, pretty much up front, "You've done your volunteer work. You've been a wife. Now you need to just focus on your work." That was it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How old was she at the time?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I think she died— again I'm not sure. I thought she was very, very old, but she wasn't anywhere near as old as I am. [They laugh.] She was, at that time, she seemed very, very old.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So there were frequent trips to New York. When did you actually move here?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, after my husband—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm getting ahead of myself. How long did you have this instruction with Lisette Model?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, the instruction was periodic until I went to Washington, and Washington [in 1977 –RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —was when the Carter Administration started.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.



ROSALIND SOLOMON: Jimmy Carter—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, 70—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —[77 –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think. Unless that was when—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, that's right, '76 [was the election –RS].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —'76, so he was inaugurated in '77, right? Or in '76? I don't know. That's easy to find out. So, shortly after, or as he was getting his administration together, my husband got this call. He had worked for him behind the scenes, you know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —raising money, so on.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Affirmative.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And at that point I was deeply into a project in Tennessee, and I was not at all happy about leaving it and going to Washington. But—

LINDA YABLONSKY: A photographing project?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was working on *Dolls and People*, and all kinds of eccentric people that I was meeting there. That was very, very interesting.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, you were making portraits of dolls—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: With—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —of dolls and people together?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Their dolls? I mean—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Their dolls. One of them—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —adults with dolls?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes. Adults with dolls. [They laugh.] It was really—some of them—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Were there a lot of them in Chattanooga?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, you know, around the area. I mean I found, yeah, there was a woman whose whole house was full of dolls. [They laugh.] And she also posed in her—was it, colonial,

Confederate, whatever [Daughters of the Confederacy costume –RS]. They had some kind of annual party, and she had a costume, and she wore her costume and held one of her dolls for me. And her son collected little soldiers and uniforms, and he dressed in one of his uniforms and posed with one of her dolls. It's a great picture that I took.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It sounds amazing. What a great subject!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So there were all—

LINDA YABLONSKY: People with their dolls.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then there was this guy that is in the current book [*Got to Go* –RS] my friend Stan Townsend, he's still there, he helped me to find—he knew these characters, and this man was a collector of knives. A weapons collector. [They laugh.] So, anyway, he didn't have a doll. It was another one that had the dolls, who was totally crazy. [They laugh.] And he had gotten them from the Tennessee River. He pulled them out of the Tennessee River. I interviewed him and he talked about them. So—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they're really—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —a lot of craziness.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —sad dolls?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were. I really didn't want to leave at that moment. But then—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I did, you know, but I did. And then when I got to Washington I got a little darkroom there, a little tiny place that I made into a darkroom. It was wonderful. At that point, my husband was so preoccupied with what he was doing that I felt free to really do what I wanted to do. And we went on a vacation to Guatemala, on a short vacation and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: With your kids?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Huh?

LINDA YABLONSKY: With your children?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, our children, by that time—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Now at this time—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —no, they were out, they—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —they were gone.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —were gone. [They were in their 20s and –RS] they were gone. I was very intrigued with Guatemala, so then I went without him a few times.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He didn't mind. You know, I mean, then I started—

LINDA YABLONSKY: By yourself? Or did you—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: First time—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Go with other people?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I took a friend with me. You know, I found out very quickly—well no, I did take a friend to Peru for one trip. I found out before too long that it was really hard for me to travel with anybody else, because as I went along, I just learned about how I wanted to interact with people, with my camera, with the people who were going to help me, and if somebody else came along that had never had the same experience that I did, and they, you know, they were in a social situation and I just couldn't work and be in that situation.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I understand. It's hard when you have a purpose and the person with you is—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Just coming along—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —partying. Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —coming along for the ride.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah. So what was it about Guatemala that intrigued you that first trip?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or later?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know about the—I can't remember the first trip as much, but I was interested in shamans there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I sort of tried to go to where the shamans were, and to find them and photograph them. But along the way, at that time, the highlands were just so beautiful. And I can remember getting there and just feeling this kind of release, you know, from being in Washington and all that *stuff*. To be there, with this, you know, mountainside of flowers and the clouds and the sky, and just there, to photograph whatever I saw that was interesting. It was just wonderful.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But there must have been a change in your thinking about yourself, because clearly now, you identified yourself as a photographer. You made these trips to make pictures, not to go sightseeing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So something about working with Lisette Model must have altered your thinking, or your perspective?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. I'm sure. Well, even, yeah—I didn't know that I was going to be a photographer when I started in Chattanooga, but I took pictures all the time then. I don't do that now. You know, I stopped doing that a long time ago, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —I'm sorry to interrupt. Because now when you take pictures it's for a specific purpose, not just randomly taking pictures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because now I just go. If I'm taking pictures, I'm taking pictures, and otherwise I'm on another plane.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-Huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Now I'm on a different—I think something is different about me when I'm taking pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-Huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I connect with something in myself that's different than when I'm in social contact.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. So you're in Guatemala looking for shamans.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, and I came up with, I got a really good body of work from there. Jane Livingston wanted to show my Washington work in one room and the Guatemala work in another room.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Jane Livingston was who?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was the curator—I don't know if she was curator of photography [...–RS] of the museum—at the Corcoran, at that time. [She was chief curator at the Corcoran Gallery. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah. Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And she—I was so dumb. You know. I still think it would have been so great if I had done the show the way she wanted to, because it would have showed much more insight into who I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —And what I was trying to do right from the outset, where I was coming from and where I was going and how they interrelated—and I didn't though. I thought I just wanted to show the Washington work because I had so much work and also I thought that I would withhold the Guatemala work because when I got to New York I'd have that body of work and I would show it in New York. And, of course, it didn't work out that way at all.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, but that's how we learn. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The hard way. The hard way. Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So that was a missed opportunity, but you did show the Washington work or not?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You did.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I had a big show with the Washington work. Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And then what happened?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I haven't told you yet—I haven't mentioned that a big part of my story is that my husband had polycystic kidneys, which is a progressive kidney disease.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And my mother used to say she didn't believe in death.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What does that mean? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know. She never went to a funeral.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She just, you know—she said, one of the things that she said when she was about to have a hip operation, I guess she'd had some kind of medication, and she said, "Youth is my God." And it was. That's how she was, you know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So what did I say about my mother?

LINDA YABLONSKY: About your husband having—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh. yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Kidney disease.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, so when we first married, he told me—I mean, I knew that he had aunts and uncles, and I don't know why I didn't—I knew about genetics too.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because I'd had a course in genetics, but he told me, you know, he had about four aunts and uncles who had died of this particular—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —disease, and he didn't know whether he had it or not. He'd never been tested, so I encouraged him to be tested because I was sure he wouldn't have it. You know, why? I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You didn't want him to have it.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was 23 years old, you know, and so he did have it. And so, at 23 I learned that he had this disease. He didn't have any manifestation of it at that time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I was—I became quite obsessed, you know, in my mind, about it, and he had the first manifestations of it when he was in his early forties and at that time—that would mean that I was in my 30s.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so I became very obsessed about death, you know, and I did a lot of pictures—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Then.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Then, you know, and I was in Guatemala and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What does that mean? How did you photograph death?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I photographed—while in Guatemala I came upon a burial, you know, in a cemetery. I was with a driver/guide.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I wanted to photograph it, and I did photograph it. And then, in Peru, there was an accident—well I hadn't gotten to Peru, but there was an accident—while I was staying in a pretty remote place and they had no way—they just laid the bodies out and covered them and they sprinkled them with Holy Water and so on—and they were just out there, and I photographed that and things around that burial.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I photographed in cemeteries, and so on.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So when your husband started having, when it was clear that he did have the disease—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: In his early 40s—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —had you already picked up a camera at that point?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, because I started when I was 30.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —[38], you said.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I don't know, because he was nine years older than I. So, I'm not sure. But also, I had the complete hysterectomy sometime around that—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh right, you had that, too.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Some time before I went completely into photography and left The Experiment in International Living.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I just wanted—

LINDA YABLONSKY: When you started making, you know, when you were purposefully making pictures, you were already in this head, this deeply obsessed with mortality?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, and the dolls, you know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The first pictures I took of dolls—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And the broken-up dolls—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was all kind of connected, and I just had just never had any—I had never been to a funeral until I lived in Chattanooga. So I was kind of—also I liked to see how people coped with their struggles—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that was really a lot of my motivation with the shamans in all, too.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, which is ritual behavior—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or activity.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was just how people, you know, that it does seem to give them some kind of support.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, I think it does. So you've been to Guatemala, you had the show in Washington, your husband's getting ill. Then what?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he was in Washington and that's when he got, you know—he started going a little bit downhill, and then he had to go on dialysis.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He went on dialysis when we got out of Washington, but he was going to go back into—I mean, he was going to go back into the family business, which included his two cousins, and so they told him they didn't want him to come back.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] Muscling in on their business?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He did not have a prior legal—any kind of legal document with them. They were his executors. When he said "we" he meant "them," not the two of us, because he was so close to them, and they cut him out of the business.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, my God.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They cut him out of the business and he was sick, and he got into a

depression, and he was the kind of the person who would never, ever seek any kind of psychological help, and he became just like a demon. I mean, he had this tremendous personality change—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And it was hell. It was terrible.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, boy. Where were you living after he left the job in Washington?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, we were going to go to New York.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, we were. We got—we had an apartment in New York, and I had my dark room in the apartment and—but, soon I was spending more time there. He was away more, and I was glad that he was away, because when he was there it was just, it was horrible.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So he didn't make an attempt to start another business or join another business?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he had a little—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He had a little, some little pieces on his own. So, he had—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Enough to—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He had enough to survive, but, actually, the business was a huge business. [It was his identity. He lost his identity. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was a giant business and it's turned into a, you know, a huge, giant business [that he and his cousins had developed –RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and so he had enough to get by on decently.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Why were his cousins so awful to him?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They didn't tell me. [Laughs.] How do I know?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, I considered one of his cousins to be, you know, kind of like my surrogate father. I mean, I really—



LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I really cared about him. It was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean it's odd. If they were so close, I would think they'd want him to have some part of it, you know?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I do not know. I do not know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That's very wrong.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The story. I can—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What a shame.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I can only imagine it. It was a tragedy.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was a tragedy for him. It was a tragedy for our family.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because—well, and then, you know, because he had to leave Chattanooga. I mean, he did. He didn't want to be there. And that was his home. That's where he had been born. That's where he had a lot of friends. And so this man who, you know, was always rooted, had no place to be rooted.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I was totally miserable, and I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mmm. [Affirmative.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —willing to be separated, but I just couldn't—I couldn't just live with him. I couldn't. And so to make a long story short, one of our friends got divorced—a couple got divorced—and I knew that she had always been crazy about him, and I told him he had to start going out with other women.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When you were still married?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We were still married.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But living apart?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: More or less.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. I stayed in New York then and he—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, then, he dated a couple of people, but finally he dated this woman and

they got married.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, we made, you know,—

LINDA YABLONSKY: How did she live with him—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He got married—

LINDA YABLONSKY: In that state of mind. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He got married the day after we divorced. You know, well, I wanted out.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I understand, but, you know,—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So—

LINDA YABLONSKY: If he was that difficult—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She had—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wasn't he that difficult with everyone?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She had—of course, that's what happened, because my son told me that. That after a few weeks, you know, that she went upstairs and he stayed downstairs.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh really.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But he died seven months later.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So the whole family—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What year was this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm losing track of the timeline.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I moved here in—it was in—it was in 1984, January 1st, that he got married. And then he died in July, I think, of that year—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Here, meaning this loft?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I moved to this loft—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in 1984. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. And she was with him, and then I went down there and we sat together at his funeral and held hands [. . . –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And my daughter was doing other stuff, [and my son was in Canada –RS] and I was really, really alone. I really—you know, I started my life completely over again when I moved in here.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because I really didn't want—I didn't want the life, you know, this—I don't know how to describe them, you know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The bourgeois lifestyle.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't want an Establishment life.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I didn't want a life that was built around wealth and—I mean I didn't—I didn't have that wherewithal when I moved in here. Anyway, I didn't want to be part of that. That wasn't my world. I didn't want that to be my world.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So I started. The only people I knew was a guy who printed for me. I thought when I moved into this place, this was my salvation because at that time this was an artist co-op, and there were—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A couple—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Lucky for you.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, you know, there were other artists here.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And we were friendly and, you know, kind of how I began my life in New York alone, on my own. I was 53 then.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I think that's the best time in a woman's life, personally, in the early 50s. It seems to run—you don't have a dark room here, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did have a dark room.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You did?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's still there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I broke it up. I mean it's still there, halfway there, but I'm working with it, you know, the digital now.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right. Things have changed. So all these—so we're sitting in your studio—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which has work tables and—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Lots of—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: All my prints are in there and then—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, storage.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is all my negatives and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Contact sheets are there and that's it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: All right, I don't want to get ahead of myself. So now you're here. You've had these—you've had some experience as a "professional" photographer, and you've shown some of your pictures. Were you now looking at the work of other photographers who might have influenced—I mean, you know, you knew that Lisette Model had been Diane Arbus's teacher. Were you looking at Arbus's pictures. Were you studying anyone else?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I wasn't studying anyone else. When I was in Chattanooga, you know, I felt that my time in Chattanooga was really—I probably never would have done what I've done if I had lived in New York.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because I find it really overwhelming—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: To see a lot of other work—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I felt that I just kept blinders on as much as I could.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So not inspiring, but—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] I know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Sort of cramping.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Maybe, maybe, but I like to go to theater—you know, I didn't make a point of seeing every show that happened.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I would be more interested in going to theater or to a film and—but, I did in the beginning. I, of course, thought that Arbus's work was fabulous, but I never wanted to be like her.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I did start to use a strobe [a flash –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Which is what she did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I've worked with a strobe everywhere, and it has really enabled me to do so much of what I've done.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Even outside, I worked with a strobe.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I just want to be clear about one thing. Y'know, I'm not a photographer like you, so when you say a strobe, that means that all these pictures you're taking are kind of formal setups. You mean—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No!

LINDA YABLONSKY: But it's a strobe on the camera, you mean?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, all right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A strobe on the camera. That one I didn't take with the strobe, but that one I did. A strobe on the camera, which means [a flash –RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So you're using a portable camera. It's not a—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, it's a Hasselblad. It's pretty heavy—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I made it portable. I mean, I did carry it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, by 1984 you had a Hasselblad?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: By 19[76—I got my Hasselblad in 1976 –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, well you certainly didn't stint on the equipment. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, Lisette told me not to.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was married then—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I could, and my—and I could afford it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, so encouraged by Lisette or you just knew it was the best camera?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Lisette always told me to get the best I could, you know, she—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, I believe in that. I think it's important.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She said, "Look, I mean, this is the most important thing you get. Don't hold back on it."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, I think it's true.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, I started—so anyway, I used—the thing is with the strobe, I could take things—I could go to a procession and quickly catch something, because it stops action.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I never tried to work with just natural light. I mean, I have in some cases, but very rarely.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Very rarely, because I cared about getting what I was seeing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So the picture that you're pointing to right now, the one where you used the strobe, is a portrait of—this is in what country?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was in Peru.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Peru.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oops, we can't move, can we? [Because of the mic wires –LY]

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, no. No you can't.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's too bad, but there is the picture. See that?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's the poster from my MoMA show and that—I used a strobe there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because it looks like it was taken at night.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was taken at night.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it was taken at night.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I learned how to use it in a way that I could make it look pretty natural, you know, in the darkroom, because I spent a lot of time there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You know, at least from here, I can't tell if that's a man or a woman in that picture.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That—yeah, because you can't see her hair.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a woman.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because she has this very concerned look on her face.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, that was her husband behind her.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was after a bus accident.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh gee, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which you just happened upon?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I was living in—I was in this small town in Peru, and that was where the funeral was for people who had died in a nearby accident—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Bus accident.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was this? You went to Peru when?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My first trip was in 1980.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, so before you came here.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And you went to Peru for the same reason you went to Guatemala? I mean, what took you to Peru?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: An earthquake.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You knew about the earthquake and you were—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I knew about—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And you wanted to photograph the aftermath?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The earthquake had been a few years before, but I knew—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There was this earthquake-damaged area—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And the earthquake seemed to be a metaphor for what was going on in my life. And that's why I went there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Hmm. In 1980, so you were already having marital difficulties in 1980?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, it was—we got divorced four years later. Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was already—had been out of Washington and—yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did anyone ever—[laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: What?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ask you if, I mean, think you were a little ghoulish for chasing funerals and earthquakes situations?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Ghoulish.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or did you think that—or did you wonder to yourself, What am I doing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: All this depressing material.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I felt very depressed, so I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Thought, you know—I mean, it was very much a concern for me, and I always have tried as much as possible to connect my inner feelings to my pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I have to say, for the record, that they're not the least bit exploitative. Because there's so much compassion in each shot. So that's pretty clear. When was that show at MoMA, *Ritual*?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 1986.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, so two years after you moved here, you had a solo show at MoMA?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, that's true.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At the Museum of Modern Art.



ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's true.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, by this time, you've clearly met a few people, because that doesn't happen without a connection.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, I didn't mention—so I'd been taking my work—I can't remember, but at a certain point—actually, Lisette told me—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: To take my—first, she told me to take it to the Metropolitan. Weston Neff was there at the time, and then—Weston Neff.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Weston Neff, okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then, she said, "He will like your work and he will ask you for something."

LINDA YABLONSKY: He was the photography curator?

[phone ringing]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not answering. I'm sorry that's—

[phone ringing]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So then I took my work to MoMA after that, and that was very exciting because John Szarkowski bought some of it. He bought three pictures the first time that I took my work there, and what year—

LINDA YABLONSKY: He was the head of the photo department?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And the year that that happened, you know, I'm not—I don't really remember, but they would know the year that he bought the first pictures. And subsequently—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which ones did he acquire?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He bought a doll picture—none of them have been shown, those first three. I only remember two. He bought a doll face and he bought a picture, a very close-up picture, of a man from Alabama with a hat. And the third one, I'm just not sure. I can't remember. I remember a mother and child, which is maybe what he bought, but none of those—other things have been shown over the years, but not those first three. And then, in 19—before I moved here, when—maybe in 1980 or '82, I'm not sure, when I was in the other place where we moved when we first came to New York, it was a rental place right across from Lincoln Center, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] Long gone, I'm sure. The whole neighborhood has been razed. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, it's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Still there?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: On Broadway. From Broadway.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it's on Broadway.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's there. Yeah, right across from the Empire Hotel.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Anyway.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, a lot of that is gone.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he came to my place.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he picked out a group of pictures for MoMA.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Fantastic. So then did you feel made at that point? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did I feel?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Made, you know, like you'd made it. Now, you're in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I should have. I don't know, you know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, along the way, I tend to think about—maybe I did, but I tend to think about Today's the day, I don't remember yesterday that well, you know, and tomorrow's going to be tomorrow.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't really think about—it's hard to remember everything that's happened in my life.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, I'm sure. You're doing awfully well.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] Okay, good.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, he bought them [. . . –RS]. [Some of my photos were shown soon after. –RS]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because they often have these "new acquisitions" shows.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have to tell you, first of all, he told me—I gave them, but he told me, he said—he told me that I should have somebody buy them for whatever, and let somebody else give them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't know any better.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What happened to your agent? That agent that—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I never had an agent.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The woman you consulted, who—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, but she—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Connected you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I never saw her again. That was the end of her.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean, I didn't see her again. She wasn't my agent.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you didn't pursue another relationship like that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, not then and not until the very end of the 1990s did I—you know, I made so many mistakes along the way.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So many. I mean I don't think that's a huge mistake, but I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, but so you weren't really talking—except for Lisette Model, you weren't talking to other photographers who could've guided you, given you some advice?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not sure who I would have talked to.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Until John—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Even now, if I thought about it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not sure who I would have—who would I have talked to? For one thing—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But he—when John Szarkowski said "Get somebody to buy them, he didn't help you?"

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, but the thing is it would have been easy. If they didn't have to buy them for anything, it's just that they would have gone into MoMA and it would have been—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A gift of so and so.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Instead, it's a gift of the artist.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so, that bothered me a little bit.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, it's very generous of you, really.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But in the end it really didn't matter, you know. I mean, I-I had that show, you know, which was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So he gave you a show even though he didn't the first three pictures. [Laughs]. How many were in that show?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [35. Peter Galassi curated the show. –RS]

[...–RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: That's pretty good. Was it reviewed?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Thirty or 35. It was, but it was reviewed as a travel show.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, my God. You're kidding.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm telling you. I'm not kidding you.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, you know things happened that were—you know, that was really—

LINDA YABLONSKY: A travel show at the Museum of Modern Art? Why? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The after all she is, basically these are [very good –RS] travel photographs.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Pardon my dropped jaw.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, but the pictures in *Ritual* were from Central America?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were from—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And South America?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, they were from India, Guatemala, Peru, Nepal, I think, and a couple of U.S. pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And they're portraits of people.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, some of them are just, you know, that isn't a portrait. Some of them are group rituals.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And some of them were portraits.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Some of them were portraits.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, how could anyone mistake that for travel photography?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, that kind of thing. That was kind of crushing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you can't take that seriously. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And another thing, there was a little—a tour of the show and so—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh really, it went on tour?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I was asked to come to be there. You know, there was a group of people who wanted to see the show.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, a tour of the show.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, the show didn't move. And some woman said to me, "Why are these prints so beautiful? You're taking pictures of people, you know, in these difficult circumstances, and your prints are gorgeous. Why did you do that?" Well, you know, I was just stunned. I didn't really know what to say. Now I would say, "the prints are good because I wanted to show the details. I wanted to show a feeling."

LINDA YABLONSKY: But if they weren't good, you wouldn't look twice at them.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Of course, you know. I mean, that was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did that woman think of Sebastian Salgado?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: What?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you know Sebastian Salgado?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. I don't know him. I know his work.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, so, I wonder what she—those are almost disturbing—his are disturbingly beautiful.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, you know, I wasn't quick on my feet then. I think, I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think I would be a lot better now.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have a lot more confidence.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm sure.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, you should.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: All right, so that was in 1986.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The show, yes. And then, after that, well, the next thing was the AIDS.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The next thing was that I had decided to do the project.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The project meaning photograph people with AIDS? [*Portraits in the Time of AIDS, 1987-1988*].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was going—I wanted to photograph people with AIDS, because I felt—well, at that time, some of them, some of their *families* were ostracizing them. I have tapes of people telling me this.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But, because you knew people—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I didn't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: With AIDS?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —know them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't know them. It sounded like it would be a good thing to do. That it would be a contribution of some sort, and I felt that after having a show at MoMA, I felt that it would be good to do something that might be helpful [to others –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm. And, in 1986, AIDS was—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was in 1987 that I started it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay, but that's when, '86-'87, I mean, I can remember in 1987 going to funerals almost every week. It was bad, 1987, 1988, 1989. That's when it became a crisis.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, if you lived in New York—I mean, I'm sure this is true in other cities too, but since I lived here and you lived here, you could not go a day, if you went out of your house, without encountering someone visibly with AIDS, and it was pretty heartrending and scary. So—you didn't know the people. How did you find the subjects?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A woman—you know, I—how did I—I ran this down in my own life recently, but I can't remember how I found it. There was a woman at [St. Vincent's –RS] hospital—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Who saw my pictures. I took them [to her –RS]. I was trying to find a way to [make pictures of people with AIDS –RS]. And she liked them a lot and she said, "I would like to see you do this, but I don't know how in the world you can do it." And then she called me about a week later and she said, "I've met somebody who I think will help you." It was—he was a young priest who was just—his ministry was people with AIDS.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What was his name?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Father Bill McNichols, and I just recently found him on the web, and I wrote to him. I couldn't have done it without him. He likes to—he is a painter, and he saw my work and he really—he wanted me to do the project. So he introduced me to his friends. That was, you know, some of the men who—they were men who had AIDS, and I started with them. And he also told me about this dinner at Saint—St. Peter's [Church—at Lexington and 68th in NYC –RS], it's that church.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, the one that's downstairs.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, St. Peter, yeah?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They had communal dinners every Friday night for people with AIDS, and there would be dozens of people there and a piano player. And I just would go and have dinner, and just sit next to somebody and ask them, "Would you let me come to your house and photograph you?" And tell them what I was doing. And that's how I did it. I went from one to the next.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, you had conversations—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Yes. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: With them?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I took a tape recorder with me and I talked to them. I don't always do this when I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Photograph people. It's not my way that I go ahead and talk to people in depth, but with them, I did. I talked to them, you know, for 20 minutes or half an hour before I took their pictures, and they were eager to talk, and they were very self-revelatory. It was very touching, very tough, and [each week I photographed at least two people with HIV –RS], and people would ask me things [like], "Aren't you afraid you're going to catch it?" Intelligent people!

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I know, but if you remember in those days nobody knew—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Nobody knew.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Anything. It was easy to be suspicious. Even I, who was exposed to a lot of

people who got sick, in the beginning, you know, I was afraid to let them use the bathroom in my apartment, because I didn't know. I didn't know!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, of course.

LINDA YABLONSKY: There was all this terrible misinformation.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: There was suspicion in the air and no information, because nobody knew anything. So, rationally I knew I can let them use the bathroom, but I—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You were afraid.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —emotionally had this fear that, you know, should I be doing this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So just to know, you know, there was a lot of ridiculous stuff.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And there were families that wouldn't allow them to come home. There were all kinds of terrible, sad stories.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, one of the wonderful things about these pictures is they're all photographs of people with AIDS. Some of them have lesions and look—and are emaciated or hooked up to machines in hospitals, but a lot of them aren't. So what you're photographing are the effects of this illness, or the circumstances also, physical and emotional, which is what I find so interesting about them. Because it's another way to picture the totality of what the effect of this virus was on people and their immediate families and people around them. So they're not all literal pictures of people who are sick.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You know, they exist on many levels and you don't know—I mean, when I looked at them, I didn't know the relationships of everybody when you photograph more than one person. There's one image of someone's feet.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's one of the more, in a way, abstract pictures. But, I think this, when you're—I mean, I know other photo—you know, I have a friend who's a war photographer and we've talked about this a lot, but you can communicate much more by not showing the actual battle, but you know, and you did that. And so your photographs exist as a document and also as metaphor, and that's what's so great about them, other than they're striking portraits as well. So how many people are in—how many photographs are actually in this project?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I showed 65. I showed 65. [But there were at least 75 in the project. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Now, where was the show?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The show—



LINDA YABLONSKY: And how did it come about?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, what happened is as soon as I started—shortly after I started doing the project, I ran into Tom Sokolowski. Tom was the—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The director of Grey Art Gallery at NYU.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, and then he went to the—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Warhol [Museum].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. And he said, "I hear that you're doing this project."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh! How did he hear that, if you had no connection to—or did you already know him?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I didn't know him.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know how he knew. I really don't know. I don't remember. He might remember. I don't remember.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, he offered you the show?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He said, "I would like to show these pictures, but they're going to have to be finished and ready to show by May next year," and I had just started it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, well,—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Good line. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, I mean that was like I had never done a project for a show, you know? I've just worked and then if things got shown, they did. So that was a lot of pressure, but—so that's what I did. I mean, I—it was—it was really a full-time thing, and I couldn't—I couldn't really talk to people about it because it was so tormenting and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so sad.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And other people couldn't, you know, there was no way anybody would understand what it was if they didn't have contact with it, and I, you know, it was—I would dream about it. I mean, it was night and day, and so then, then to produce the work [. . .-RS], we got no funding, we got—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I was about to ask you—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We got \$1500. Maybe that took care of the catalogue, I don't know. There

was no other funding. He [Tom Soklowski –RS] tried to get funding.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How are you supporting yourself in this period after your husband—after your divorce and your husband's passing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I got a, you know, I got—we divorced and I had got a certain amount, and we'd been married for 30 years.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So you were able to devote yourself to your work?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was able to do it, but I spent a lot of money on that, a lot of money. Because the whole show was produced in here, and they were big prints.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What size?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, not big in terms of what's being done today.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They were—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were at least as big as the one on the end.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were, they were about—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Nice size.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 29x29, yeah, 29x29.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Inches, yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So there was a huge enlarger here, and a board, and four people to work on the whole thing, because they were rolled like wallpaper in the dark room. That's how they were put through the chemistry because I didn't have a dark room for a tray that was that big.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then, it took over the whole space.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And how big is this space?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think it's 2800 square feet.

LINDA YABLONSKY: 2800 square feet, a whole floor.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It took over all the way up to the front. It was just total. So the gallery was just down the block, so it was possible get a sense of how they would be, and Tom just allowed me to figure it all out myself. I mean, I probably would've been smarter to have let him be involved in it too, but, you know, he didn't impose any kind of structure on me or anything, just whatever I wanted to do with and what I chose to show and the way that it was hung. And it was push-pinned. They were not framed.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That was—that was quite progressive.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: At that time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At the time, because, you know, it was still a radical idea when people started doing that in the 1990s, when it was, like, in art galleries, when suddenly photography came into the gallery, or the art market as never before, as fine art not as, you know, the photography markets. Different market.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, what happened was that the people who were still alive that I'd photographed came to the show and they loved the show, but the show was panned, you know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Panned?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Panned.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How can you pan a show like that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The only person I can think of—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Panned? I can't believe it.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Vince Aletti really liked—I mean he really—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Vince Aletti was then the photography critic at the *Village Voice*?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's right.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he took one of the very [toughest –RS] pictures and it was printed in the *Village Voice*, and Vince was very supportive of the show. But, otherwise, it was, I think, [regarded as being –RS] exploitative, whatever—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It just—people did not—

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're so not—as I said a minute ago—your pictures are not exploitative by any stretch of the imagination, in my opinion, and I know what I'm looking at generally, and they're not even on the edge of exploitation, as Sebastian Salgado's can be, for example.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh God.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But good or bad, any review at least lets people know something's happening. So did it draw a lot of people?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't really—

LINDA YABLONSKY: To the show?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Remember that. I just know that I was—and, you know, it's hard to be distanced especially when you—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Of course.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't have any—I don't know. I was disappointed that-that-that people didn't appreciate it, but I was glad that the people I'd photographed—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, more important.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They really liked it and so—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you think that the reaction, other than from Vince, who also knows—is a collector of photography also, as well as a writer—had something to do with the panic at the time and the fear, and people not understanding actually what they were facing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think that there—that there was a huge, still, a real taboo—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: About photographing illness and death.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What year was this? I'm sorry.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 1988.

LINDA YABLONSKY: 1988.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think that now—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We're just totally inured. I mean, right? I mean, it's different now.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, it is different now. But also, others, like Nan Goldin, also started photographing people with AIDS.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: People loved her.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It was after you did.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Was it after?

LINDA YABLONSKY: It was after. Sally Mann had a project like that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did she? I didn't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Much later.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, well everybody always loved Nan's stuff. I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Color.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because they were her friends, too.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There was that thing. I don't know. You think it's color? Color?

LINDA YABLONSKY: All her—her photographs have a certain quality, that a richness of color and—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: You know, the strobe that she uses that has a particular effect, and they're very visceral.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But, you know, they were kind of promoted as a diary.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So people came to them with certain expectations.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You got—you were earlier, and nobody knew how to take them, I'm guessing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have a—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But the gay community must've flocked to this show. I mean, it's supportive of the people.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'd have to ask Vince. I mean, Vince really supported it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And Vince and I—he wrote a nice piece in the *Voice*. He wrote something positive and I got up my nerve and I called him, and I asked him whether we could have lunch.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And we did, and we became very good friends. I mean, I've known him for years now, and that's how I met him.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But nonetheless, this show really established you as a photographer, no?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, you know—at the time, you know, I didn't feel that at all. It seems that it has become—what happened is, a few years ago, Bruce Silverstein showed some of the work again.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Bruce Silverstein has a gallery in Chelsea.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, and he's a photography gallery.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He is showing all kinds of things now.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's mostly photography. He started with photography.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, he started with photography. But he showed about 20 of them and subsequently,—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well,—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: People—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That was just like last year or something?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 2015, no.

LINDA YABLONSKY: 2014.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [2013 –RS]. And then, I know somebody who saw the show years ago, a woman who's not involved with art.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I knew her when she was much younger, and she wrote me after she saw the show at the gallery, and she said, "You know, I saw it completely differently than I did." She hated the show when she saw it in 1988.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —that's what I mean.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She saw it completely differently.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Perhaps because we were so immersed in this and knew so little. It was hard —

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Maybe. I don't know why she—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's not like your pictures are hard to look at, you know. They're not pictures of people lying dead in the street.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean, their humanity is most—is very present in all of them. So did she venture a guess as to why she saw them so differently?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I didn't ask her why-why it was. I can't remember.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think she said why.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She just saw it differently and then,—I was going to say—oh, what happened was, it was shown—I mean, again, it was a small section of them were shown at the Paris Photo, in the Salon d'Honneur last year [2015], and they were reviewed and mentioned really —people really responded to them, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did Bruce show them in—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At Paris Photo?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, they were shown in this—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Salon d'Honneur, I know. Which is in the Grand Palais in Paris and it's—how do we—it's a whole separate section from the fair.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a separate section that people who are—I think compete to be in there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes. Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So I mean, I never—as I was doing it, I never thought this is the most important thing I've done or that I'll ever do, you know. I didn't think that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you think so now?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, it seems that that's the way it's being regarded.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I think that it's because not enough people have seen your other pictures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's regarded as being historic.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, it is historic, because I think you were the first to do that. As I said, all these other photographs came later.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I think.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I don't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or around the same time, but they weren't a whole project. They were one photo here and one photo there—that were shown, anyway.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did you see the—I just got an award that was really—it turned out to be really exciting.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Congratulations. What is it? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The award was for a portraiture, and it was the Lucie Foundation. You probably don't know what they are, but I didn't know anything about them. This just came to me. And so—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is the Lucie Foundation?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's very—it was founded by a man who is interested in photography. He is interested in every aspect of photography whether it's sports, fine arts, anything, and so what he establishes is something that's like the Oscars.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so they make videos of everybody's work. A very short video, but it includes a lot of work.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: With some people speaking—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Are you ready to leave?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, no.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: With—I was asked to get three or four people to speak about the work and I had to get somebody to present me. And it just turned out very well, because Sarah Meister presented me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Meister?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She's—Meister. She is a curator at MoMA and she said great things, but about MoMA's interest in my work, which made me, you know—it was great. And then, the video, with some other people talking in it and a number of my images, is also—yeah, you can see it. I can actually—I'll email you the link if you want to.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I have to ask this, even though I feel a little silly having heard your story so far.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: What?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you think the response had something to do with your being a woman? Doing a man's job?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You mean to the AIDS work?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've wondered if not only—I've just wondered all along if that isn't why. I mean, I'm beginning to feel that now my work is being recognized for what it is.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes. Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, it has really taken a long time and my work was there a long time ago, you know. I mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.



ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's not—it hasn't just happened. My work has not just happened. It's—I'm still doing it, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And, it's just—it's taken a long time and I feel that if I had been a man, it would've been a different story. I do not think it would've taken this long.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I have to suggest—make another suggestion, which is not only if you had been a man, but if you had been a man who hung out in bars with other artists and photographers things would've been different, because you would have had a community that would lead you to an agent, or an agency, and a gallery.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't have any community.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I didn't look for it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I hear you.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't look for it. And, I was going to say—oh, I do have—somebody started helping me in the 1990s and he came to me, through a friend of mine, who I know from *The Experiment in International Living*. I mean, it's wild, but he is a lawyer in Washington and he has just been amazing. He has been my friend since around 1997, something like that, and he has kept me from making terrible mistakes. I think some of my early mistakes, you know, he has just—when I have a question, you know. I've had somebody to play things back against. He's not a photographer. He was—he was a photographer's agent for a while, but that's not what he does, but he is a very smart guy. Are we at the end?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, not by a long stretch. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, oh, I saw you looking, I thought maybe—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm always paranoid about whether the recorder is recording.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So having had this experience, what was your next step? You made this really tough—I mean, I'm sure it was tough to do—body of work of people then living with AIDS. I imaging they're all gone at this point, because there wasn't any alternative in 1987. How do you move on from that? How did you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, that was hard and—I was going to say something else about that time, but now I've forgotten. It was hard because it was such an intense and emotional project and meaningful in a way that—in a really deep way that I didn't think I could—I knew that I couldn't just go back to—although I think the *Ritual* was very interesting and it also had deep meaning for me—I just couldn't go back to where I was. I couldn't do that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I didn't. So the first thing that happened was I knew somebody, John

Jacob, actually he's now the—he's now the McEvoy [Family Curator] or something in photography at the National Museum of American Art [Smithsonian American Art Museum]. He's a curator and writer now, but he was a young guy then and he had gone on a trip behind the Iron Curtain—that's what it was then.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he had—and he had been.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In the 1980s. This is still in the 1980s?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah-ha.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He had been in Poland.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he told me that he could—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He had friends in Poland—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, you went from AIDS to the Holocaust. It seems like a natural progression!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went from AIDS, and also—first, I went to Poland and then I went to South Africa.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When apartheid was still in effect?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was still in effect.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay, so wait, let's start with Poland.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He put me in touch with people who had been, you know, friends of his there because otherwise I couldn't have gone. I mean—there just wasn't anyway to plug in there. And so—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But once again you didn't make pictures of Auschwitz or—what—where did you go? I imagine you went there.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: At that time, I drove around in the countryside. I saw things like—well, here's the book. I don't know if it's interesting to see it now, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, of course, it is, but we have to describe what's in these pictures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, I know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: People can't see them.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This came from early on.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is one that-that actually—it's just a picture of some women hiding their eyes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, behind their—they're throwing their hands in front of their faces—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Now, that—

LINDA YABLONSKY: There's three women—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have to say—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But they're standing very close together.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's one of the few things that I've ever done where I've said, Why don't you put your hands up to your face?

LINDA YABLONSKY: But, once again, you're working with metaphor and not with doc—you know evidence.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: To me, that meant something, you know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, but that seems to be your—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, I do that a lot.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Technique, if we can call it that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But this, I also did—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That is of the camp.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In 1988.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And this was nearby the—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is that, a sign? Oh, it's a train.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a little locomotive and it was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: For a railroad crossing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is that sign?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Interesting.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And this was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It makes it look so cute. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is actually—this is one of the camps.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, this is one of the camps. So, you're photographing from a very low angle, through barbed wire to these barracks. What year was this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 1988.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, that—well what camp is that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think it's Majdanek—Majdanek.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Majdanek?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Majdanek.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But that—so that's still there?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Like that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, it's there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yikes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then, I mean, there were other things, you know, there are things that are religious things, like—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This one, there's a hatchet, so—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, I mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: A hatchet—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know what it—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Now, what kind of—this is a Greek Orthodox Church?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, yeah. I don't know [inaudible].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Inside with a Jesus figure and the saints or disciples, I guess.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And this guy with the hatchet.

LINDA YABLONSKY: One of whom has an angelic aura and a hatchet in his hand. Very interesting. Of course, your eye would pick that out right away. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, this was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: A jolly priest and a Santa Claus.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A jolly priest.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But this is where, in Krakow? Warsaw?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't remember where that is.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It looks like a big city.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'd have to look it up. And this is near the Russian border, I think. But I just thought he had a kind of—I don't know. He looks the way he looks. I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So your photographs—so this is—these are postwar photographs of people who live with the legacy—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Of the Holocaust around them.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, that's what it is. And—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And who are never threatened by it.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know. So these were different. That's it. I have in here, I think. It's I went back again—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Much later and did some more, but this is from that time. It's just—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, these are not photographs of either mortality or ritual?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, but this is—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they differ from a lot of your other work that way?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You're still using a Hasselblad now?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, when you travel to Poland, you must have some extra baggage. [Laughs.] You can't go with a carry-on.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, it's hard.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you don't use any assistants.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I get somebody to help me there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, you do?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There. Yes, I have to have assistance because I also often work with a tripod now—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And—or I have—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: For a while. You know, this was from the first trip—the 1988.

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is inside a camp?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, just the roadside.

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is a roadside? So there's just architectural—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, but there—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Landscape?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There's crosses.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Kind of menacing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see, yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that was just the window, but it just—I don't know—I felt it, you know. I felt it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Have you ever worked with color film?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've tried, but it's never—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's hard to do black and white now, today, because everyone has a cell phone camera and everything's in color.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, you mean it's hard for people to find it interesting?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, very few people do it because film is disappearing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, you make digital. Are these digital? Do you have a digital Hasselblad?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. I really—see, here, this is one from a later one. I did mothers and sons, and I went back there and—I don't know what the date is, but I have it, I can give it to you.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, what led you to photograph—I mean, how did you choose your subjects, mothers and sons on these trips to Poland?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, mothers and sons interest me because I have a son, and the relationship between mothers and sons interests me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But why, they're not tied to place so much. That could be anywhere.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They could not be tied to place, but then for me there was some kind of, you know, there were—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That's a very striking picture.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's kind of hard to say related, but I felt a little bit vulnerable there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, I mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: As a Jew.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I didn't feel like anyone was going to do anything to me, but I always wondered what they were thinking, and like—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, these—

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're kids.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Young people.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Anyway, so I went there and then I went to South Africa.

LINDA YABLONSKY: From Poland, you went—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Directly to South Africa?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was—Poland was earlier, and then I went. Still, it was in 1988.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went to Zimbabwe and to South Africa.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At someone's invitation, or you just—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And what were you thinking about that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was thinking about—

LINDA YABLONSKY: About what you would find there or what you would look for?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was thinking about race. You know, I was thinking—I was thinking it would just be interesting to see it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And where did you go? I mean, what cities or townships?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did know—I met somebody before I went there. [I went to Johannesburg, Durban, Capetown, Soweto, and the Karoo. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went first to Zimbabwe, because I met a woman who had been born there and she had relatives there, but then—I made a long trip. That was— [I spent six weeks in Zimbabwe. Then I went to South Africa for many weeks and finally to Mali. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: That's a really long trip.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I made too long a trip that time because something awful happened when I came back.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I made—I stayed away for five months. Can you believe it? It was after the AIDS [project —RS] and—you know, and after Poland. I stayed away for five months. And when I came back, the guy who was helping me, who was my assistant in the darkroom and so forth, had left and set up his own business and taken everybody that I ever knew and worked here. You know, there had been part-time people who would come in help, but who knew my stuff. He took them with him.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I was afraid you were going to say he took all your work.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, he didn't do that, but he took all of my support away from me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh jeez.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I had worked with him for seven years, and he did this while I was gone.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And didn't tell you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did not give me a clue.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.



ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was like, oh my God. All that I've worked for and built up—it was gone and, you know, it wasn't that easy to find a good printer. A good somebody who I could work with that way, and there were—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No community.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No community.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It means a lot.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Huh?

LINDA YABLONSKY: It means a lot.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, now I have community.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, I'm sure you do, but—I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Now, it's different. I do know what you're talking about.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You're right.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I think that, because it's very important to me on a personal level, but because I've done interviews with a number of other older female artists—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And it's always the same.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Really? You mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: In those cases. It's not the same for everybody.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You mean they don't have—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No community. Isolated by one thing or another, by a husband or family or location or just didn't know how important that could be.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know I have—

LINDA YABLONSKY: To meet the right people.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have a friend who's a poet.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And she's talked for years about community.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She knew it from the beginning. Community was her thing. I said no. [Laughs.] I don't know why, because I mean, before I came here I had friends and community when I

lived in Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes. That's right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I had some community when I first moved to this loft and there were other artists here.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I didn't really meet artists and I didn't really meet any of them. I mean, they didn't just come in. Where would I meet them? I wasn't teaching. Everybody knows everybody academic—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'll tell you, in the 80s, it was all about bars and nightclubs.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: About bars? I never went to bars. Isn't that funny.

LINDA YABLONSKY: There's one very close to here—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't even know that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where everyone went. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's where you—you mean people went to bars and that's where they'd —

LINDA YABLONSKY: Social connections.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I didn't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And, "Oh you're an artist, can I see your work." You know, studio visits.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Wow, I should've met you then, you would've told me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I don't know that I [laughs]—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —would have been in a position to tell you then, but I saw it happen again and again. I mean, that's how I met artists.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Going to bars.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I wasn't always in the art world, but that's how I met them.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Huh, but now? How do people meet now?

LINDA YABLONSKY: God knows. [Laughs.] I don't know.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I mean now—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because now there aren't artists, you know—in those days, '60s, '70s, '80s, and '90s, even up through, say, 9/11, everybody lived in the same neighborhoods.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It was easy to run in to people. I met lots of people standing on street corners. Just, oh, let me introduce you to so and so. Oh, you're a writer, you're an artist. You know, I'm having a show, come see. Things, you know, my studio's right around the corner, would you like to come? That sort of thing. It's really casual and it's very meaningful at the same time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Wow.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But now, real estate being what it is in New York City, it's very dispersed. You don't run into people unless it's planned.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I used to—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I do, but because I go—it's my job to go to galleries and to go to openings, so —

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, I meet a lot of people at openings or generous after-openings or things like at museums or whatever. But I don't know how young people meet, except I think I get a sense that a lot of artists who went to the same school. They went to Columbia or to Yale or to Carnegie —

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They network. They have—

LINDA YABLONSKY: UCLA, and they stay in these—you know—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They stay connected and—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they form a core relationship early on and then it expands when they start to have careers, or—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I want to tell you something.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I want to talk about my work in Israel.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, I want you to talk about your work in Israel, but that came when?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was recent.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, so I want to try to keep this chronological.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: All right, but before I get to that, I want to talk about community again.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, well home of the kibbutz.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, no, not about that. About the other photographers who were in the group.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, because that was a group project.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was a group and I almost didn't do it because it was group.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay, so one thing that surprises me, or correct me if I'm wrong, is after you had done this kind of shattering—or precedent shattering AIDS photography—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —have you never been called on to speak at a symposium or to—at a—you know or to teach or—as time has gone on, you know, and we have a different perspective on what happened in the 80s.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: About the AIDS? No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And in the art world.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: About AIDS? No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, about photography or photographing these kind of crisis situations.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. In the beginning, I was invited occasionally to go to universities.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I guess I had met people. I don't know. But I was invited to come to talk. A couple of years ago, I decided that I wanted to talk more, and I went to talk to a class at NYU. I mean, one of my assistants knew a teacher who would be interested, and she was. But no, I don't, I haven't. It's funny. I don't know why. I can't tell you why.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's odd.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, you know, I've spoken at CCP because my work is there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At CCP, meaning—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Center for Creative Photography. But I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which is in?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Arizona, Tucson.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh right. This is a huge archive and research center. Very important for photography.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. Yeah, I spoke at Bard because—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I kind of generated that. You know, I've kind of generated it myself, but

I don't get requests and I don't know—I don't know why. What's the matter with me? [Laughs.] I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, it's partly because you didn't have an agent and now you have your gallery.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have a gallery, but the gallery isn't involved in such things, you know, as generating talks.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They don't manage careers.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, they don't manage in that way. You know, they don't manage.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, we live in a different—much more commercialized art world now. There's a lot of marketing and branding being done, which has nothing to do with the work, but it has everything to do with the way people perceive it or if they perceive it at all. But meanwhile, okay, so you've done these amazing bodies of work and not had the greatest response that you should've had, in my opinion, so then you go to South Africa. A really difficult, you know, in a terrible social—socially unjust situation. Having lived in the American south during segregation and now you're in Zimbabwe, so how did you get connected? Where did you go? What did you do?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I wanted—one of the reasons I wanted to go to Zimbabwe—Zimbabwe was a country that was being run by a black African. At the time, I don't think I knew how—you know, who he really was, but the point was I thought that it was—I would meet black Africans.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was not easy in Zimbabwe.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because you were white.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There was still a white community there— [post-colonial –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I couldn't meet—I didn't meet very many [black Africans –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [. . . –RS] I found me somebody to be my assistant. He was so interesting, he was the son of a revolutionary, who was apparently slated to be the president of Zimbabwe, and he was murdered, [assassinated in 1975 –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: His father had been [assassinated –RS] and he was obsessed with that, [about finding out who was responsible, –RS] about who it was. His mother, though, was in the Mugabe administration.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mugabe.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mugabe.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And, you know, Tiyane [Chitepo], he was the one who assisted me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How do you spell that, please? Tiyane?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: T-I-Y-A-N-E.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I met his sister. He took me to visit his sister and her—she had a daughter, but a year later Tiyane committed suicide because he had AIDS.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, yeah, AIDS was—that's right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I forgot about that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: AIDS was a terrible problem in South Africa. Was—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This was in Zimbabwe.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, but, well—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And in South Africa, I know it's terrible.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, that area of the world.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so, I mean he was a, you know, very educated, very—I think his boyfriend actually was white—so what? But you know—so, but I really didn't—I went to photograph some people and I couldn't really do much except photograph the people—the white people that I met. And I went on a safari. You know, I did the things that you do there just to see what's there, but I couldn't really get into depth in what I really intended to do there. I thought it was going to be an opportunity to meet black Africans, and meet and photograph black Africans, and it wasn't. So then I went to South Africa. Again, I, with some connections from the woman who gave me connections through her family in Zimbabwe, but what happened in South Africa was that I just made up my mind that I would photograph anybody who would let me photograph them and see what came out of it, because it was a difficult place.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What city were you in?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I landed in Johannesburg.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And what's so strange is that on the day after I got there, the first day that I went out to work, I went out—I don't remember who told me, but somebody told me about this woman who had a beauty business in her home. And I got in touch with her. I said, "Can I come and photograph you?" And she said yes. And I went there and then that—if that had been the only day that I'd been in South Africa, it was the best, most interesting picture—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I can bet.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that I got out of the whole trip.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But it wasn't about—well, I got the beauty business. That was another—what she was doing in the beauty salon—but what I got was I, that I went to take a picture of the mother and daughter, and she said, "Oh, just a minute, do you mind, I want to call"—whoever the maid was—"my maid. I want her to be in the picture. Is that okay?" And I said, sure. She called her in and she said, "Now get down on the floor." She had her kneel on her—and that's the picture that I got.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's amazing because the woman who worked for her is looking very sober and she is, you know, is smiling. I had my tripod. It was all set up and it just was there, and it was amazing. Nothing else like that that happened on the whole trip. But, yeah, there was another really interesting place. I went to the Karoo.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Karoo?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Karoo. K-A-R-O-O. It's a vast area.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Where I think they're farmers.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And someone I had met in Capetown told me about a woman who had—there were some bushmen living on her farm.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that it would be interesting for me to meet her. So, it was a long, long drive to the Karoo, and she had—there were bushman—and she was renting them to film companies.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was—they were living on her farm.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But this is a white woman or black woman?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A white woman.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And she was renting them out for films.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yikes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was really unbelievable.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So who did you photograph, the bushmen?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I photographed the bushmen and I got some pictures of—a picture of her with them and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: She didn't mind being in a picture with them?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, so it was—there were I'm sure various other experiences in South Africa that were more amazing, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, you were there—this is the five months trip in Zimbabwe and South Africa?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. I think I might have spent six weeks in Zimbabwe. I wrote a lot there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, you must have met a lot of people even if you didn't—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I met people and I photographed them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, and I have a collection of photographs from Zimbabwe. And then I went in South Africa—I don't know how long I was there—but from South Africa, I went to Mali.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so I did all that, you know in five months and then I came back and oh, I'd never go away for so long ever again. I'd never go for more than a couple of weeks, you know. It was crazy.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you show anybody any of the pictures at that point that you'd taken in South Africa?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, here's—something really bad happened when I—I mean, I created it—I gave up a big opportunity. I don't know what—I think it was after I got back—but, I was asked to have a show at the Phillips Art Gallery [Academy], you know, the Andover—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Phillips—oh, Phillips, yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They have a wonderful, small museum there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And they wanted to do a show of my work, and I was also at—I was also going to have a show in Mexico City, at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City.

LINDA YABLONSKY: That's a fabulous museum.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I absolutely—I sabotaged both of these opportunities. I absolutely couldn't take it, I guess, you know. I mean, so much—I was having success and I didn't know how to



handle it, and so I told the people in Mexico—this is just so terrible!—I told them that the date they proposed wasn't the right time of year. I gave up that show.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm sorry.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was going to be a show—the same show I had in San Diego of *Earth Rites*, and then the one in—

LINDA YABLONSKY: When did that happen? San Diego? You didn't mention that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was in 1986—'86, and it was going to travel there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What was that show? Somehow that slipped by.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, it was really funny too, because that show was set up. Arthur Ollman wanted to show my work.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Arthur Ollman?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, this is it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he had it scheduled for whenever it was scheduled in the spring, and after it was all set—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait, can I just read the title of this—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: *Earth Rites: Photographs from Inside the Third World* and these were photographs of—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were from—

LINDA YABLONSKY: From Latin America?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Latin America and India, and I think Nepal.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So these were all—the curator Arthur Ollman.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, Ollman.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How did he know about your work?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: He [was the director of the Museum of Photographic Arts –RS].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I guess he knew. I don't know how he knew. But he came and looked at my work and he said, you know, he was going to put me on the face. [Laughs.] You know, he was—this show would mean a lot. So what happened was, after it was all set—that show happened—but it

was all set and I had shown Peter Galassi—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, at MoMA.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I realized that—I had suddenly realized that I had a collection of my *Ritual* pictures that I'd really been doing for 12 years and I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, I showed them to Peter Galassi—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who was now, at that point, the head of the—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, he wasn't—he wasn't the head at that point.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Maybe it's just a curator in the photo department at MoMA.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But he was a curator. And he—so with only like a six-week lead time, or something crazy, he asked me to have the show. He said, "we can do this show." There was no time for a catalogue. So that's why there's a poster. That's all there was. And when Arthur Ollman heard about it, he was really—he was upset because he felt as though Peter just sort of jumped the gun on him, what he was planning. Anyway—

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're 3,000 miles apart, these two museums, it's not like there's—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: A crossover audience.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, but anyway, that's what happened. So they both happened. Both of the shows.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So they both happened at the same time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They both happened—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It was good for you.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In 1986. Yeah. But, still, nothing much really—didn't generate. Neither one of them traveled. [. . .-RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: And did the museums buy any of these photographs they were showing from you? Did they?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think they bought a few.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They did.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, they bought a few. A few, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, anyway, I didn't do the—I didn't do the show at Andover and I didn't do

the show in Mexico City. And then—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What year was that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, that was after—AIDS was in 1988, so it must have been 1989 or 1990.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Before you went to South Africa you were offered those shows?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think so, because I went—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There wasn't much—there was only a little time between when I went to Poland and then I went to South Africa—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right, okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And Zimbabwe.

LINDA YABLONSKY: All right, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think in the fall maybe, that I was offered.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You came back from the first trip and found yourself—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Wait a minute.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Alone, here.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, 1986 was the show, "Earth Rites."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, maybe it was before then. I mean, I don't know. I have to find out about when those things were offered to me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: All right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I can—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That I'm just not—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Clear about.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, you went to—so, you came back from the first trip, your assistant's gone with everyone else.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When did you go back again?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: To where?

LINDA YABLONSKY: You said you made two trips?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: To where?

LINDA YABLONSKY: To South Africa.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, I went there—you know, I also went to Ireland. What I did was—

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's not like it's on the way. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went on the way. Yeah, because it was British Airways.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I could go to Ireland.

LINDA YABLONSKY: There was a stopover. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And then go on to South Africa. Yeah, I did that. I did it for three years in a row.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You went—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think, if I could get up—

LINDA YABLONSKY: You went three times?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I could look at my negative list and then I—yeah, I went for three years in a row.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I'll tell you when we can untether you from the microphone. Wow, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 1988, 1989—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, you must have been very taken in by what you saw there. I mean, this is, we're talking still Apartheid. It must have been upsetting. There was violence. There was a lot of outrageous acts of bigotry.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. [I got shingles on my face during the first week there. I saw plenty of evidence of racism and wrote about it at length in my journals. —RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Black people lived in unbelievably difficult circumstances.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you photograph that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I didn't photograph the violence.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, you didn't.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've never photographed—

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, not violence, I mean their circumstances—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went into the—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Of their living.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I saw them. I went into the townships [and photographed—to Soweto in Johannesburg, to Crossroads in Capetown, and also to a township in Durban –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you have to get permission for?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No. Did you meet any other photographers doing that? There have been others.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't meet any other photographers, except for David Goldblatt.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, yeah, I was thinking of him.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I didn't have good feelings about David, because—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] Oh, I shouldn't have said that. I'll tell you why, because I wanted to show my pictures in South Africa, because there was a chance—they had a gallery there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, in Johannesburg.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes. And David had a part in it. You know, I mean he was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, he did.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Involved.

LINDA YABLONSKY: He was a very major presence.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I said, "I'd like to show my pictures there." And he said, "Well okay, but I'll have to decide what you can—I'll have to edit them. I'll have to show you—you have to be careful what—you can't—I'll—you can't—you're not going to decide." He didn't say it. He just said he would have to curate it and that there were pictures that he wouldn't show. I don't know what, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: All right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I felt really angry because I thought that that was—that he shouldn't have done that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He did.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Then, again, there was your entrée to the photo world in South Africa, because he was kind of top dog.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You mean I should've just let him do it?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, see, that's why—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That was an opportunity.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's what [my friend Paul Mahon –RS] in Washington has kept me from doing. I never do anything like that now.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm very happy to hear it because your works deserve to be seen everywhere.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: First of all, I know—first of all, I think I'm a little more mature. I think I understand more how things work. And second of all, I don't say no to things without discussing it with him. You know, we just have email, but I just don't decide, "Don't do that." Yeah, you're right, that would've been—but I instead—and you know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: You went—you are a woman who goes her own way. That's fine.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm going to—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Conclude.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, for this afternoon.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: We'll meet again. I mean, we'll continue—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: At the next meeting. Thank you very much. This has been really, really illuminating, and wonderful.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, thank you.

[END OF CARD 1.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is Linda Yablonsky interviewing Rosalind Fox Solomon at her home and studio, a loft on Broadway, in New York City in Greenwich Village. It is Monday, October 31st, 2016, Halloween, for the Archives of American Arts, Smithsonian Institution, card number two. Hi, Rosalind.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Hi Linda.

LINDA YABLONSKY: We're back. It is Halloween and neither one of us is in a costume [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Have you ever—were you a Halloween party person ever?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went once to the parade.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, yes?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, it's only a few blocks away from here.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, but after that I didn't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I went once.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I get frightened by the, you know, the craziness of it here.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You had some thoughts about what we discussed—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —the other day?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I think that I forgot to tell you that my son inherited polycystic kidneys.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I learned of that when he was about 26, and, you know, I was devastated, of course, and I think that part of the reason that I photographed people with AIDS, or that I was successful with it, is that I felt so strongly about my son—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I felt that I could really relate to them as young men who—most of them were young men.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So did his diagnosis immediately precede your doing that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, it had been going on for a while. Yeah, in fact, he was older than a lot of the—he was older than some of the people that I was photographing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I meant had you already started to do that project?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So it did proceed?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I hadn't. It proceeded—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The writing, yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —definitely, yes. It was just one of those things that obsessed me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, understandably. Were you aware of the work of other artists who were active during the AIDS crisis?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, oh, yes. Only one. I knew that—Nick Nixon—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, a photographer, yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —was doing a project.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did he do?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He felt that he didn't want to do anything that was confrontational. So he did a lot of work that was from behind people.

LINDA YABLONSKY: People with AIDS?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: People with AIDS.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, he photographed people with AIDS, but it was basically not looking at their faces, but I didn't know what he was doing at the time. —after I started, I think he started.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you ever think about doing it again now?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I hadn't thought about doing it now. I have photographed a couple of people since I did it, by chance, but at the time I felt—I thought about going on with it because when I started it I thought of it as a long-range project. But then one of the people who became a friend, Michael Hirsh; he said, "Don't go on with it. It'll drive you absolutely out of your mind. You've done enough. Don't do anymore."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Michael Hirsh is an artist?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He—no. He was a person with AIDS.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [. . .-RS] I knew him for quite a long time. He was an activist.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean, I knew him for the whole year.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is he in your book, in that show?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He's in the show, but I don't know whether he's in the catalogue.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. How did you photograph him? I mean, in what—as we discussed the



other day, some of your photographs; they're not confrontational, as far as confronting the ravages of the disease.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have one picture of him at a demonstration near—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —Washington Square Park, and I photographed him with his mother—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, I see—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went to visit—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —it is in the catalog. I saw it—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, yeah. Well, it may be. They're—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —or I've seen the picture, in any case.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Whether on your website—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —or in the catalogue.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he's not the only one I photographed with his mother.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's why. [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I photographed him with his mother.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And—but was he—did he look sick in the picture? Because not all—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —not all of them do.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, he really didn't.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He did not.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So why do you think he warned you off continuing with the project?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because it really was such a nightmare. It was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —it was hard to live with it. You know, it was hard to—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and so—and I think that, yet at the same time I felt, as I told you, that I couldn't go back to doing exactly what I had been doing before—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I started doing the AIDS Project; that I wanted to do things that—that I thought—might be helpful in changing people's perception of war maybe, and of discrimination, and I don't really think that they are necessarily helpful. But you never know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, no, you don't. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You never know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, they're very nonjudgmental, for one thing, and compassionate, and only in a few of the pictures do your subjects look ill.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Even though they are, and they're dealing with the day-to-day—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —of having full-blown AIDS at a time when there was no treatment.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So today there is a treatment. That's why I was asking—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So different.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —I think you could probably take the same pictures, obviously of different people, and it's—and this is the face of AIDS now—at least, in America, but you did continue the project in a way when you went to Africa.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I thought about it, but I'm not—you know, I'm not positive that I shot anybody—that I took pictures of anyone with AIDS there. I don't know whether I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I don't mean that so much, in that you went into the townships—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —and you photographed people in really difficult circumstances—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, yes, I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —who were subject to a great deal of prejudice—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

In LINDA YABLONSKY: —as well as illness, and so the theme is similar.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Even if the immediate circumstances are different and, of course, you're surrounded by people with AIDS also, whether you photographed them or not. You also went to Ireland. We briefly touched on that. Let's go into that a little bit, and you photographed people—this is during the civil war in Ireland.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and I went—I photographed some Protestants and Catholics. I went into both areas, to a degree.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did they look different?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —they don't look different at all.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Exactly. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They don't look at all different. It was just kind of crazy.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did you tell them you were doing? I mean, how did you get the cooperation of people that you didn't know for this project?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't even remember.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But there wasn't any resistance to having me take pictures there. There wasn't any resistance.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How did you meet the people even to ask them?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: How did I meet them?

LINDA YABLONSKY: And also how did you make the choices you made? What led you to photograph those people rather than others?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I photographed people who would let me photograph them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've learned that—I've learned—what happened was, when I first started photographing, that's not necessarily what I did, and when I went to South Africa I realized that it was not going to be easy to photograph people, because how would I get into their homes, and I couldn't really choose. But when I photographed in South Africa I learned, which I don't think I knew before, that if I photographed someone and looked at them carefully, they were interesting to me. I would say the only people who have never particularly interested me are people who are very covered up. You know, people who are not self-revelatory at all, and I'm not saying that people who talked to me were self-revelatory, but their faces became vulnerable.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, they—somehow, I learned how to get to that point with people. Most of them I didn't talk to that much. AIDS was something different.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, you mentioned that the other day.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So then how did you get into their homes, or make an introduction?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know, that's—it's so crazy. Well, the first—I knew somebody who was born in Zimbabwe, and she had some relatives in South Africa. So I think that maybe they gave me an introduction to the first one. Truthfully, isn't that funny? I can't really remember in South Africa how I did. In many places—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I've had a driver or an assistant [in some places –RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, right, you did mention that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —who would open doors for me, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in South Africa that didn't happen, and I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And in Ireland?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I remember in Zimbabwe—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —it was different because I knew the family of this woman who had told me about it—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and they connected me to somebody who rented cars who was a travel agent, and then they found Tiyane Chitepo, and he was my—he was my—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right, oh, you didn't give me his last name the other day—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Chitepo. I think it's C-H-I-T-E-P-O.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And the first name is T—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Tiyane; T-I-Y—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —A-N-E.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I have that. Okay—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went to a mine with him. I remember that, that we went to a mine.

LINDA YABLONSKY: A diamond mine?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not sure.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or a gold mine?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not sure. We went to a [gold –RS] mine, and afterward we went to a place nearby to have a meal, and some people came in and he—we were sitting at a bar, and he wanted to move away. I remember him saying something like, "If they aren't—if they are—if they say anything derogatory to me, I will tell my mother, and they will—" you know, because she was part of the Mugabe administration—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and, you know, but he was very conscious of discrimination, and I also—in Zimbabwe, I suppose, a travel agency suggested a driver at one point, and he was a 17-year-old. And he told me terrible things about his prep school there—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that it was basically about a kind of cruelty to the students, the students who were white, you know, and I had an experience with him. When he confronted a man who had maybe slightly bumped into the car or was parked in the wrong place, and he was determined to get that African man—black man, into trouble. And he went on and on, and I just had to, you know, I had to discipline him and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: He was white or black?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was white.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, he was white, and anyway, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You mentioned Mugabe. Now you've photographed several heads of state?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Only one, only one. Got Mrs. Gandhi.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Not Mugabe?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I didn't.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But what—doesn't Jimmy Carter count?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] Yeah, he does.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Jimmy Carter counts. That's true. [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Jimmy Carter and Indira Gandhi. Truthfully, again, that was just never, you know, Jimmy Carter fell into my life, and Mrs. Gandhi I photographed because a friend of mine insisted that I had to photograph Mrs. Gandhi, and he would make arrangements. He would be sure that I could get an appointment with her, and I ended up spending a week in New Delhi waiting for that to happen. You know, it was a big deal to photograph her.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And it was 15 minutes, you know, and she was told that I was going to make a portrait of her. So she—I think—I don't know. I think she thought of it like as a painting. I have no idea, but she was perfectly, you know. She didn't talk to me—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean, I tried to say a couple of things to her, but she—she just sat there. [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: So you photo—how was Jimmy Carter? I mean, did you go to the White House or did you photograph him in Georgia?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have one picture of him in the White House, but not a formal picture. Actually, I photographed him during the campaign.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because my whole family was involved—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —except for me, was involved in the campaign, and I photographed him—one of the pictures is at MoMA, when he was in the water with Sam Macdonald [Donaldson]. Do you remember Sam [Donaldson]? He was a reporter.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, for television.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Television guy.

LINDA YABLONSKY: White House reporter, yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And Jimmy Carter was, you know, in this water. [He and his family were dredging a pond. –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There was some reason, and Sam [Donaldson] was in the water too, looking at him, and I photographed him there and I photographed him with Sam [Donaldson] in that situation.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] Fantastic.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I photographed him once in the White House because my husband was there too, and I photographed—I managed to photograph both of them. They were talking. But after a while I couldn't get any access to them—any special access, because I think that his press

secretary mistrusted me, and probably—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Why [laughs]?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well in the sense that he knew that I wasn't going to—I wasn't looking to do some cosmetically beautiful picture.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I assumed that, because he made it—he didn't make it possible for me to photograph him. I photographed Roslyn Carter in the Air Force Two or Air Force One, whichever one it was—in the plane.

LINDA YABLONSKY: One.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You were on the plane?

[...-RS]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes. He was president.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and I had photographed them, her, in her house in Plains, with Amy. Because, again, actually my son kept saying to me, "Mother, you have to do it. You have to go to Plains," and I said, "I'm working on dolls and mannequins."

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you also photographed the Dalai Lama?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, yes, I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Another—he's kind of a head of state [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I photographed the Dalai Lama, and that was really—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And while in India?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, in Dharamsala.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What was that like?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was odd.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean, how did you meet him?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Again, I was with a guide who was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —very—he was a Sikh, very big, and kind of very managerial. And he talked his way in. He talked my way in there. He got me in there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it's a formal portrait?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Not exactly. —RS] He spent about 10 minutes with me, and one of them is—they aren't really formal, but they're in—one of them has a lot of foliage behind it, but he's looking at me and another one is—one is with his glasses and the other one is without. But he commented on the way I was dressed during the session, because I had on boots. You know, I had on like hiking boots and I was wearing Indian dress, you know, a kurta. And at the end of the conversation, he asked me whether I was Russian. I think it was because I had on the boots. It was so—it was very strange. [They laugh.] He said, "Are you Russian?"

LINDA YABLONSKY: In English?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did he say anything else? Any words of wisdom? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He said no words of wisdom. No words of wisdom and, you know, we had to exchange white scarves. That's part of it. I had to bring a white scarf to give to him, and he gave one to me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, yeah. You know, I think it's very hard for a Dalai Lama, who's brought up in such a sheltered way, to really have a big concept—a real concept of what the world is.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I don't know if that's true of the Dalai Lama because he travels continually and he's—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, [he was less experienced then —RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —always mixing with people all the time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: At a certain point, yeah. Okay, are you a Buddhist?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay [laughs].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —no, I'm not.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs]. Okay, no.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Are you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I'm not.



LINDA YABLONSKY: Are you in any way religious?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I'm not. I think that some of the Buddhist practices, I think, are very good. You know, about letting go of things. I think that's an important concept, but no, I'm not a Buddhist, and I'm not a practicing Jew. I—when I was married, I raised my children so that they would have something that I didn't have; that they might have some kind of identification—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —because I had had—mine was so confused. But my husband had—was definitely identified.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I can't believe it, but at that time I did Friday night rituals. I did the whole thing, until I was divorced.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But not Christmas? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Not Christmas, no Christmas.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Like your mother did.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, not then.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay, so you have photographed these political figures and also other artists; William Eggleston, William Cristenberry, Tony Smith, Louise Nevelson—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're people you met—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was able to do that when—because in Washington I met them. I met them—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in one context or another, and if I hadn't met them, it was possible—it was possible for me to meet them because of the Art and Architecture program that the General Services Administration was involved with.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see. Now, the reason I'm bringing all this up is, I wanted to ask you—so you have photographed these public figures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean, I'm not sure all of the artists were at the point that you photographed them, but they are now, and you have photographed, you know, people in South Africa and Ireland and Guatemala and Peru.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is there a difference, both in the way you approach the photograph, and is

there a difference in the experience itself, the quality of the experience for you as a photographer?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think that there was a difference in the way that I approached the idea of photographing them or actually photographing them. I had the same kind of ideas in my head. I think mostly of the picture of Louise Nevelson, which has never been out.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really? She's so great, was so great looking. I mean—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —I was so stunned by her.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She had—I photographed her with—her hands were very big. You know, I mean, I got those upfront. It's a little wild, the picture I took of her, relatively close up, and I think it was good. I was fortunate enough to go to her place and to have lunch with her—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —once and, you know, I had—I did have contact with her. I photographed Tony Smith, and that was—with his wife—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Jane.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —Jane, yes. That's a good picture. That's never been out. But my picture of Tony Smith is in the MoMA collection. Now it was—they weren't different. I mean, some of the pictures that I have of Eggleston—there was one that was auctioned at Aperture—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —last week where he's sitting on top of a—it's not—it looks like a dog, but it's not a real dog.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I have another one of him with shampoo on his head in a bathtub—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, my goodness.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —with a friend of his—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —together. No joke.

LINDA YABLONSKY: A female friend or a male friend?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A male. And, you know, I thought about—I mean, that's much more interesting than the one—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —of the dog. I thought, no, I don't think I'm going to do that. You know, it was something honoring him and I just didn't think that would be the appropriate thing to send to

that auction.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, wow. Maybe you should save it for a show [laughs] because that sounds

—  
ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, you know,—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —amazing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's very, very strange, yes. And I didn't—I mean, I know that he—I knew that he—he wasn't famous like he is now. I think he—I don't know if he'd already had—no, he hadn't had the show in Washington yet.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 19—I photographed him in 1977—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and that was very interesting. I spent hours with him and I did a number of pictures, and then I went back, and that's when I got the bubble bath picture. But I asked him if I could photograph his friends and family, because a lot of his family lived in Mississippi, and I thought it would be—give me a good itinerary, and a good reason for going to photograph in Mississippi, which I did. And I also went to see the—where the—I think the graves of the three civil rights workers.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The Freedom Riders?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Yes. That could've been another trip, because I also went to the Neshoba County Fair in Mississippi during the time that we were in Washington –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because I had met somebody. It's the kind of fair where they have houses, like summer houses. People own the houses and they go there just for the fair. It's kind of weird [laughs] you know?

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Little wood houses.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you photograph the graves?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think they really were graves. I can't remember that. I don't think so.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I don't think so. There was something about it though that made me go to that particular spot. There's a lot I don't remember, I guess.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You've have a lot of experience. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was a long time ago: So I didn't mention to you that I went to Cambodia.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —just kept doing—I kept doing these really difficult things. That was in the early '90s.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, when did you go to India?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I was in India many times, and I went to India [to photograph –RS] for the first time in 1981, and I was there 1981, 1982, and 1983. Each time for—I mean, once, the first time, was for just a month or six weeks, and then after that it was for longer, and the third time I was supposed to have—the ambassador was sponsoring a big show of my work. It was—the U.S. Information Service [Agency] traveled the show and the ambassador gave—was giving a party for me, but I was finalizing—the divorce was being finalized, and I just—I just got more and more depressed kind of—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I just couldn't—I just couldn't stay there any longer.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I left there, and this friend of mine who had been really helpful to me—he's the one who wanted me to photograph Mrs. Gandhi. He was a fascinating person; a Tibetan Buddhist, and he saved all the religion. He saved all the—actually saved the religious [books –RS] of Tibet—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —the books. Anyway, he said, "Well, you're going to come back aren't you?" And I said, "I don't know." And I just didn't go back. I couldn't go back. I just couldn't. It was just my state of mind, and I realized that it was a terrible thing for—I was really plugged in in India, and it was fascinating, and I just kind of threw that away, in a way, you know? I just blew it by not—you know, and then it turned out that they didn't—I think if I had been there that they would have liked my pictures, but I wasn't there for the ambassador's reception. It was really terrible, and they didn't like the pictures. They thought they were patronizing because, you know, I photographed these sculptures before they were finished, so they were actually sculpture in the nude and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait, tell me what's in—the pictures that aren't of people?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're of sculpture?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They're some people. I did photograph people too, but I went to Calcutta three years in a row—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —to photograph the festivals.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I got—I had a grant, a fellowship, from the American Institute of Indian

Studies—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and so, I photographed just very intensively all of this—the process of a sculpture, and a lot of it when they were unpainted, and they were these huge, female figures, and it was also sort of a counterpoint to the dolls that I had photographed years before.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But these were really strong female, you know, the female goddess, who is powerful.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so, a lot of that—that was a lot of the work that I photographed. I also photographed people. I photographed Satyajit Ray. I mean, he—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The filmmaker?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and I photographed poets who lived in Calcutta, and a writer—a writer in Delhi. Yeah, and a dancer somewhere else. You know, I had a lot of different kinds of people there too.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Were these pictures of sculpture—in-process sculpture—were they the pictures that were in the MoMA—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: One of them was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —photo-as-object show, or whatever it was, called a few years ago?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, yes. The same picture that was on my wall that was the poster picture from my show. She included it in the sculpture, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Roxana—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Roxana.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Roxana Marcoci.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, the curator of MoMA.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and it's in the book. I was very excited about that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: That was an interesting show.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Have you been back to India since then?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You did go back?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went back in the '90s. When was it that I got pneumonia?

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think that's when [laughs] I got pneumonia. I got—I had my first life-threatening incident. I was photographing—I photographed at the rush-hour street cars and people.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Calcutta?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Calcutta, and I thought I had a cold and finally I was staying in a—the guesthouse of the organization that sponsored me. I wasn't being sponsored by them at the time, but they had been very nice in letting me go back and stay there. And the woman who was running it, at a certain point she said, "Look, you have to see my doctor." And she sent me to a doctor—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and they took x-rays and I had double pneumonia, and I don't know whether it would have been possible today, but I went in a wheelchair to the airport, and then got—I was so weak—and then got on the plane and somebody met me when I got off the plane [and took me to the hospital –RS]. But I don't know that they would allow you to get on the plane like that today. I don't think so.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's very—it's contagious at a certain point.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, it could have been, I guess, and I was on oxygen for two weeks when I got back. It was [laughs]—I had—and then I went—before that happened I had gone to Dhaka, because I thought it would be interesting to make a trip into—

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Pakistan?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —East Bengal.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where—Dhaka is in—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: East Bengal—what is—it's in—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's not Pakistan.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: What is the matter with me? It's Muslim, but it's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —you know, but it's—it's not part of India, but it's Muslim. It's right next to —

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's Bangladesh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Bangladesh, that's what it is, yeah. I never—I took two pictures there I think and then I just couldn't get out of my bed [laughs].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So that was a very bad experience, but then I went back again. I went back more recently. I got a few pictures on that trip, but nothing like what I had done—in the '80s it was just, you know, I just—I took rolls and rolls, like every day, but I didn't have a really definite project when I went back.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is that how you mostly went about your photography? Taking lots and lots of pictures? I mean, not when you're set up to do a portrait of someone, but when you're on the road, say, and doing a particular—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I mean,—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —following a particular idea.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: When I was doing ritual things, you know, and processions and all that, I would take as many as I could because you never know, especially when things are moving. You never know—you know, you can't be sure that you've gotten something.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Not like Eggleston who takes one picture [laughs] of one thing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, no, no, nothing like that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've never done it that way. Since I developed it myself—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I learned to develop—to do deep tank development, which means that I could develop 18 rolls of two and a quarter film at one time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And you did that at home—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes [in my studio darkroom –RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —or you went to a lab?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I did it here. And I first learned—started it in Washington. Nobody showed me how to do it, but someone in a store told me about the deep tanks, and I just took my chances. I had—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —this little dark room in Washington, and I had a tub, and I put the tank in there and I did okay with it, you know, and then it was a way to just be very, very free with the film, and so I have lots of—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, if you take so many pictures, that means you have to do a lot of editing, if you're going to do an exhibition or a book.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, sure. Well, I mean, I always—I always produce my things. Oh, I did a lot of small prints, little small proofs—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and then I would edit from the small proofs and make exhibition prints. But I never—you know, only with the AIDS project did I know that there was a show upcoming.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I never did it knowing that—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I had a show coming up.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you've made several books.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, that came later. The one book—this happened in 2003, and I started —

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is—this is called—this is—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: *Chapalingas*.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What does that mean?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was really a mistake that I called—I thought it meant grasshoppers, which—the name came from a Mexican word. I thought it was—that it meant grasshoppers and later on I found out it didn't mean anything.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] It was just a made-up word and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But this is a kind of catalogue of everything or—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, no. This was just—this was a show that I had in—it was the closest thing to a retrospective—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —at that time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And this was—but this is—Steidl published this book?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And it was published when? Three years ago?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, 2003.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, 2003.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Sorry.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —the reason I think it was a mistake is because I think it should have been



my name—you know what I mean. My name is there, but Chapalingas meant nothing to anybody [laughs]. It didn't help the book to get around, I don't think, but it didn't—it didn't get around a lot anyway. This show, which was a great show, the show was—there were about 169 in [the book – RS], but the show was about 200 pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And finally, it traveled—just the American work—traveled to France to a museum which is well known, but people don't go there because it's so far out of the way.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is it?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's Nicéphore, Niépce, Nicéphore; N-I-C-E-P-H-O-R-E N-I-C—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait, N-I-C what?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: P-H-O-R-E; Nicéphore: N-I-C-E— [Nicéphore Niépce House Museum –RS]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And it's where?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Niépce; N-I-E-P-C-E. I don't remember. It's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I don't know of it.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But you'll look it up. You can find it; Nicéphore, Niépce [Chalon-Sur-Saône – RS]], and they did my American work and it was in a beautiful space, but nobody came. You know, I mean, it's not a place that people come. And so it never—it was not shown as a body in this country. God knows why.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Finally, Michael Foley, who is the gallery that preceded Silverstein for me. I really didn't have a gallery, and Michael took me on after this book, and he showed some of the pictures. He had a tiny gallery. But it was never shown as intended, you know, and I wrote for it too.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It wasn't shown in Germany?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was shown—it was shown in Germany, in Cologne—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —but it didn't even travel in Germany. Although—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where was it shown in Cologne?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was shown at Photographische Sammlung—Sammlung. The Photographische Sammlung is a—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Sammlung.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —S-A-M-M—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —yeah, actually Gerd Sander was responsible for me having that show because I had shown [at his gallery in DC —RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And who is he?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: August Sander's grandson.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I've met him!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You met him?

LINDA YABLONSKY: I met him during the Venice Biennale years. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] That's interesting.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, he was sitting next to me at a dinner, and I was fascinated to know that I was sitting next to August Sander's grandson. A very nice guy.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Very.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He had a gallery in Washington, and Lisette Model—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —sent me to him, and he showed my work twice there. But then I didn't hear from him for years, and I went to Harry Lunn's memorial. Do you know who Harry Lunn was?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Harry Lunn?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Lunn, L-U-N-N.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Lunn.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was the biggest international photo dealer.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was a major thing at that time. I don't think there's anyone like Harry Lunn. I mean, now, because it's a different world, but Gerd—when I saw him there he said, "I want to do a show of your work," and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, there are big photo dealers.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But no—but Harry—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you go to Paris Photo when you had the show in the Salon D'honore?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, I went there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So there were some of the bigger photo dealers in the world.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I'm just telling you that Harry had a different position though.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Harry was the international—he was—lived in France, and he had a gallery. I don't think there was anybody who could compete with Harry at that time, in that respect.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was my impression of it and, anyway, so this was what happened. You know, I had showed the books there. I showed my first video piece. It was really—it was an interesting show, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Video? We haven't talked about that at all.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I didn't know that you had done video.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did video because I was—somebody told me about Hannah Iverson, who, at that time, lived here in the police building—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and she had a bi-weekly workshop in her home, video workshop, and I attended. And so I learned—and then I went to Mexico. She had a workshop there, and I went to Mexico and took that workshop.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where in Mexico?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: At the Centro de—El Centro de La Imagen.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The what?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Center of the Image; I-M-A-G-E-N; Centro, el Centro, C-E-N-T-R-O, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Mexico City?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so the video that they showed was my—kind of like my student video.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They showed that in Cologne, but since then I did—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What was in the video? Sorry to interrupt.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think it's online. I think that that whole video is online. It's called *To Highlands*. It was—what was in the—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Two like as in the number two?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: T-O, T-O.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because the Highlands, the two Highlands: one was Highland Park, where I grew up, and the other was the highlands of Peru. It was kind of a jumbled-up thing, but it was—I—it was somewhat about my—I went back to the house where I had grown up, and the people who lived there let me come in and I did some shots there and outside, and then I was in Peru. That was in, I think, the 1980—1980 or 1981 when I—I took a lot of—I did a lot of Super 8 then, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But then I narrated it. Yeah, but it was Super 8. And then, after that, I did something for the first show that Bruce Silverstein had, and it was called—I gave it the name—*Don't Eat My Centerpiece*.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that came from the fact that my father used to eat my—and when they would have parties and they got a little bit high, my father ate my mother's centerpieces.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Were they edible [laughs]?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were flowers! No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And she—that was the one thing that my mother could really claim for herself—that she did beautiful—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, yes, that's right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —flower arrangements, so I called it *Don't Eat My Centerpiece*, but it was a three-monitor piece, and really—and I performed in it too. I was also in part of, at least my voice, was in *To Highlands*. I can't remember how I did that, but—and then the third one was *A Woman I Once Knew*. They were very all—they were pretty personal, but they included some of my foreign footage, and in *A Woman I Once Knew*, it was the Indian footage—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —of me having a massage in a boat on the Ganges and saying, "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," and that was part of it, and a woman—the *Woman I Once Knew*, I did in 2009—around 2009, because in 2008 something terrible happened to me, is that I had a kind of, you know, there was the crash. And I crashed.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You're talking about the stock market and that crash?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, it wasn't because of the stock market. It was other things, but I—it was really terrible.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Financially?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No!

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I thought people were coming into my house.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I thought things were happening during the night.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You were hallucinating?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Something like that, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What caused that? Do you know now?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I thought it was set off by a confrontation with my daughter.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But it was, because I was kind of—and apparently, it's anxiety. You know, I think I was depressed, and then it was that and actually now I don't know, really. You know, I don't blame her for what happened to me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is your daughter's name?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Linda.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, right, yeah. I'm sorry, you told me.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And so, that was terrible. You know, I mean, it's—I had never had anything like that occur. I had been depressed, but I never had anything like that. It was a paranoid—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —attack, you know. It was really bad.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But did this go on for a while or—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I got over it within six months.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I came out of it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow, that's still a long time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —with some medication. You know, and—but I started doing this *A Woman I Once Knew* video during that time, and it's—I think it's really—it's an interesting video.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's called *A Woman I Once Knew*?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: *A Woman I Once Knew*. You wouldn't—part of it is in my website online, but the most shaking part of it, I don't think is. You know, I just didn't want to do it—put it all out there. Pretty self-revelatory, isn't it?

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm sure it would do really well on YouTube.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, you mean the whole thing? Part of it is me, partially nude. Yeah, and it's kind of a crazy thing. You know, part of it I'm a little crazy-looking. But I think it was a very success—for me, it was a successful piece. I mean, it's not successful in the sense that it got around anywhere, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, if you—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —it was quite—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —put it on YouTube it would! [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh yeah, something happened. I got an award for it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh! [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I showed it at the—it was shown at the video festival; not the main New York festival, but the New York Film and Video Festival—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and it won first prize in experimental short, which—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —was pretty good.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Great! Congratulations!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: 2010 [. . .-RS].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Fantastic.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So when did you go to Cambodia?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I went to Cambodia, I think, after—I mean, not right on the heels. I went to Cambodia in the '90s, in the early '90s, I believe. Again, I can check my negatives list with the—I have all the dates in there, and I went to photograph mine victims. And actually—is there something online now, because it's called this—something, This Century but, again, I can—they asked a photographer—they asked to me—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who's they?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Whoever runs that blog. I'd have to look it up.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it's a blog.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This Fine Century, or—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's a blog?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —*This Long Century*, yeah, and they ask you to submit something that has never been shown.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So I got into Cambodia under false—with false documents, which—saying that I was a representative studying the [laughs] what was happening there, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, you were.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —yeah, but they—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It wasn't that false!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —they weren't letting—they weren't letting people in. It was during the United Nations occupation. They weren't just letting journalists in.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait, what year was this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Early '90s.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, this is long after the war's over.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know, but they—it was full of U.N. They were just—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —you know what? I don't even remember that. I mean, what exactly what was going on there, but it was a tense time and there weren't foreigners coming in, except for the U.N.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And so, what did you photograph?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I photographed people who were mine victims. I also photographed a temple.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mine victims?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mine. Victims of mines, explosives.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, you mean landmines?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Landmines.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see. Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's who I photographed.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I also was invited to something at the royal palace, because I had gone to visit a journal that existed in Cambodia, and they said, "Oh, there's going to be this party. Do you want to go?" And they arranged for me to go, and I photographed some of the royalty also. So that was interesting. I mean, just group. You know, nothing—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you make a book or anything out of that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, and Granta was doing something. I don't remember. I don't know that it was on Cambodia. Maybe it was about landmine victims, but I sent them some pictures and the one that they chose was the most innocuous thing that I had. You know, it was nothing. I had pictures that showed the results of the landmines.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wasn't that hard to do?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Of course, it was hard to do.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A lot of things that I've done have been hard to do, but they didn't publish that. They published something that was like a young boy learning to dance or, you know, it was just—and, I mean, Granta, you know. No, I didn't get it out. I—that hasn't been seen. The Polish work was *never* seen in this country, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Does your gallery now, Bruce Silverstein, does he plan to show any of this work that hasn't been exhibited before?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I guess he showed some of the work that hadn't been exhibited, over the years, but I'm not really sure. Yeah, I mean, that hadn't been exhibited here; some of the work from *Chapalangas*. I've never had a talk with him about it, but I don't—no, he didn't do—when *Polish Shadow* came out there was a kind of book-signing, which about two people came to, and a couple of pictures of, you know, that night but, no, nobody's ever shown that work, and I don't think that he—I don't know that he would show victims—I don't know. I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Hang on a second.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm going to turn—can I turn on some light?



LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think it would be—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Let's have some light. It's getting a little—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —dark. Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I wanted to say that when I came here in the '80s—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —I came from a totally different world.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My photography meant so much to me. First of all, I wanted to do as much work as I could. I had never hung out in bars. I mean, I'd been to cocktail parties and everything, but I never had that experience, and it never occurred to me to do anything like that. Also, I had the feeling that by getting too involved with other—well, I was thinking photographers—artists, whatever, that I would be diluted. That I needed to stick to what I was doing. I felt that so strongly.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I wonder why; because it's about a support community, not competition.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I didn't—I felt it was very competitive. I felt that it was very—and besides, there was Lee Friedlander—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —who's around my age.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Who else was there who was really a contemporary of mine? Mary Ellen Mark was much younger than I was. I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you know her?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —just to say hello.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I knew Helen Gee, who was much older than I was.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Helen Gee?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Helen Gee; J—G-E-E. She had the first photography gallery in New York.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I mean, she wasn't a community. But I'm telling you. I don't even know who there was that would have been my community, truthfully.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, you would have—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Robert Frank? No. He wouldn't have been my community.

LINDA YABLONSKY: He's older than you are.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, he's the same—oh, he's a little older, I guess.

LINDA YABLONSKY: He's in his 90s.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, then he's older.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, if—the galleries that showed all these artists' and photographers' work, that's where you would have met people, just by going to openings or being invited to a dinner.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay, I hated going to openings.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or going to museums and seeking out curators. I mean, you already had a connection in MoMA.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did go to, I did go—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah. Anyway, that's water under the bridge.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But it's not too late—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: —is all I'm saying. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But that becomes—that becomes a huge part of your life then.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Is doing that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's part of your work. Going to see shows?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It doesn't have to be—it's part of your life. It's just part of the day to day activity—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Which I haven't really done.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —of photography—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Which I really—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So describe to me your working day.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, my working day now is a lot different than it was in the '80s.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, describe it in the '80s, and then we'll move up to now.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My working day in the '80s was that I would—three times a week, I was in the darkroom—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —with somebody else—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —who was helping me, but I was in the darkroom three days a week, and then in between it was analyzing the proofs. You know, I would spend a certain amount of time figuring out what needed to be done the next time around when they were made. I worked on editing. I planned my next—whatever my next project was going to be, where I was going to go next. That's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that's it. That's what I did, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: I understand.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I produced a huge amount of work.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, you have.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that was important to me, because I cared about doing that because I really wanted—I wanted to do something that mattered, and I thought it mattered. I didn't want to just—I mean, I had come out of a world where people—it was pretty much based on socializing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and—or politicking, you know, either being involved in politics, which is a whole thing, or just socializing. And that isn't what I wanted to do, and when I broke away from that, and I really broke away from it, I think I already said that, that I didn't—I didn't really continue to see people who were in my life before I came here. So I ended up totally alone in the beginning, and only knowing a man who had been printing my stuff in a lab in New York, and the interns that I met at MoMA. They were my friends then— Maria Hambourg, before she was Maria, when she was Maria Morris, and Peter Galassi. They were the people—they knew and appreciated my work, and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wait. Peter Galassi was an intern?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at MoMA? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —well, yeah, he was 25 years old.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know if he was an intern. I think he was an intern, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I mean, I only knew him as the chairman of the photography department [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at MoMA. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —he'd been there a long time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes. [Laughs.] Did Peter Eleey, who put you in the last Greater New York Show at MoMA PS1, did he see any of your other work?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, that was so—it was really exciting to have Peter Eleey invite me to do that. Peter went to look—he looked at Silverstein, at whatever they had.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I guess he looked at some books. He said he just follows his hunches and whatever, and he came to look at some work for the show, and it was just a very exciting to me. Who else? A friend of his. There was a man who had—who had been negative about the AIDS show. He's very well-known, but I can't remember his name and he now is a—he supports it now. He's a friend of Peter's, and I liked Peter a lot. And I hadn't known him before at all.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, he used to be at the Walker Art Center before he came to PS1 as the chief curator.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Huh.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And I think he's doing—I personally think he's doing a very good job.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And you go—and you go there to—you see everything, which I don't.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I don't see everything. That's impossible today—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —because there are too many things to see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I mean I should, but again I find myself—you know, I have to take care of this place, I want to read—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I actually want to write! I mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I have—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What are you reading now?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm reading—I'm reading a book by Jhumpa—what's her last name?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Lahiri.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, Lahiri. I'm reading a novel. I'm reading that, although I also have read recently *Being Mortal* which is a really interesting thing to read.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Who wrote that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Hmm?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who wrote that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: His name is Atul [Gawande]—I don't know, I'm very bad with names. I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: All right, let's go to something you're really familiar with. So let's talk about your trip to the Gaza—to Jerusalem—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: My trip to—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —and the West Bank.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, that was—you were part of a group at this point—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I turned it down in the beginning.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You turned it down?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: When Frederick Brenner came to see me—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who? Fred—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: His name is Frederick Brenner. He was—he is the one who organized and raised the money and everything else. He's a photographer and—anyway, he was behind the whole thing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And what was the thing? Can you describe it?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The thing was—the thing was to go to—go to Israel and spend—[. . . -RS] as much as six months or more, and to do your own work, and he wanted a kind of portrait of Israel and only by photographers who were not Israelis.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So I really felt strongly that I wanted to know and understand some Palestinians directly—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and so I went to Jenin.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean I didn't stay the whole—I stayed a few weeks. Jenin, it's a Palestinian town.

LINDA YABLONSKY: How do you spell that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: J-E-N-I-N.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And my entrée there was through a German filmmaker who had established a theater there, who renovated a theater and had created a guest house and the manager of the guest house was my assistant and it—I had a—it was fascinating for me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was this trip?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was in—the beginning of it, 2010.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Why did you turn it down at first?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Because I didn't think I could work in a group. That's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: You were working on your own.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know, but I—but I just—I just couldn't—that's why I turned it down. I didn't think—I didn't think that I could be part of a group and of course it turned out that we didn't have to worry, we did do our own work and we hardly ever intersected. You know, we were—even though we might have been there at the same time, there were only a few times when we would all be having—or a few of us would be having breakfast at the same place, and the positive thing about it was that I met photographers who were so interesting to me and—well, Wendy Ewald I knew from early on. Wendy's been a friend for many years, but we haven't seen as much as I would have liked to have seen of her—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —because she travels a lot—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and she worked a lot in North Carolina, but this really brought us back together again and that's been wonderful, because we share a lot of interests and we always have a lot to talk about. And she's wonderful and we have a really good friendship. So I got to see more of Wendy. I met Fazal Sheikh, which was very—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Fazal.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Fazal.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Fazal Sheikh. You know his work, don't you? The refugees and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —anyway he works prolifically, and Thomas Struth, who I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: He was part of this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, and I connected really strongly with Thomas, and he loved my work, and, you know, I saw him when I went to Berlin, when we had dinner together and I went to his studio and who else did I meet in the—well, I mean I didn't get to know him terribly well, but I liked him: Martin Kollar, he's a young Czech photographer, and Joseph Koudelka, who's [laughs] weird, but it was interesting to meet him and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What an interesting group.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —Stephen Shore.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and Jung Jing Lee has become a good friend. She's a Korean photographer—I mean she lives here, but she—

LINDA YABLONSKY: How do you spell her first name?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: J-U-N-G—

LINDA YABLONSKY: J-U-N-G, that's right.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: G-I-N, Jung Gin, I think. You have to look it up—Lee, L-E-E. [Jung Jin Lee]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, that was a very positive thing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And Jeff Rosenheim, who—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, Jeff actually set up my filing system here. He worked for me shortly after he got out of school—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —for—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And now he's the photography—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —curator at the Metropolitan Museum.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he built something in my sub-basement so, you know, he's always glad to see me and I'm always glad to see him, but he hasn't bought one of my pictures for the [laughs]

Metropolitan.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You should have him over for a studio visit. It's been a while.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've tried. I wanted to bring him—you know, bring some stuff up there, but I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Send him an email and invite him over.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: I'm serious. I'm sure he'd love it.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, anyway, so I saw a good bit—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, what did—what did you do there? What was your day like? What, where did you, whom did you photograph?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Sometimes it was quite awkward, that I would just go out and see what I could see. I did some things on the beach, you know, I looked for people there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The beach? Where were you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Tel Aviv.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Tel Aviv? Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean that's where—that was where I was on the beach—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —but I wasn't in—I wasn't—that was where I was occasionally, but I was also in Jerusalem. One of the most interesting stays that I had was at the Austrian hospice in Jerusalem.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They have a pension, like hotel, and that was fascinating. I photographed pilgrims at Easter. I photographed—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Christian or Muslim?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Christian pilgrims and I photographed them in the Old City, at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I did portraits of Israelis when I could meet them, and do that. I have—I photographed a Holocaust survivor who was an older woman—went to Beersheba to do that, just for that purpose, and I photographed—I had made friends with—I have a friend who's an actor and a theater director. She has a small theater group. I photographed her and her daughter, which is a very close portrait. Actually my—the assistants helped me. Sometimes I photographed someone and their family, mother and daughter or whatever. I mean there's the book—



LINDA YABLONSKY: So, they were all portraits—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Here's the book.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —that you did in Israel?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mostly, but not all.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But didn't you say you went to the West Bank, or Gaza?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did; I went to Jenin, that's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, Jenin, yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is one of the pictures from Jenin. He was murdered when I was about five minutes away. That man was murdered.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The one in the photograph?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In the—in the poster.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In the poster that the boy is holding.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was the founder of a—his mother had founded a theater there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was part Jewish and part Arab.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow, that's difficult!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: His father was Arab—Yeah, and—yeah, so I mean, you know, there's some that are—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is this picture? What am I looking at here? A clock over—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Some toys.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it looked almost like an encampment of some sort and I—the clock hanging in the sky.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, you—the perspective.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And this man?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was the leader of a group of Ghanaians.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In the West Bank?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, in—

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Gaza?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, no, in—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in the Old City.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, in Jerusalem.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Jerusalem, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So this book is collected in—I mean, these pictures are collected in a book titled *Them*—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —which was part of the larger project also—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, all the books that—there were—everyone made a book—had a book.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Called *Them*?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. Then what was—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They all had their own—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —the title of the larger—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: "This Place."

LINDA YABLONSKY: "This Place."

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But *Them* was—and I did a performance of the book, I mean kind of a performance at SVA with a cello accompaniment.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I memorized it and I—there's a little bit of that on YouTube.

[They laugh.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did everyone who—did every one of the photographers publish a book from that—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —project and were they all this format?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. They're all different formats.

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is quite small.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is small and I was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Of course, square formatted pictures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: After having this huge one, I don't know, I was happy to do that. I didn't care, because it was intimate.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Those are Israelis.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They live in Israel. Yeah, I was really interested in doing—they—

LINDA YABLONSKY: These are Africans?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: These are Africans—these are Africans from Sierra Leone.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, and they're living in Israel?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes, and this is—the daughter of—she is the daughter of a man who came during the time that Mrs. Gandhi was having buildings constructed and she went to Africa and apparently made a lot of connections here, and the Africans came and built the buildings, a lot of the buildings in Israel, and he is not a citizen, but he's been a resident for 20 years and his daughter was—I mean I just wish I had extended my visit and done it. His daughter had a bat mitzvah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The African daughter?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and I said to him, "I thought you [were Christian] —RS)—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But they converted? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I said, "I thought you were Christian." He said, "We live in this country."

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: "This is her country. She speaks Hebrew," and then he told me, "After she goes to the army she will be able to get citizenship for us."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see. Who is this man with the tattoos?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was a man on the beach.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, that's a hotel behind him?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I really had thought about doing body markings there, but it was too hard. You know, I wanted to do the wounded and the—you know, other things, but I didn't know how to get access to that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And how long did you spend?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A total of five months on several different [trips –RS]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: And were you living in the same house that whole time?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. We had—each one of us had a—we had a budget, we had—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —which of course I, you know—I didn't just—I ended up spending some of my money—own money, and I'm sure a lot of them did. So part of the time we were in a place called Mishkenot, which is a place that—

LINDA YABLONSKY: How do you spell that? Mishkenot?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mish—M-I-S-H-K-E-N-O-T, but that may not be—

LINDA YABLONSKY: O-T.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They house—have dignitaries who come to stay there, and the director of the project had apparently made a good deal with them and when we stayed at Mishkenot, we had these giant rooms, you know, with an upstairs and a downstairs. It was really amazing, but then—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you have a darkroom there?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So you did all the printing after you returned?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes. I always did it that way, so I never knew how it was going to come out. And, once, I stayed in Tel Aviv, at a hotel there. I liked it because it had movies in the lobby—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and my husband had theaters in Chattanooga and I just—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What about this book here, with—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, this is the new one.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And this is—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is my—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —out or just a—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's out.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's out.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is my *pièce de la résistance*.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean I love this book. I'm so proud of it. Here, you can open it. It's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: *Got to Go*, which we started to talk about—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at the very beginning of this interview—at the—I mean the other day, but—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. This is a woman I knew in Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She's the queen of the crop [laughs]. Is she—she's in a bathtub, too.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes [laughs].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is that a thing [laughs], you photographing people in bathtubs?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. I think they're the only two that I photographed in a bathtub. That's funny.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She is weirdly androgynous.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, really? I never thought of that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah. Her—I don't know—her—even though—yes, maybe—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I never saw her like that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because you don't really see her body there, covered with suds and it's mostly her head and her—it looks like a wig, like just, you know—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: How strange.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —like just kind of—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —propped on top of the head and she has very strong features.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's so interesting. That's me in the window—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in the front.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What a great picture. Why is it called "Got to Go"?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: There's something in the book that—well, "Got to Go" is kind of symbolic, you know, it's—I had to go. I mean, I actually did go, but when I was a child my mother saw me pee in the woods, so then like maybe a couple nights later at dinner, I said, "I have to go, I need to go," you know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and she said, "Go outside. If you act"—you know, "if you act like an animal, live like an animal." So my mother was very tough. That's my mother.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. Wow, what is she wearing? [Laughs.] It looks amazing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, she always said, "You can always tell a woman's age by looking at her neck." That was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's like a sweater dress, but with a ruffle and yarn [laughs]—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: —around it. It's unbelievable.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Fringe—sort of fringed. They're not fringes, they're just loops—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They're loops.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —of yarn.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, you—this is about—this first person is you or it's something that she said?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's something that she said.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, okay.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's what a mother says—or Mother said.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And that's—that was absolutely true.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Can you read this—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —for the record?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Okay.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Thank you.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: "Mother says, youth is my God. I hate age! Everything is such an effort. I take Benzedrine to cope with my aches and pains. Last time, before they operated on me, I ate 30 Hershey bars. Then I found out that I have diabetes. No Hershey's tonight. Boo-hoo! Nothing can help me now but a new leg. Hip-hip-hooray! I'm getting intravenous tonight. I don't know whether it's the appetizer or the post-mortem. Yesterday, I thought I would congeal. My feet are just like ice.

In a few days, I'll be a dead ass. There will be no tomorrow."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That is what—I wrote it down—you know, that is from—really from her mouth, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: She takes Benzedrine—took Benzedrine—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She took—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —for aches and pains.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She took—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Benzedrine is speed.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She took Benzedrine for years—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And she told me—I didn't—you know, it was for her low blood pressure. So I think that she was slightly—you know, she was a little addicted—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah, I would say.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and she had these very highs and lows and she could be—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Not surprising.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, she could be—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —very tough.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah. Who's this with the bandaged—is this a nose job?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's somebody in a—I did a series in a hospital and that was one of the pictures I took.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But is this cosmetic or reconstructive?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have no idea.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I have no idea. I assumed it was cosmetic.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Such a young girl.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's sad.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And so, all of the text that goes with the—where this is text, this is something

the subject said?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It doesn't always go with the pictures.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Sometimes it follows the picture and sometimes it precedes it—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —because it—

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, what is this—these two lines about "I never knew which I hated most: my breasts, my nose, or my name." [Another quote out of the mouth of my mother. –RS]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, you saw—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is this the woman in the tub?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You saw the nose. Well, it's the implication of my mother, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, well, this is quite different [laughs]. So this is in Africa? The children and a mother in Africa?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes. It's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where in Africa is this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's in South Africa, in the Karoo. It's that—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah. Is this one family?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is the group that this woman—I told you there was a woman who rented a group of bushmen for films.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, yes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Remember I told you? This is the group of bushmen.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But they're not a family, they're just rented. Rented!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They are family.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They are? Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They are a family, yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Rented—and who's this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was in—



LINDA YABLONSKY: That man?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was in Mali. He was a photographer.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: See?

LINDA YABLONSKY: I see. So this is in his—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And this is—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —in his photo studio?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And what is this woman in bed here with a—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —magazine?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: With a *Fairlady* magazine?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, you know, that was my first day in South Africa.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That was in the beauty clinic I mentioned to you.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, wow. I mean this woman looks just this side of dead.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know [laughs]. She doesn't look very—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Even though she's fully dressed. It's just the way she's lying in this bed—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She doesn't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —with her eyes that way, open like that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She doesn't look very happy.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No. What an extraordinary photograph [laughs], really! Where were you? So you were standing? This is an odd perspective. Where were you?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] It was a bed, you know? It was a bed where she was getting treatment. I was just standing—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Fully dressed?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, at that part—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in that part. So, you know, nobody knows—I mean, in the back there is a list of the dates and the places—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —but when you look through this book, the idea is that you just get the sense of, you know, the variation and you read the text.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So—but the reason I—I'm a little confused about the text is because the beginning was a photo of your mother and your mother's words, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —whose words are these?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It happened to be her words, but it doesn't matter. It's, "I love being taken care of."

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, but is this something you wrote or something they—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's something my mother said.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, this is all—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. The—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —what your mother said? Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And some of it is fiction, but that isn't and this is—yeah, "I love being taken care of," and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where is—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Spain.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is it a costume party? [Laughs.] What is happening?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's an Easter procession.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it's an Easter procession.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean, this looks like a Ku Klux Klan hood.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know, I know it, that's how it looked.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Spain? You didn't mention Spain.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, there are a lot of places I've been.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When did you go to Spain?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've been to Spain a lot, a number of times. I have a friend there and this is something I was telling you about—this is the beauty—those two were from my first day in South Africa, and there's yet another one.

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is a woman—what is she doing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She's massaging—

LINDA YABLONSKY: With an—with a—like a—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It looks like a brush.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It looks like a vacuum cleaner brush.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Massaging her butt.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And here, this—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a woman I knew in New Orleans. I didn't tell you about New Orleans either.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, no, we started—you did start—you mentioned you had been to New Orleans, but the—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, New Orleans was my—finally, when I was about to go out of my mind, going to all these—doing all these horrendous things—actually Jeff Rosenheim said to me, "Why don't you go to New Orleans? Most photographers go to New Orleans at some point, and I think you would really like it," and of course New Orleans was a great release for me. It was such a contrast. It was wonderful.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you go during Mardi Gras?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's when I went every year. I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, every year? You went a lot.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: For three—for three years. I rented a little—I found a little place in the French Quarter—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and it was very reasonable and I rented this little place. It was much cheaper than going—you know, having a hotel room.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I went there three years in a row.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When was that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In the '90s.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Have you been back since then?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Once, yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And so, this is just some random woman you met? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't—

LINDA YABLONSKY: In her bedroom, or—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't remember how I met her. No, she collected costumes and this is her Marilyn Monroe costume—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, I see.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —dress. It's a real Marilyn Monroe dress.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And how did you meet her?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't remember, but possibly because her boyfriend was a musician and I might have met him first, you know, publically, in public, because I don't remember getting any introductions, but if—in New Orleans, you know, then it was very easy to just talk to people and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It still is.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] It's kind of relaxed. Now if she's sitting down on this kind of—the settee with her shoes in front of her and this dress, which looks like nothing Marilyn Monroe ever wore, but it's strapless with this—almost a tent over this perch—

[They laugh.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: What was that called?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Like a peplum tent.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Peplum, peplum.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And she's kind of young, but anyway she's sitting down, leaning against the bed post. Where were you? Were you also sitting—because you see—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No. I was standing up.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —you seem about level with her. How do you decide where—from what point you're going to set this, you know?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't set it up. I probably just told her to sit down—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and then I figured out where I would stand.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Her expression is one of tedium. [They laugh.] Or maybe you caught her between expressions.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She doesn't look happy. She's wearing one of her—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She probably—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —prized things.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She probably wasn't happy.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Or maybe she's just tired but, you know, it's not—she collects these—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a good picture.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —clothes.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a good picture.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't care what she does [laughs].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Right. Well—it is a good picture because the contrast of what she's wearing and her expression—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Huh.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —is very telling.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's interesting.

LINDA YABLONSKY: These people look happy.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This is—

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is where?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Guatemala.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, really? So, they're just at a picnic, man and woman?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Just at home, man and woman, I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Who's this? These women? Honestly they look like the women that Cindy Sherman dresses up to be older women. Who is the blonde?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Now you seem to be kneeling [laughs] in front of, you know—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: —this is not in a straight-on—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is a completely different perspective—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Isn't that—well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —than I've seen in your pictures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know. I mean—

LINDA YABLONSKY: You're shooting upwards.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was in an apartment in Miami, and I guess I was with somebody who was carrying my stuff, and I don't know, I guess we just said, "Can we take your picture?" And she went to her room and we—you know, I took her picture.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, but you did not take a straight on picture.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well—

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is—you're beneath—you're down. It looks like you're on the floor looking up.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's not true, though. I wasn't on the floor. I probably was using a tripod. I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow, and here, where is this? This one?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She's an actress in Yugoslavia.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, well, she looks quite theatrical, or dramatic—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.] Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —with a little cigarette holder. You don't see too much of that anymore and who's this young girl and where?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was in Mexico.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah. That's a very nice picture. Oh [laughs]. What is this? This young girl against a—I don't know how old she is, five—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I guess five or six.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —with her dress, which is way above her crotch [laughs]—her little party dress—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah [laughs].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —leaning back against the grill of an old—it looks like '60s-era Chevrolet. This is—this is a little like an Eggleston picture in black and white.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But again, you're shooting from a low angle. The expression on her—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Maybe I did, maybe I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Honestly, it's a very funny picture.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Her Maryjane's. Well, what an interesting book this is. Now where was this?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In a hospital in Chattanooga.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, this is one in a hospital? That's the cancer and—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This was in New York.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is happening here?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's part of—this is [Tadeusz] Kantor, who was a director and he was, I guess, in his plays, and this was in one of his plays at La Mama.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The Polish director?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh! I've never seen a picture of him.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's him.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You mean those are live people?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. [Laughter] They don't look like mannequins.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Okay. Wow, so he was performing or he just performed for your photograph?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, at this point he just—I asked him if I could take his picture.

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is a great book. So how long did it take you to—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, I think I spent a year on it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And the pictures—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It's very careful, the way you put it together.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: The pictures already existed.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But I had to find—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —you know, I had to make the edit and find—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —what would work and then the text and this is—that one is misplaced. That's one thing.

LINDA YABLONSKY: "Keys, keys, keys. You can't get your affection without the right key." That's quite a telling line—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That was from—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It certainly gives meaning to this picture, which could be anything going—this conversation between a man and woman at what looks like a cocktail party, but—yeah. Oh. Birthday party gone wrong.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, it's very interesting because you've photographed children, you've photographed adults and older people, male, female, black, white, different cultures, and they do feel personal, I mean personal about them. What's happening here?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was a crazy guy who collected dolls.

LINDA YABLONSKY: A guy who collected dolls?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: A guy who collected dolls—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But the picture is of, obviously, a man's hands—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, he was a little—I mean he obviously—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —pressed and putting the doll in a heavy book and—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Squishing it.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He was kind of sadistic; he did all kinds of—

LINDA YABLONSKY: There's a rope here that suggests other nefarious goings on.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: He did [laughs] all kinds of strange things with the dolls. That was in Tennessee.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh. Well.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow, what's happening here? What is that?



ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, that's in Peru.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What is that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Just corn and squash.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, corn.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I thought they were bones.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: More—a doll—combining dolls and hospitals [laughs], two of your favorite subjects! Now what's—is this a costume—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a Halloween party.

LINDA YABLONSKY: A Halloween party. When was this taken—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was taken—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —of this couple?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Taken in the late '70s, I guess—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, it looks like they're—it looks—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —probably.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —from judging from their style, it looks '60s, could be '70s, I guess, and what was happening here?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is like a Nan Goldin picture in black and white.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean that was—I guess I must have asked them to pose in the nude and —

LINDA YABLONSKY: This is a couple in a bed. You don't see the woman; you only see her buttocks and she's on her side.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She's pregnant.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, you can see that she's pregnant, and a man, nude, full frontal with his head inclined against—sort of nestled against her stomach, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was my—

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did you tell them? [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Nothing, I don't think anything, but she was my assistant in Miami at that

time.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean, did they pose themselves or you—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I would say so.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They did?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. I don't tell people—

LINDA YABLONSKY: It almost looks like a crime scene photo.

[They laugh.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, God.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Because of the overhead angle.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Like a Weegee picture. And this is back in Africa or in—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It actually was in Nicaragua.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Nicaragua. When were you there?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Very briefly, I think, in the—I think in the early-'90s.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Another nude.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Weird nude picture [laughs]. What's this? This is a nudist?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: [Laughs.]

LINDA YABLONSKY: Are they nudists in a corn field?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No! I just decided at a certain point I wanted to make some nude portraits.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But they're in a corn field.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They're in a cane field—

LINDA YABLONSKY: A cane field.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —in Cuba.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were both photographers and I met them—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —on the—I met them on the street!

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] It's just this like surreal photograph. What a great variety of pictures. And this one of a man in the clown mask?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In Washington Square.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah. People just walk around—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, they—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —like that. Have you ever done a self-portrait?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, that's what the one in the beginning of the book is. That's a self-portrait, the one in the window.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, right, there was one.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, I've done—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Was that the only one?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No, I did a lot and actually Bruce Silverstein showed a number of them.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow, an interesting hairstyle and beard.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's Alice Neel.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You might be interested in that—no, not the—this one.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, my goodness. And who's the girl?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't know. And it was a public—it was public. It was someplace in SoHo in 1976.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Was she having a show?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Isn't that one of her portraits?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think perhaps it was a fundraiser, it—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not positive.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean why does she happen to have a paintbrush and a pallet in her lap if she's—if it's an event?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She—because it just—I don't know why she did and I didn't know why that little girl was there, made up, I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh. History of your life, "Got to Go."

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, kind of [laughs].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So do you still have to go? I mean are you traveling—you don't travel so much.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, since the—since the Israel—for one thing, I spent a whole year doing the Israel book—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and the prints for the show, and then I spent a year doing this and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: The *Got to Go* book.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and it came out this year, and also doing a big show at Bruce Silverstein.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So that happened in February to April and that's—I haven't—you know, I've dabbled a little bit, but I'm going to Cuba. Did I tell you that?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm going to Cuba in December for two weeks.

LINDA YABLONSKY: I hope you have a hotel.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm staying in a good—in a—yeah, not a hotel—

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're really hard to get a hotel. [Laughs.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm staying in a like B&B—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —that somebody knows the people.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you've obviously—you've been to Cuba before, in the past?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I've been to Cuba before.

LINDA YABLONSKY: When were you there—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In the early—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —the first time?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: In the early-'90s and the first time—

LINDA YABLONSKY: During the—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: When they—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —terrible time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yes.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What did they call it? I forget.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I mean that's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: They have a name for it.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —why the couple looks so thin.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What was it like—for you? I mean there—they had nothing to eat, no power, hard to get fresh water.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I just knew that they didn't have much to eat, and I ran out—you know, I didn't know the person who supposedly knew the ropes, who went with me, didn't tell me there would be no way to get money there, and I ran out of money, And I took them to dinner, the nude couple.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —but I didn't know that they were going to eat as much as they did [laughs] and they were really ravenous.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It was probably the first meal they'd had in a year.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were ravenous.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But anyway, I couldn't—really didn't stay very long there because I didn't have enough money.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Like how did you get—excuse me—how did you go?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Through the Dominican Republic, and—yeah, the first time I was there, I've been remembering this, was that I was engaged when I was in college, when I was a sophomore in college, and then had a broken engagement—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and my mother decided that she should go with me, we should go to Cuba to get me over it, you know, to—[laughs] so she went with me to Cuba. It was wild.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What year was that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Before the revolution or after?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, way before.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Way before.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Wow, what a contrast to go there then and then to go in the '90s.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What do they call that period? Some—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —thing. [The Special Period.]

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, anyway.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So what was it like then?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It was glamorous.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: If you had—I mean it was—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think we stayed at—we stayed at—I don't remember the name of the place, but it was a very well-known hotel. I don't know. I had a nice bathing suit, and I met a Spanish man, who was very attractive, and my mother and I—that's probably—you know, we really—that was really kind of an interesting thing. We went out to a club together, and we were both dancing with people. It was—it was unusual.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Is that the only time you socialized with your mother?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think so, and it's the only time that I can remember, except for when my mother went to my sister's sorority meeting in Colorado, that she ever left him, and while she went to the sorority meeting, he started an affair, which went on for years and years and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Really?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —years and then he told her he was going to stop the affair, and then she found out some years later that he hadn't stopped the affair. So I think—you know, I've realized that they were really pretty miserable. I mean my father must have been very miserable.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And he kind of had to stay with my mother, I guess, because he was supporting his in-laws.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Oh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: It's a long story.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yep.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, when you go this time to Cuba, you're going to stay for two weeks? That's enough time to travel around the island a bit.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not going to travel around the island. I might go to Oriente [Province], but I'm not going to try to travel around the whole island. I think Havana is interesting enough.

LINDA YABLONSKY: It is interesting, but it's even more interesting when you compare it to something outside—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Have you traveled around?

LINDA YABLONSKY: A little bit.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Around the island?

LINDA YABLONSKY: I would like to go sometime and go to the other end of the island—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, isn't that where—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —Santiago—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Isn't that where Oriente is?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No idea. I don't know—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think so.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —the island very well.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I think so and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But I did get out—in my first trip, which was about eight or nine years ago, I did get out of Havana for a day, just to some villages in the countryside, about an hour, hour and a half.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And just that was fascinating?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Just so different.

LINDA YABLONSKY: The contrast, but you don't actually have to get that far to see the—you know, it's just—you know, people are poorer there, but in Havana there's a kind of Beverly Hills section and it's quite prosperous at the moment since there's been this opening up of the borders, but the poverty if you go across the bay to—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —it's almost a suburb—I guess it's part of Havana. It's kind of shocking.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'll do that.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you can see it—there's a very poor neighborhood in central Havana, right sort of on one side of the old Havana. There are so many contradictions and contrasts there that I find it fascinating and puzzling, because I've never spent enough time there to begin to understand —

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —but architecturally it's devastatingly beautiful—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —and the people are beautiful.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, and the music is wonderful.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And the music, yes, particularly late at night [laughs]—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —it gets better.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You know—

LINDA YABLONSKY: If you start going out at midnight [laughs], it gets better.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm not sure that this will be a serious project. I don't know.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: We'll see.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, that's wonderful. Are you going with somebody?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, you know, I was going to go alone, but it turns out that a friend of mine wants to go and she's going to stay somewhere—you know, we're—we'll just intersect, but I prefer to go alone. I mean—but it's going to be nice to have somebody I can go out with at night.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And, usually, I don't go out at night when I travel.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But there it's part of the culture—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, you know?

LINDA YABLONSKY: —you kind of have to [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: This'll give me a good chance to go—to go out at night. I told her she could be my assistant at night, because otherwise she really wouldn't be able to go because you can't just go as a tourist.

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, you still can't—



ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did you go—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —get a tourist visa—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —but it's not hard to get a visa and—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You get a visa when you go—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —also the food has improved—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —ten-fold [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: You just get a visa when you get in there, don't you?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No, you get it at the airport here, before you leave.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Really?

LINDA YABLONSKY: I don't know. That's how I—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: I mean it's looser now. I went maybe a year and a half ago. It's right before—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —it was like six months after Obama's speech saying that they're—they were going to lift certain travel restrictions, but they hadn't—the embassy hadn't opened yet, so I had to have all the papers before I left.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Did you have them before you went to the airport?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yes, and then I got more when I got to the airport.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: That's funny because I've been told by a woman who goes there relatively frequently, she said, "You'll just have to go to a table at the side of the airport when you get in, and you'll get your—you'll get a visa, it'll be a Cuban visa," you know, you get your visa at the airport.

LINDA YABLONSKY: In Havana?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, at the airport.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I don't know because I never had to do that. It was all arranged in advance.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh. You went with a group?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, it was a group traveling together. I mean, I wasn't actually part of the group, but yeah—but I get a journalist's visa, which is something else. So—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —and it's complicated. I mean, I didn't get a journalist's visa to go, but I got a research—what they call "professional research," which anybody can go on, but that's what I was doing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, that's amazing—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —that you can—you're going to go there again.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But with a camera. I mean this isn't a vacation.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: With a camera, definitely, with a—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you ever take vacations without a camera?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No [laughs]. Well, I did. I took one for a week this summer. My granddaughter was in Mexico.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She was working there.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And do you have a—do you ever take pictures with a cell phone, [laughs] like the rest of the world is doing?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm going to see a friend of mine who does—a photographer friend of mine, next weekend. She told me to come over and she'd show me some of the pictures that she's done, because I think that's all she's working with now. So, that's interesting, but I can't imagine that I would be able to take the—you know, as my pictures would be at the level that I can do them with a Hasselblad.

LINDA YABLONSKY: They're good for snapshots, and they're quick because it doesn't—it takes a second.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They're snapshots, yeah, and I mean that's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But some people are really good at. Nonetheless, you're right. I mean, now they're getting better, but I mean I use a regular camera. You can't print them, except small—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah. I—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —without losing the resolution.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think that that's going to be the right thing for me.

LINDA YABLONSKY: But you've never worked with any digital camera even, not even a Hasselblad

—  
ROSALIND SOLOMON: I tried, but I just haven't been able to. So I'm still going to use film. I use film, and then it just gets scanned, the film gets scanned.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Ah, I see, so—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —the printing techniques have changed.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah, yeah. You know, of course I couldn't believe that I could have done the Israel project when I did it. I was 80-years-old—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Amazing.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —when I started and it came out so well, so I do have some hope that—I don't know that it'll be Cuba. And then I went back to Chattanooga, too. This summer I went back for a few days, and a couple of really good pictures came out of that. That's another thing: I've thought about using some of my old work from the South and writing about my experiences, you know, some of my Southern-ness.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Did you happen to read Sally Mann's—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I did.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —memoir? What did you think of that?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I thought it was interesting. [Laughs.] There was one thing I didn't like in it, that when she went to prep school, she said she didn't know what a Jew looked like.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, that's where she grew up.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I know, but—you know, that was—oh, my God, that's—was just a funny thing to say, but—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Well, I think it's being pretty honest, but I—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I mean her background is fascinating.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: All the—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But she's a very good writer, which is why I brought that up.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I see. Yeah, she is.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, I couldn't—I wouldn't be doing that kind of writing. I couldn't.

LINDA YABLONSKY: And she's a very Southern photographer [laughs], I mean—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —all of her pictures have to do with—even her family pictures are kind of about—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Do you know her? I mean have you—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Not really, but I mean I—yes, I'm acquainted with her. I've been to Lexington, Virginia—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: —and I've been to her studio, but she—so when you went back this last summer and took pictures, were they of people or—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were of people.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —are they sensitive to the place.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: They were people and also some signage and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Is there anywhere you've never been that you'd still like to go?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LINDA YABLONSKY: Where would that be?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Russia.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You definitely need a visa—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —at this time [laughs].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I don't think it's a good time to go, frankly.

LINDA YABLONSKY: There's never a good time to go except in the spring because the winters [laughs] are so harsh.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Have you—you've been there?

LINDA YABLONSKY: I was there a year ago. It was in the summer. It was the only time I've ever been there.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Was it—was it a good trip?

LINDA YABLONSKY: Yeah. It was a short trip—it was a good trip, but I only went to Moscow and I always wanted really to go to St. Petersburg.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: So, I mean I would go back to do that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I thought—I mean, that's one place I have never—I have never been in. I think it would be very interesting to go there. Maybe—

LINDA YABLONSKY: You do have to have a visa [laughs] at the time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Have to have a visa—

LINDA YABLONSKY: That—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and I think have somebody to help.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You can't even get a hotel room without a visa.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Oh, well.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Which all has to be arranged ahead of time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: But, you know, I don't—I don't think about—I feel as though I've seen—you know, I've seen a lot of the world. I'm glad that I've seen as much as I did see.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Do you have images or ideas for images in your head that you've never been able to realize, that you'd still like to do? Does that ever happen? You see some—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: No.

LINDA YABLONSKY: —you know, just in your mind's eye?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Well, that sounds like a wonderful thing, but I—[laughs]—

LINDA YABLONSKY: But there's no particular person or situation? Is there a person or a situation?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Sometimes I feel as though I have—I have taken so many, many, many photographs that sometimes I wonder why I should take any more.

LINDA YABLONSKY: What an extraordinary thing to say.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Truthfully, I mean I do feel that my last work was as good if not better than any work I've ever done—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Absolutely.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —and can I—I think for me to do something like that again, it has to be a very—again, an in-depth project, and probably with a way of having access, and that just doesn't come that easily, to have that kind of—and that kind of time, plus the exposure, you know, getting it out, the whole thing, I don't know. Does that sound terrible?

LINDA YABLONSKY: No.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: I'm 86. Can I still do—yes, I still could.

LINDA YABLONSKY: You can take a break. Well, there's—you know, Carmen Herrera, the painter who has a show at the Whitney right now?

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Yeah.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She's 101. It's her first show in an American museum. She's been here since 1950-something.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Wow.

LINDA YABLONSKY: She had to wait a long time.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She's—

LINDA YABLONSKY: She's still working.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: She is?

LINDA YABLONSKY: The paintings she's made in the last five years are the best in her life.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Wow. Yeah, I worked very hard from 1980—I don't mean 1980—from 19—from 2010 through 2016. I also did an audiovisual piece—

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROSALIND SOLOMON: —for *Got to Go*.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh!

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And, yeah, I was—I just thought I really—I did need to take a break. It was just constant and—

LINDA YABLONSKY: [Laughs.] You deserve one—

ROSALIND SOLOMON: So, I'm—

LINDA YABLONSKY: —and you also deserve to be known and celebrated, so I guess—let's see if we can do something about that.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Thank you.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Thank you, Rosalind. It's been fascinating talking to you and looking at your pictures.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Thank you, Linda.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Thank you for your very valuable experience.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: And I loved reading your book.

LINDA YABLONSKY: Enough about me! So thank you.

ROSALIND SOLOMON: Thank you for doing it.

[END OF CARD TWO.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

*Editor's Note: Rosalind Solomon has provided the following addendum. The original tapes and transcripts reside with Rosalind Solomon.*

Selected Notes and Commentary from my AIDS Tapes, 1987-1988, with tape and segment numbers

#### Tape 1A

I am hoping to do a project on the AIDS epidemic following my two 1986 solo exhibitions at MoMA: *Rosalind Solomon, Ritual* and at the Museum of Photographic Arts, *Earthrites, Photographs from Inside the Third World*. I want to work on a project that might be of service to others.

I am reaching out to friends ask them to put me in touch with people or organizations that could help me make connections with individuals. I called St. Vincent's hospital, Elizabeth's hospital and the Gay Men's Health Crisis Center. Suzanne Little put me in touch with Betsy Salomon, a therapist at St. Vincent's. Betsy says that she would like to help me to but she said it was an extraordinarily sensitive area and she couldn't figure out how I would manage to photograph people in the hospital. Today she phoned to let me know that she showed my catalogue to Father Bill McNichols, a Catholic priest of the Jesuit Order who works exclusively with an AIDS ministry. I spoke to Father Bill and made an appointment to see him. He quoted Minor White, "when nature needs a photographer, a photographer is there."

When I went to talk to him I took him the *Earthrites* catalogue and some small prints. I found him in an office at 75 Prince St., behind a huge warehouse loaded with barrels. The place is a Franciscan Mission and these barrels are filled with clothing which will be shipped all over the world. The Franciscans gave Bill McNichols this space at the back of their warehouse where he has set up a small shrine. He has designated the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is the only black version of the Virgin, as the Virgin of the Saint of AIDS. A picture of this Virgin appears behind his candles and his flowers. He keeps the candles lit. There are a couple of comfortable chairs. One where he sits and the others are where his visitors sit when they visit him.

I talked to him about what I wanted to do and within an hour and a half, he gave me lists of names of people with AIDS whom he thought would be open to being photographed. He also gave me lists of the various agencies that serve their needs. He mentioned a weekly dinner at St. Peter's Church that is sponsored by the church volunteers who prepare it. Approximately 150 people with AIDS and PWA's, come to the dinner with their friends or alone and they receive a good meal. There are also clothes and canned goods for those who need it. AIDS patients tend to lose weight and don't have the money to buy new clothes. I walked in feeling very afraid, not knowing how I was going to approach people. I had spoken to Peter Avitable who runs the program there. He welcomed me, but then was left to myself. I stood in line, got a plate and sat down where I saw some people who looked as though they might be friendly. I began talking to them.

#### Tape 1B

Charles Angel, one of the men I met there and photographed later commented on the dinner as Fellini-esque. He says when someone doesn't come you always wonder if they've die

#### Tape 4A, Segment 014–06

I'm experiencing a kind of withdrawal from everything else except my AIDS project. The kinds of

relationships that I'm having with the people I'm photographing are so intense, so genuine and on such a gut level that everything else pales beyond this experience. Nothing compares to it. I feel that I'm expending unnecessary energy to simply go out and have dinner with a friend and talk about things that don't matter to me now or to talk about what I'm experiencing. It's the kind of way that I always felt on my best trips when I felt that it was truly an advantage to be alone. Most of the time I didn't feel lonely because what I was doing was so consuming and complete that at night, I would have the time to think over the day's work. I would feel at peace because I had accomplished so much. I needed the quiet and just the time to think rather than diverting myself in anyway. That's the way I'm feeling now. I'm finding it necessary to break off from people except for those who are connected somehow with people with AIDS. It seems better for me not to spend much time with other people. It seems best not to talk too much about what I'm doing. I feel like it dilutes my feelings and perhaps dilutes the intensity of the work. Again that's the kind of thing that I always felt when I was doing my best work on the trips to Guatemala, Peru and India. I avoided talking to people along the way except for those who were working with me, because once I poured out my emotions and feelings about what I had experienced and what I was photographing, I felt that somehow that was taking away from what I could put into the work. I've never had this kind of feeling in a prolonged way at home. I always allowed myself when I was working in the United States to go in and out of my work and to function on multiple levels. That was a problem that I faced in the South and in Washington. Now [that I am divorced and living in New York] I'm in a position to control my life completely in that regard. And I'm going to see whether it will help my work to follow my inclinations and isolate myself from the things that I feel will not be productive to the work at this time.

Tape 5A, Segment 160–187

It seems strange to be excited about working on a project that is so devastating. I'm going from one extreme to the other. This morning I woke up with a headache. I feel under great tension and pressure a lot of the time. I feel tremendously emotionally involved with a number of the people that I've met and photographed. There are so many difficult sides to it and at the same time I feel a sense of exhilaration in that I am doing something that I feel is really worth doing as a document and as an expression. I'm happy to be working in such an intensive way.

Tape 8B, Segment 277–End of Tape

I do have things going full force here in the darkroom and I have made some evening plans for other things. I really have, stop making any social engagements because I must have the time free to take advantage of whatever I can do at any given moment. If it weren't for the Mahabharata next weekend, I would go to Baltimore then. And there's always the chance that Tema will not be well by the time October 31st rolls around. So two weeks can even make a real difference. Tom Alaimo is in the hospital again, I guess for about the third time since I've known him. Jeff is not feeling well either; he has a fever and thinks he might be getting pneumonia. I just spent 3 1/2 hours doing a careful edit of the work I did at the March on Washington, Nick Pippin, Ron Wit and Craig Watson and his sister Cindy. I saw a lot of things that were common to the photographs, so I think that the selection that I made is fairly tight and interesting.

Tape 9A, Segment 000–014

Note: Bracketed section is what I assume the beginning of the sentence to be. The brackets end where the recording start

[I had a dream where I was holding a syringe] with the AIDS vaccine in it. I dropped it and it



shattered and the vaccine went on me and the floor. The dream involved a German Baron who was a friend of Chuck's-this is some fictitious character-and he and Chuck were going out to play tennis. I had told Chuck about what had happened and he had said that he would stay and help me. But I felt as though I dreamed this forever and ever. I had a very disturbed night. I was thinking about Jeff and Tom both being in the hospital and both being so very ill. And I thought, I just can't go on with this. I just can't go on with this. But I got up this morning, and went over the prints and once again I got my bearings and of course I am going to go on with it.

Tape 10A, Segment 132-155

I'm interested in the metaphorical connotation of the environment around people. What I choose of where to photograph people in their environments comes out of my idea of what specifically in that place relates to them, their problems and the conditions in which they find themselves. I shouldn't always say problems because that sounds so negative. To their *feelings*. The problem with photography is that people take it very much as a surface thing. People tend to look at photographs strictly as a document. They don't allow themselves to have a range of feelings about it and to let themselves be carried somewhere by a photograph. Whereas when you look at a painting, you allow what's in that painting to let your mind go free. People do not think when they look at a photograph that they should approach it that way.